Nursing and Midwifery Council
Fitness to Practise Committee

Substantive Hearing
Monday, 30 June 2025 – Wednesday, 2 July 2025
Wednesday, 4 November 2026 – Thursday, 12 November 2026

Nursing and Midwifery Council
2 Stratford Place, Montfichet Road, London, E20 1EJ

Name of Registrant:	**Ashley Peterson**
NMC PIN:	04H0728O
Part(s) of the register:	Nurses part of the register Sub part 1 RN1: Adult nurse, level 1
Relevant Location:	East Sussex
Type of case:	Misconduct
Panel members:	Konrad Chrzanowski (Chair, lay member) Deborah Bennion (Registrant member) Carson Black (Lay member)
Legal Assessor:	Simon Walsh (30 June 2025 – 3 July 2025) Jayne Salt (4 November 2026 – 12 November 2026)
Hearings Coordinator:	Franchessca Nyame (30 June 2025 – 3 July 2025) Samara Baboolal (4 November 2026 – 12 November 2026)
Nursing and Midwifery Council:	Represented by Claire Stevenson, Case Presenter (30 June 2025 – 3 July 2025) Represented by Nawazish Choudhury (4 November 2026 – 12 November 2026)
Mrs Peterson:	Not present and unrepresented
Facts proved:	**Charge 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, Charge 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e**
Facts not proved:	N/A

Fitness to practise:	Impaired
Sanction:	**Striking off order**
Interim order:	**Interim suspension order (18 months)**
Final outcome:	**FTP Impaired – striking off order**

Decision and reasons on service of Notice of Hearing

The panel was informed at the start of this hearing that Mrs Peterson was not in attendance and that the Notice of Hearing letter had been sent to Mrs Peterson's registered email address by secure email on 29 May 2025.

Ms Stevenson, on behalf of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), submitted that it had complied with the requirements of Rules 11 and 34 of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2004 (the Rules).

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

The panel took into account that the Notice of Hearing provided Mrs Peterson with details of the allegations, the time, date, venue of the hearing and, amongst other things, information about Mrs Peterson's right to attend, be represented and call evidence, as well as the panel's power to proceed in her absence.

In the light of the information available, the panel was satisfied that Mrs Peterson has been served with the Notice of Hearing in accordance with the requirements of Rules 11 and 34.

Decision and reasons on proceeding in the absence of Mrs Peterson

The panel next considered whether it should proceed in the absence of Mrs Peterson. It had regard to Rule 21 and heard the submissions of Ms Stevenson, who invited the panel to continue in the absence of Mrs Peterson.

Ms Stevenson submitted that Mrs Peterson has partially engaged with proceedings in that she has provided training certificates and references, but she has not provided a response to the concerns or reasons for her non-attendance at this hearing. Ms Stevenson added that, particularly as of this year, the NMC has not

received a response from Mrs Peterson to any correspondence; suggesting that, whilst she was previously engaged, she has since disengaged.

Ms Stevenson submitted that Mrs Peterson has voluntarily absented herself. She went on to further submit that, given the non-engagement and lack of good reasons for non-attendance from Mrs Peterson in relation to these proceedings, there was no reason to believe that an adjournment would secure her attendance on some future occasion.

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

The panel noted that its discretionary power to proceed in the absence of a registrant under the provisions of Rule 21 is not absolute and is one that should be exercised *'with the utmost care and caution'* as referred to in the case of *R v Jones (Anthony William)* (No.2) [2002] UKHL 5.

The panel decided to proceed in the absence of Mrs Peterson. In reaching this decision, the panel considered the submissions of Ms Stevenson and the advice of the legal assessor. It had particular regard to the factors set out in the decision of *R v Jones* and *General Medical Council v Adeogba* [2016] EWCA Civ 162, and had regard to the overall interests of justice and fairness to all parties. It noted that:

- The panel was satisfied that Mrs Peterson received reasonable notice of the hearing to her correct email address;
- Mrs Peterson has not engaged with the NMC and has not responded to any of the letters or emails sent to her about this hearing;
- No application for an adjournment has been made by Mrs Peterson;
- There is no reason to suppose that adjourning would secure Mrs Peterson's attendance at some future date;
- Witnesses are due to attend this hearing to give live evidence;
- Not proceeding may inconvenience the witnesses, their employer(s) and, for those involved in clinical practice, the clients who need their professional services;

- The charges relate to events that occurred between 2017 and 2019;
- Further delay may have an adverse effect on the ability of witnesses accurately to recall events; and
- There is a strong public interest in the expeditious disposal of the case.

There is some disadvantage to Mrs Peterson in proceeding in her absence. Although the evidence upon which the NMC relies will have been sent to her, she has made no response to the allegations. Mrs Peterson will not be able to challenge the evidence relied upon by the NMC in person and will not be able to give evidence on her own behalf. However, in the panel's judgement, this can be mitigated. The panel can make allowance for the fact that the NMC's evidence will not be tested by cross-examination and, of its own volition, can explore any inconsistencies in the evidence which it identifies. Furthermore, the limited disadvantage is the consequence of Mrs Peterson's decision to absent herself from the hearing, waive her rights to attend, and/or be represented, and not to provide evidence or make submissions on her own behalf.

In these circumstances, the panel decided that it is fair to proceed in the absence of Mrs Peterson. The panel will draw no adverse inference from Mrs Peterson's absence in making its findings of fact.

Decision and reasons on application to amend the charges

The panel heard an application made by Ms Stevenson to amend the wording of Charges 1e, 2a, 2b, 2d and 2e.

The proposed amendments were to amend some typographical errors. It was submitted by Ms Stevenson that the proposed amendments would provide clarity and more accurately reflect the evidence.

> "That you, a registered nurse between 8 February 2017 and September 2019:

1. Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you…

    e. Told Child B she could **not** visit Person C in hospital because she annoyed him and he did not like her or words to that effect

…

2. Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, in that you or allowed others to:

    a. Tell Child B that you were fed up with her 'shit' **or words to that effect**

    b. Tell Child B that she would end up like her 'fucking mother' **or words to that effect**

    c. Tell Child B to leave the room when the family was there as they did not want to look at her or words to that effect

    d. Tell Child B to stop being a 'weirdo' and 'creep' **or words to that effect**

    e. Tell Child B that she is 'damaged, a direct product of her mother' **or words to that effect**

AND in light of the above, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct."

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor and had regard to Rule 28 of the Rules.

The panel considered Charges 1e and 2c. It noted that neither of these two charges allege any specific words or phrases, thus it determined that it was inappropriate to include the wording '*or words to that effect*'. Accordingly, the panel, of its own volition, decided to make the following further amendments:

"That you, a registered nurse between 8 February 2017 and September 2019:

1. Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you…

    e. Told Child B she could **not** visit Person C in hospital because she annoyed him and he did not like her ~~or words to that effect~~

…

2. Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, in that you or allowed others to…

    c. Tell Child B to leave the room when the family was there as they did not want to look at her ~~or words to that effect~~ …'

The panel was satisfied that there would be no prejudice to Mrs Peterson, and no injustice would be caused to either party by the proposed amendments being allowed. It was therefore appropriate to allow the amendments to ensure clarity and accuracy.

Detail of charges (as amended)

That you, a registered nurse between 8 February 2017 and September 2019:

1. Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you:
    a. Shouted at Child B on one or more occasion
    b. Screamed at Child B on one or more occasion
    c. Told Child B that she did not belong in your home
    d. Said to Child B 'the family are going backwards because of you, your stupid sister and stupid fucking social workers' or words to that effect

e. Told Child B she could not visit Person C in hospital because she annoyed him and he did not like her
f. Permitted Child B to watch programmes which were not appropriate for her age

2. Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, in that you or allowed others to:
    a. Tell Child B that you were fed up with her ‘shit’ or words to that effect
    b. Tell Child B that she would end up like her ‘fucking mother’ or words to that effect
    c. Tell Child B to leave the room when the family was there as they did not want to look at her
    d. Tell Child B to stop being a ‘weirdo’ and ‘creep’ or words to that effect
    e. Tell Child B that she is ‘damaged, a direct product of her mother’ or words to that effect

AND in light of the above, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct.

Decision and reasons on application to remove redactions from an exhibit to Charlotte Mantel’s witness statement and admit new accompanying documentation

The panel heard an application made by Ms Stevenson under Rule 31 to remove redactions to parts of an exhibit to Charlotte Mantel’s witness statement, as well as case notes for Child B which were not initially exhibited to be added to the exhibit, into evidence.

In the preparation of this hearing, the NMC had indicated to Mrs Peterson that it was the NMC’s intention for Charlotte Mantel to provide oral evidence to the panel. Despite knowledge of the nature of the evidence to be given by Charlotte Mantel, Mrs Peterson made the decision not to attend this hearing.

Furthermore, Ms Stevenson informed the panel that the NMC sent Charlotte Mantel's unredacted exhibit to Mrs Peterson via email on 26 June 2025 at 15:24.

Ms Stevenson told the panel that the NMC obtained Child B's case notes from the East Sussex County Council (the County Council) who contacted the NMC directly. She submitted that, whilst the new evidence does not contain any direct evidence to charges, the panel may take the view that it would be fair to admit the evidence because it provides further contextual background which may assist the panel. She added that the evidence contains correspondence between the author of the case notes and Mrs Peterson, therefore some of the evidence would assist her case and could be included out of fairness to Mrs Peterson.

On this basis, Ms Stevenson advanced the argument that there was no lack of fairness to Mrs Peterson in allowing the evidence.

The panel accepted the legal assessor's advice on the issues it should take into consideration in respect of this application. This included that Rule 31 provides that, so far as it is 'fair and relevant', a panel may accept evidence in a range of forms and circumstances, whether or not it is admissible in civil proceedings.

The panel considered that Mrs Peterson had been provided with a copy of Charlotte Mantel's statement in advance of this hearing, as well as the unredacted version of their exhibit, and the additional documentation from the County Council on 26 June 2025. The panel considered that, as it had already determined that Mrs Peterson had chosen voluntarily to absent herself from these proceedings, she would not be in a position to cross-examine this witness in any case. There was also public interest in the issues being explored fully which supported the admission of this evidence into the proceedings.

In these circumstances, the panel came to the view that it would be fair and relevant to accept into evidence the unredacted parts of Charlotte Mantel's exhibit.

However, in relation to Child B's case notes, the panel concluded that it would wait to hear Charlotte Mantel's oral explanation as to their provenance before considering whether to accept it into evidence.

Decision and reasons on application to hear Megan Bratton's oral evidence

Ms Stevenson made an application under Rule 31 to hear oral evidence from Megan Bratton.

The panel accepted the legal assessor's advice.

Given that this was an application to hear Megan Bratton's oral evidence rather than to admit a witness statement, the panel was content to hear from Megan Bratton if they decide to attend the hearing.

In light of all the above, the panel accepted the application.

Decision and reasons on application to admit the witness statement of Rebecca Stevens

Ms Stevenson made a further application under Rule 31 to allow the witness statement of Rebecca Stevens dated 14 December 2022 into evidence.

Ms Stevenson made reference to the cases of *El Karout V NMC* [2019] EWHC 28 (Admin) and *Thorneycroft V NMC* [2014] EWHC 1565 (Admin).

Ms Stevenson submitted that the evidence of Rebecca Stevens is relevant as it provides direct evidence in respect of all the charges.

With regard to fairness, it was Ms Stevenson's submission that the NMC wishes to rely on Rebecca Stevens's witness statement to pursue its overarching objective of protecting the public. She then went on to address what she considered to be the factors set out in paragraph 56 of *Thorneycroft* which are:

‘(i) whether the statements were the sole or decisive evidence in support of the charges;

(ii) the nature and extent of the challenge to the contents of the statements;

(iii) whether there was any suggestion that the witnesses had reasons to fabricate their allegations;

(iv) the seriousness of the charge, taking into account the impact which adverse findings might have on the Appellant's career;

(v) whether there was a good reason for the non-attendance of the witnesses;

(vi) whether the Respondent had taken reasonable steps to secure their attendance; and

(vii) the fact that the Appellant did not have prior notice that the witness statements were to be read.’

Ms Stevenson submitted that Rebecca Stevens’s statement is decisive evidence in support of the charges. It is direct evidence that goes to all the charges, and it is also the sole evidence save for Charges 1a, 1f and 2c, which also have evidence from Charlotte Mantel and Megan Bratton to support them.

Ms Stevenson highlighted that Mrs Peterson has not formally responded to the charges. However, she directed the panel to the notes from the joint visit to the Petersons’ home address dated 17 and 26 September 2019, in which Mrs Peterson stated that many of the allegations set out in the charges were ‘*not true.*’

Ms Stevenson submitted that it has not been articulated by Mrs Peterson or her previous representative whether or not there was any suggestion that Rebecca Stevens had reasons to fabricate their allegations. However, out of fairness to Mrs

Peterson, she referred the panel to the following notes from the visit to the Peterson's home address dated 17 September 2019:

> '[Wayne Peterson] *named* [Rebecca Stevens] *stating that this is what she does, she wants money and has raised several RCN matters in the past*.'

and 26 September 2019:

> '[Wayne Peterson] *is concerned that two nurses may have colluded to instigate this matter and reported that they run a business together*.'

Ms Stevenson went on to submit that the charges are serious, directing the panel to NMC guidance 'SAN-2: Sanctions for particularly serious cases'. She added that the allegations amount to more than one incident over a period of time of emotional and verbal abuse of a vulnerable child, thus she submitted that it is highly likely that any adverse finding would have an impact on Mrs Peterson's career.

Ms Stevenson informed the panel that Rebecca Stevens is not attending this hearing due [PRIVATE]. She referred the panel to an email dated 11 November 2024 from the NMC to Rebecca Stevens in which they were contacted to be a witness in these proceedings. A telephone call was made to Rebecca Stevens on 3 February 2025 and they confirmed that they would *'be unable to enaged* [sic] *in* [the NMC's] *hearing process.*' Rebecca Stevens was contacted by the NMC again on 1 May 2025 and was asked [PRIVATE]' On 18 June 2025, Rebecca Stevens told the NMC via telephone call that they '*will not be able to take part in the hearing*.' Notably, on 25 June 2025, [PRIVATE].

Ms Stevenson highlighted that, in the email dated 25 June 2025, Rebecca Stevens stated:

> '*I have not reviewed my statement in over six years, nor confirmed its accuracy.*'

The NMC responded to this on 27 June 2025, stating:

'*In relation to your statement, although the events you refer to occurred six years ago, you signed the statement nearly three years ago (2022). This included a signed declaration confirming that the contents were true to the best of your knowledge and belief at that time. This suggests the statement was reviewed and confirmed as accurate by you at the time of signing.*'

Ms Stevenson submitted that the NMC took reasonable steps to secure Rebecca Stevens's attendance at this hearing, [PRIVATE]. After assessing the circumstances, the NMC decided that it would not be proportionate to compel Rebecca Stevens's attendance at this hearing.

Ms Stevenson told the panel that Mrs Peterson was notified that the NMC *would be making a hearsay application for the evidence of* [Rebecca Stevens] on 26 June 2024 at 10:28. As such, it was her submission that there is no unfairness to Mrs Peterson.

Ms Stevenson then went on to submit that, if the panel decided to refuse this application, it could, of its own volition, require Rebecca Stevens's attendance at this hearing under Rule 22(5). She referred the panel to NMC guidance 'DMA-5: Directing further investigation during a hearing.'

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor who directed the panel to the principles set out in paragraph 45 of *Thorneycroft*. The principles read as follows:

'For the purposes of this appeal, the relevant principles which emerge from the authorities are these:

1.1. The admission of the statement of an absent witness should not be regarded as a routine matter. The FTP rules require the Panel to consider the issue of fairness before admitting the evidence.

1.2. The fact that the absence of the witness can be reflected in the weight to be attached to their evidence is a factor to weigh in the balance,

but it will not always be a sufficient answer to the objection to admissibility.

1.3. The existence or otherwise of a good and cogent reason for the non-attendance of the witness is an important factor. However, the absence of a good reason does not automatically result in the exclusion of the evidence.

1.4. Where such evidence is the sole or decisive evidence in relation to the charges, the decision whether or not to admit it requires the Panel to make a careful assessment, weighing up the competing factors. To do so, the Panel must consider the issues in the case, the other evidence which is to be called and the potential consequences of admitting the evidence. The Panel must be satisfied either that the evidence is demonstrably reliable, or alternatively that there will be some means of testing its reliability.

In my judgment, unless the Panel is given the necessary information to put the application in its proper context, it will be impossible to perform this balancing exercise.'

The panel first considered the cogency of Rebecca Stevens's reason for their non-attendance. The panel noted that, aside from the fact [PRIVATE], the NMC was unable to provide the panel with a clear explanation as to why Rebecca Stevens would not be attending the hearing. The panel was therefore unable to conclude whether this was a good and cogent reason for Rebecca Stevens's non-attendance. The panel was aware that the absence of a good and cogent reason does not automatically result in the exclusion of evidence. As such, the panel went on to consider the *Thorneycroft* principles.

The panel was of the view that Rebecca Stevens's witness statement is sole and decisive evidence. The panel was mindful that no other witnesses could give direct evidence to the allegations. The panel determined that the evidence is not demonstrably reliable and that it has no means of testing the reliability of the

evidence. Moreover, the panel noted Rebecca Stevens's email to the NMC dated 25 June 2025 in which they stated:

> *'It's important to note that I have not reviewed my statement in over six years, nor confirmed its accuracy.'*

The panel also considered fairness to both parties, and it determined that it would not be fair to Mrs Peterson to admit Rebecca Stevens's witness statement into evidence without having the ability to test that evidence or question the witness.

The NMC raised that, although it had decided it would not be appropriate or proportionate to require Rebecca Stevens's attendance at the hearing by way of a summons, the panel could do so of its own volition. Given that the panel had not been given any information about [PRIVATE], it concluded that it was not in a position to make an informed decision on whether or not to require their attendance.

The panel therefore did not accept the NMC's application to admit Rebecca Stevens's witness statement into evidence.

Decision and reasons on application for an adjournment

Ms Stevenson made an application under Rule 32 to adjourn this hearing in order to allow the NMC to take further steps to secure the attendance of Rebecca Stevens.

Ms Stevenson reminded the panel that the NMC had taken the view not to apply for a witness summons to secure Rebecca Stevens's attendance. However, upon review of its position, she informed the panel that the NMC now intend to seek a witness summons for Rebecca Stevens.

Ms Stevenson stated that she accepts that this application could have been made earlier, but the NMC wish to ensure it has exhausted all options with regard to securing Rebecca Stevens's attendance, and to remedy the concerns raised by the panel, namely the ability to test the reliability of the evidence.

Ms Stevenson told the panel that the NMC had initially taken the view to adjourn after hearing from the witnesses it has called. However, given that many of the witnesses' evidence is largely hearsay evidence from Rebecca Stevens, she submitted that it was unfair for witnesses to give partial evidence before the adjournment and then have to be called to give evidence again once the hearing resumed.

Ms Stevenson raised that, whilst there is a public interest in the expeditious disposal of a case, the NMC's overarching objective is to protect the public and these are serious charges involving the alleged emotional and verbal abuse of a vulnerable child. She submitted that it is clearly in the public interest to delay the hearing to order to try and secure Rebecca Stevens's attendance.

Ms Stevenson reiterated that Mrs Peterson voluntarily absented herself from the hearing so there would be no prejudice or unfairness to her in adjourning. She highlighted that adjourning would afford Mrs Peterson a further opportunity to engage and attend if she wished.

Ms Stevenson further submitted that there would be no injustice caused to Mrs Peterson for the above reason, and no injustice to the NMC as an adjournment would allow the NMC a further opportunity to exhaust the final option to secure Rebecca Stevens's attendance, and ensure the serious allegations could be fully explored.

Ms Stevenson went on to inform the panel that the NMC did not intend to make any submissions requesting the panel to consider the imposition of an interim order.

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

The panel had regard to Rules 32(2), 32(4) and 32(5) of the Rules.

The panel considered the expeditious disposal of this case, the potential inconvenience to witnesses, and fairness to Mrs Peterson. The panel also bore in mind the NMC's duty to protect the public, and that these are serious charges which

involve the emotional and verbal abuse of a vulnerable child. The panel was of the view that Rebecca Stevens's evidence is paramount as the case fundamentally rests on their evidence.

In light of the above, the panel decided the appropriate course of action would be to adjourn the hearing at this stage to give the NMC an opportunity to secure the attendance of Rebecca Stevens at a future resumed hearing.

The panel therefore decided to adjourn the hearing. The panel did not consider it necessary to impose an interim order.

This will be confirmed to Mrs Peterson in writing.

That concludes this determination.

Proof of Service on resumption of hearing (Wednesday 4 November 2026)

The panel was informed at the start of this hearing that Mrs Peterson was not in attendance and that the Notice of Hearing letter had been sent to Mrs Peterson's registered email address by secure email on 21 July 2026.

Mr Choudhury, on behalf of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), submitted that it had complied with the requirements of Rules 11 and 34 of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Fitness to Practise) Rules 2004 (the Rules).

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

The panel took into account that the Notice of Hearing for the resuming hearing provided details of the time, date, and venue of the hearing.

In the light of the information available, the panel was satisfied that Mrs Peterson has been served with the Notice of Hearing in accordance with the requirements of Rules 11 and 34.

Decision and reasons on proceeding in the absence of Mrs Peterson

The panel next considered whether it should proceed in the absence of Mrs Peterson. It had regard to Rule 21 and heard the submissions of Mr Choudhury who invited the panel to continue in the absence of Mrs Peterson.

Mr Choudhury submitted that Mrs Peterson has disengaged with the NMC and has not responded to the NMC in relation to these proceedings. He referred the panel to the updated "proceeding in absence" bundle, which was updated for the purposes of today's hearing. Mr Choudhury referred the panel to an email from the NMC, containing the bundles for this hearing, as well as a telephone log dated November 2 2026, showing that Mrs Peterson declined two calls made to her by the NMC Case Coordinator.

Mr Choudhury submitted that Mrs Peterson has therefore voluntarily absented herself. He submitted that, given the non-engagement and lack of explanation for non-attendance from Mrs Peterson in relation to these proceedings, there was no reason to believe that an adjournment would secure her attendance on some future occasion.

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

The panel noted that its discretionary power to proceed in the absence of a registrant under the provisions of Rule 21 is not absolute and is one that should be exercised *'with the utmost care and caution'* as referred to in the case of *R* v *Jones (Anthony William)* (No.2) [2002] UKHL 5.

The panel decided to proceed in the absence of Mrs Peterson. In reaching this decision, the panel considered the submissions made by Mr Choudhury, and the advice of the legal assessor. It had regard to the factors set out in the decision of *R v Jones* and *General Medical Council v Adeogba* [2016] EWCA Civ 162, and the interests of fairness to all parties. It noted that:

- Mrs Peterson received reasonable notice of the hearing to her correct email address;
- Mrs Peterson has not engaged with the NMC and has not responded to any of the emails sent to her about this hearing and declined telephone calls from the NMC in relation to this hearing;
- No application for an adjournment has been made by Mrs Peterson;
- There is no reason to suppose that adjourning would secure Mrs Peterson's attendance at some future date;
- Witnesses are due to attend this hearing to give live evidence;
- Not proceeding may inconvenience the witnesses, their employer(s) and, for those involved in clinical practice, the clients who need their professional services;
- The charges relate to events that occurred between 2017 and 2019;
- Further delay may have an adverse effect on the ability of witnesses accurately to recall events; and
- There is a strong public interest in the expeditious disposal of the case.

There is some disadvantage to Mrs Peterson in proceeding in her absence. Although the evidence upon which the NMC relies will have been sent to her, she has made no response to the allegations. Mrs Peterson will not be able to challenge the evidence relied upon by the NMC in person and will not be able to give evidence on her own behalf. However, in the panel's judgement, this can be mitigated. The panel can make allowance for the fact that the NMC's evidence will not be tested by cross-examination and, of its own volition, can explore any inconsistencies in the evidence which it identifies. Furthermore, the limited disadvantage is the consequence of Mrs Peterson's decision to absent herself from the hearing, waive her rights to attend, and/or be represented, and not to provide evidence or make submissions on her own behalf.

In these circumstances, the panel decided that it is fair to proceed in the absence of Mrs Peterson. The panel will draw no adverse inference from Mrs Peterson's absence in making its findings of fact.

Background

Child A and Child B were twin sisters; Child A was born with complex medical needs which meant that she required around the clock nursing care. Child B has no medical needs but is very vulnerable due to her complex family background of neglect, mental health, and substance misuse of her birth parents. The children were initially living in their birth parents' home supported by nurses (for Child A), social services and Child Protection Plans. In 2017, it was determined that it would be unsafe for the children to remain at home. It was decided that it would be best if the children were placed with a 'connected person'. Mrs Peterson was one of Child A's nurses who had cared for her in their home previously. Mrs Peterson and her husband applied and were successful in becoming the children's foster parents. The children were placed in Mrs Peterson's home from 8 February 2017.

Mrs Peterson was employed by Diversity, the main care provider for Child A. Mrs Peterson continued to work for Diversity on other care packages, in addition to her regular shifts to care for Child A. The rest of the nursing care was carried out by other Diversity nurses who would come into Mrs Peterson's home to deliver this. Concerns were raised by three nurses who cared for Child A on the care package, in relation to alleged abusive treatment towards Child B. The concerns relate to shouting, screaming and using unkind and taunting remarks as set out in the charges.

Two of the nurses, and another person who wished to remain anonymous, contacted the local authority safeguarding team, and social services were alerted to the concerns. On 10 September 2019, social services held a multi-agency safeguarding strategy meeting which resulted in social services deciding it would begin investigating the concerns raised against Mrs Peterson. On 14 September 2019, Mrs Peterson contacted social services and informed them that herself and her husband had decided to give notice on Child B's placement. On 16 September 2019, social services completed a joint visit to the Peterson's home address to share the concerns that were raised. Following further meetings, including a strategy meeting, social services took the decision to remove both Child A and Child B from Mr and

Mrs Peterson's care, and as such, the safeguarding investigation ceased. Social services referred Mr and Mrs Peterson to the local authority designated officer (LADO) who placed a flag on their system, which would alert the local authority, should Mr or Mrs Peterson apply to become a foster carer in the future.

Mrs Peterson was referred to the NMC on 23 September 2019 by the Social Work Practice Manager at East Sussex County Council (the Council) in relation to the allegations of abusive treatment towards Child B.

Mrs Peterson remained employed by Diversity until she resigned in May 2023.

Decision and reasons on facts

The panel heard live evidence from the following witnesses called on behalf of the NMC:

- Rebecca Stevens: Previously a nurse working at the family home for Diversity Care Solutions, providing care for Child A at the time of the allegations
- Megan Bratton: Previously a nurse employed by Diversity Care Solutions, providing care for Child A in the family home at the time of the allegations
- Samantha Laurie-Blackman: Social work practice manager for East Sussex County Council at the time of the allegations.

- Charlotte Mantel: Practice Manager for the Family Support and Children's Social Care Team within East Sussex County Council's Children's Disability Service.

The panel considered the witness and documentary evidence provided by the NMC, together with the submissions made by Mr Choudhury on behalf of the NMC. The panel has drawn no adverse inference from the non-attendance of Mrs Peterson, and were able to test the evidence provided by the witnesses.

Before making any findings on the facts, the panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor. The panel was aware that the burden of proof rests on the NMC, and that the standard of proof is the civil standard, namely the balance of probabilities. This means that a fact will be proved if a panel is satisfied that it is more likely than not that the incident occurred as alleged.

The panel considered the credibility of the witnesses. It was of the view that Megan Bratton (Ms Bratton), Samantha Laurie-Blackman (Ms Laurie-Blackman), and Charlotte Mantel (Ms Mantel) appeared professional during the course of their oral evidence, and their recollection of the events was consistent with their statements. Ms Bratton made it clear during her oral evidence that, due to the unique nature of the incidents, she was able to recall the events clearly. The panel was satisfied that these witnesses were credible.

The panel noted that the NMC advised it, at the closing of its facts, that Mrs Peterson had no previous concerns and was of previously good character. The panel took this into consideration when making its findings. The panel also took into consideration Mrs Peterson's denials and explanations, insofar that it could, from the written documents before it, bearing in mind that she neither attended this hearing nor gave evidence.

The panel noted that Rebecca Stevens (Ms Stevens) made it clear in her written statement that these events [PRIVATE]. This made it difficult to explore her evidence to the fullest extent. However, while giving her evidence, Ms Stevens confirmed that these events were directly witnessed by her, and that her signed statement was true. The panel noted that her written statement and all documentary evidence that she produced at the time were consistent and also noted that the two other nurses reported similar behaviour toward Child B. The panel was satisfied that Ms Stevens was a reliable and consistent witness.

The panel then considered each of the disputed charges, and made the following findings:

Charge 1a)

> "Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you: shouted at Child B on one or more occasion"

This charge is found proved.

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens oral evidence, signed NMC statement, contemporaneous meeting notes which included an email to Ms Howell, dated 10 September 2019 (the email), her handwritten notes during the staff meeting on 12 September 2019 (meeting notes), and her letter to her union (letter to the union). The panel also took into account Ms Bratton's oral evidence and NMC statement, and notes from the phone call with Laura Murtagh (Ms Murtagh), a nurse, dated 13 September 2019 (phone call notes).

The panel noted that, in the written minutes of the staff meeting, recorded by Ms Stevens, held on the 12 September 2019, concerns were raised by three separate nurses. The nurses witnessed concerning behaviour and comments made by Mrs Peterson in relation to Child B. It further noted that the Diversity manager, Jane Howell, stated *'[PRIVATE].'*

Another nurse at the meeting, Jane, allegedly stated: *'Child B is well looked after, the house is clean, meals cooked, clothes clean, so there is no cause for concern, (to which Megan, Laura and [Ms Stevens] disagreed).'*

A further nurse, Oriana, said: *'it is not in Child B's best interest to report to SS or anyone else, as she will be removed to residential and the emotional impact will be too much.'* Jane and Jill, according to the minutes, agreed.

The panel is of the view that it is reasonable to suppose that Jane, Jill, and Oriana were aware of inappropriate behaviours, but were giving Mrs Peterson the benefit of the doubt and excusing her behaviour against the backdrop [PRIVATE].

Ms Stevens said that she had directly seen and heard Mrs Peterson shouting at Child B on numerous occasions, but never at her own daughter, Child C. In the union letter, she stated:

> *'For example, Child B was often shouted at in a way that was of concern.*
>
> *…For example, Child B was blamed for recording a programme on the sky box planner and despite pleading with the family to see it wasn't her that had recorded the shows, she was shouted at, blamed and sent to bed early…'*

Mrs Peterson made a flat denial to this charge and alleged collusion between the nurses who made the reports, during the home visit on 26 September 2019. However, the panel noted that there is no evidence to support any collusion.

The panel determined that there is sufficient evidence before it that, on the balance of probabilities, Mrs Peterson shouted at Child B on one or more occasion.

The panel considered whether this amounted to emotional and/or verbal abuse toward Child B. Samantha Laurie-Blackman (Ms Laurie-Blackman) explained that these behaviours would very likely have an impact on such a vulnerable child with Child B's circumstances and difficult family background. Ms Blackman was clear that *"physical harm is easier to deal with than emotional harm, as this is usually*

internalised". Charlotte Mantel (Ms Mantel) explained that emotional harm would be caused by Mrs Peterson's behaviours.

The panel concluded that shouting at a vulnerable child in her care, with a difficult family history, would have amounted to emotionally and/or verbally abusive behaviour by Mrs Peterson toward Child B.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 1b)

> "Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you: screamed at Child B on one or more occasion"

This charge is found proved.

In reaching its decision, the panel took into account Ms Bratton's oral evidence and witness statement, and Ms Stevens's union letter.

Ms Bratton told the panel during her oral evidence that she often heard Mrs Peterson *"shouting, swearing, and screaming at Child B".* In her oral evidence, she recounted *"directly hearing the registrant telling Child B to 'shut the fuck up'".*

The panel also took into account Ms Stevens's union letter, which states:

> *'I had made several complaints and raised concerns to Jane over the past year in my supervisions because it made me feel so uncomfortable…and explained recent events that had occurred in the house where Child B had been shouted at by Ashley and screamed at her that she was 'damaged, malicious and deceitful.'*

The panel took into account that Ms Stevens's accounts of the events, statements, and contemporaneous notes have been consistent throughout. It also took into

account that her recollection of the incidents are corroborated by Ms Bratton, who told the panel that she heard Mrs Peterson screaming at Child B on more than one occasion. As such, the panel was satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it was more likely than not that Mrs Peterson screaming at Child B.

The panel was of the view that screaming at a vulnerable child in a foster care placement amounted to verbal and emotional abuse, considering the evidence provided by both Ms Laurie-Blackman and Ms Mantel.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 1c)

> "Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you: told Child B that she did not belong in your home"

This charge is found proved.

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens's statement, Ms Stevens's meeting notes, Ms Stevens's union letter, the social worker's notes during Ms Stevens's meeting to raise concerns (social worker meeting notes), strategy meeting discussion notes, and the home visit notes.

The panel took into account Ms Stevens's union letter, which states:

> *'During a family meal, I could over hear Ashley telling Child B that she 'doesn't belong here' and that Child B is choosing not to belong in the family and that Ashley isn't 'pandering to her anymore, I am fed up and tired, you don't belong Child B'.*

The social worker notes state:

‘Rebecca stated that she has been raising concerns within her Supervisions undertaken… Ashley telling Child B over dinner that ‘she doesn’t belong here’ that ‘she is choosing not to belong in the family and Ashley isn’t pandering to her anymore, she is fed up and tired, she doesn’t belong.’

The strategy meeting notes recorded by the Children’s Safeguarding Unit, stated:

‘Ashley repeatedly tells Child B that she doesn’t belong there, that Ashley is fed up and tired and not pandering to her anymore as she is choosing not to be in their family.’

The panel noted that, in the home visit notes, Mrs Peterson denied that she said this but admitted that she is ‘*tired and fed up’*. The panel was of the view that Ms Stevens’s evidence is consistent and reliable. It was satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it was more likely than not that Mrs Peterson told Child B that she did not belong.

The panel went on to consider the limb of the charge. The panel considered the handwritten letter from Child B to Mrs Peterson, which expressed attachment and love for Mrs Peterson and her family. It was satisfied that telling a vulnerable 10-year-old child with a difficult family background, who feels emotional attachment towards her carers, that she ‘*does not belong’* would amount to emotional abuse.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 1d)

“Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you: said to Child B ‘the family are going backwards because of you, your stupid sister and stupid fucking social workers’ or words to that effect”

This charge is found proved.

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens's witness statement and oral evidence, Ms Mantel's witness statement and evidence, Ms Stevens's union letter, and the social worker meeting notes.

In her witness statement, Ms Stevens stated:

> *'I witnessed the following amongst others: Ashley telling [Child B] that she doesn't belong here, that she isn't going to pander to her anymore and that the family are going backwards because of her, her stupid sister and stupid fucking social workers and that she was fed up with her shit.'*

Ms Stevens initially raised this concern in her letter to her union. She stated:

> *'31 August 2019 During a family meal I could over hear Ashley telling Child B that… 'this family is going backward for you, your sister and your stupid parents and stupid fucking social workers and it's still not good enough.'*

In Ms Mantel's witness statement, she states that:

> *'Rebecca recounted that on 31 August 2019 that Mrs Peterson was telling [Child B] over dinner that 'she doesn't belong here', that 'she is choosing not to belong in the family and Mrs Peterson isn't pandering to her anymore, she is fed up and tired, she doesn't belong. This family is going backwards for you, your sister, your stupid parents and stupid fucking social workers and its still not good enough. Im fed up and tired of your shit.'*

The panel acknowledged that Mrs Peterson responded, as seen in the home visit notes, and denied making this statement. She responded, *'what does going backwards mean?'* However, the panel was of the view that Ms Stevens has been consistent in her evidence and therefore the panel preferred her evidence over Mrs Peterson's comment in the home visit notes. The panel was satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it was more likely than not that

Mrs Peterson told Child B that *'the family are going backwards because of you, your stupid sister and stupid fucking social workers'* or words to that effect.

The panel went on to consider the limb of the charge, and was satisfied that telling a vulnerable child that the family is *'going backwards for her'* and her sister, amounts to verbal and emotional abuse. Child B was particularly vulnerable, as her sister had very complex care needs, and her family background was difficult. Being told this would very likely have a significant impact on her given the circumstances.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 1e)

> "Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you: told Child B she could not visit Person C in hospital because she annoyed him and he did not like her"

This charge is found proved.

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens's written statement, the email to Jane Howell, the social worker meeting notes, and the home visit notes.

Ms Stevens's written statement states:

> *'I witnessed a lot of unfair and unkind behaviour towards Child B, she was constantly taunted, bullied, neglected and abused; it became increasingly apparent that Child B was being treated badly by Ashley, [Mr Peterson], and their own daughter [Child C], this was constant, every day… Told by Ashley that she wasn't allowed to visit [PERSON C] in hospital because she annoys him, and he doesn't like her.'*

Ms Stevens, in her email to Jane Howell, reiterated this:

'…that Child B wasn't allowed to visit [PERSON C] in hospital because she annoys him and he doesn't like her.'

This was corroborated by Ms Mantel's written statement, in which states:

'Rebecca also told me that in August 2019, when [PERSON C] was in hospital, Mrs Peterson told Child B that she could not go and visit him as she annoyed him too much and that he didn't like her.'

The panel took into account that, while Mrs Peterson denies saying this, she made a minor admission that she did not take Child B to the hospital to visit [PERSON C]. In the home visit notes, it is recorded that Mrs Peterson stated that *'during [PERSON C'S] first admission the girls were with him. Mrs Peterson does not feel that the CCU was appropriate; she did take the others to see [PERSON C] toward the end of admission, took others as Child B can be hyper.'*

The panel was satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it was more likely than not that Mrs Peterson told Child B that she could not visit [PERSON C] in the hospital because she annoyed him and he did not like her.

The panel next considered whether this amounted to emotional and/or verbal abuse. The panel was satisfied that telling Child B that she could not visit [PERSON C] in the hospital because she annoyed him and he did not like her, while allowing other children to visit him, amounts to emotional abuse. The panel was also satisfied that telling Child B that she annoyed [PERSON C] and he did not like her amounted to emotional abuse.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 1f)

> "Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, while they were in your care in that you: permitted Child B to watch programmes which were not appropriate for her age"

This charge is found

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens's written statement, her email to Jane Howell, the meeting notes, the union letter, and the home visit notes.

In her written statement, Ms Stevens stated that Child B was *'allowed to watch programmes that were not age appropriate'*. She expands on this in her email to Jane Howell, stating:

> *'throughout the summer holidays the girls Child B and Child C were allowed to sit and watch murder investigation programmes all day, every day.'*

In the meeting notes dated 12 September 2019, Ms Stevens recorded:

> *'Over the summer holidays the children were often left to sit all day to watch the television, of which they were allowed to watch adult appropriate murder investigation programmes, all day, most days.'*

The panel took into account that Ms Stevens's account of this incident was consistent throughout all of her contemporaneous evidence. It further took into account that Mrs Peterson did not deny this allegation. When asked about this, Mrs Peterson acknowledged that children entertain themselves. The home visit notes record Mrs Peterson saying *'everyone in the household likes the Crime Channel. Children entertain /play selves – normal.'*

The panel was satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that Mrs Peterson permitted Child B to watch programmes which were not appropriate for her age.

The panel next considered whether this amounted to emotional and/or verbal abuse. The panel was of the view that, given her vulnerabilities, allowing 10-year-old Child B to watch murder programmes all day while unrestricted would likely have an emotionally damaging or harmful impact on her. The panel was of the view that this was therefore emotionally abusive toward Child B.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 2a)

> "Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, in that you or allowed others to: tell Child B that you were fed up with her 'shit' or words to that effect"

This charge is found proved.

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens's written statement and her letter to the union.

The panel took into account that Ms Stevens provided a specific date in which this incident occurred. Her letter to the union states:

> *'31/08/2019:Ashley telling over dinner that 'she doesn't belong here' that 'she is choosing not to belong in the family and Ashley isn't pandering to her anymore, she is fed up and tired, she doesn't belong. "This family is going backwards for you, your sister, you stupid parents and stupid fucking social workers and it's still not good enough. I'm fed up and tired of your shit"*

Ms Stevens's written statement also recalls this incident, in which she states:

> *'I witnessed the following amongst others: Ashley telling her that she doesn't belong here, that she isn't going to pander to her anymore and*

that the family are going backwards because of her, her stupid sister and stupid fucking social workers and that she was fed up with her shit.'

The panel was satisfied that Ms Stevens has been consistent in her accounts. She provided a specific date in her contemporaneous letter to the union in which she raised her concerns for Child B's wellbeing. This was consistent throughout her meeting notes and the social worker meeting notes.

The panel also took into account that, in the home visit notes, Mrs Peterson admitted that she was *'fed up and tired'.*

The panel was satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it was more likely than not that Mrs Peterson told Child B that she was '*fed up with her shit'*, or words to that effect.

The panel next considered whether such a statement amounts to emotional and/or verbal abuse. The panel was of the view that telling a young 10-year-old child, who is very vulnerable and reliant on a foster carer, that Mrs Peterson was *'fed up of her shit',* would amount to both emotionally and verbally abusive behaviour.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 2b)

"Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, in that you or allowed others to: tell Child B that she would end up like her 'fucking mother' or words to that effect"

This charge is found proved.

In reaching its decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens's written statement, the meeting notes, the union email, Ms Laurie-Blackman's written

statement and oral evidence, and Ms Mantel's written statement and oral evidence.

In her written statement, Ms Stevens stated:

> *'I witnessed the following amongst others: being told that [Child B] would end up like her fucking mother.'*

In the letter to the union, Ms Stevens recounted this incident and stated:

> *'she is also told that she will 'end up like her fucking mother' and is 'damaged, a direct product of her mother'.*

The panel was satisfied that Ms Stevens's evidence has been consistent. She also informed Ms Mantel of this incident. In her written statement, Ms Mantel states:

> *'Rebecca recounted that…Child B was often told…that she would 'end up like her fucking mother.'*

This incident was also reported to Ms Laurie-Blackman, who confirmed receiving the report of this incident in her oral evidence.

Ms Mantel recorded a telephone call with Miriam, the placement support worker for Child B, which took place on 13 September 2019. The notes of this call stated:

> *'Miriam reported that Mrs Peterson has said Child B is just like her mother.'*

The panel was therefore satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that Mrs Peterson told Child B that she would *'end up like her fucking mother',* or words to that effect.

The panel next considered whether this amounted to emotional and/or verbal abuse. In her oral evidence, Ms Laurie-Blackman referred to the complex love/hate relationship that Child B had with her mother. She informed the panel that Mrs Peterson's comparison of Child B to her mother *'would be harmful and cruel'* in light of her complex relationship with her, and would therefore very likely impact the child's wellbeing. The panel was therefore of the view that this amounted to verbally and emotionally abusive behaviour towards Child B.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 2c)

> "Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, in that you or allowed others to: tell Child B to leave the room when the family was there as they did not want to look at her"

This charge is found proved.

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account the phone call to the social work team made by Ms Murtagh, and Ms Stevens's written statement.

The notes from the telephone call states:

> *'Laura stated that things had escalated over the summer and that there is an ongoing concern. Child C is reported to constantly put Child B down, tell her she cannot do things or tell her to leave the room or stay away. Laura advised that the Peterson's are aware of this treatment but don't object or address these incidents. [The Peterson's other biological child] is also reported to be dismissive of Child B and tell her to go away.'*

This account is corroborated by Ms Stevens's written statement, which states:

‘I witnessed the following amongst others: [Child B] being told to leave the room when the family were there as they ‘didn’t want to look at her’.’

In the letter to the union, Ms Stevens also states that she witnessed the family telling Child B to *‘leave the room that she enters because they don’t want to look at her/ near her.’*

The panel noted that these comments were made by Child C, rather than Mrs Peterson herself, toward Child B. However, it took into account that these comments took place while the family were present, and therefore it is very likely that Mrs Peterson was present and aware of these comments, and did not challenge this or stop this treatment of Child B by Child C. The panel was therefore satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that Mrs Peterson allowed others to tell Child B to leave the room when the family was present as they ‘*did not want to look at her.*’

The panel then went on to consider whether this amounted to verbal and/or emotional abuse. The panel was of the view by not challenging this bullying and harmful behaviour displayed by her biological child toward Child B, who was vulnerable, Mrs Peterson was acting in an emotionally abusive way and allowed Child B to be verbally abused by Child C and other family members.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 2d)

“Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, in that you or allowed others to: tell Child B to stop being a ‘weirdo’ and ‘creep’ or words to that effect”

This charge is found proved

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens’s written statement, her letter to the union, and the home visit notes.

In her written statement, Ms Stevens states that she witnessed Child B being *'told to stop being 'weird' and a 'creep''.*

In the letter to the union, Ms Stevens stated that '*Child B is told a lot that she is being a 'creep' and a 'weirdo' when she is standing in the room that the family are in.'*

The panel also took into account that Mrs Peterson does not dispute this charge. In the home visit notes, Mrs Peterson is noted to admit that *'[the Peterson's other biological child] calls both Child B and Child C weirdos at times.'*

The panel was therefore satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that Mrs Peterson told, or allowed others to tell, Child B to stop being a *'weirdo'* and a '*creep*' or words to that effect.

The panel then went on to consider whether this amounted to emotional and or verbal abuse. The panel took into account Mrs Laurie-Blackman's oral evidence, in which she explained that Child B was particularly vulnerable and came from a difficult family background. She was removed from her birth parents' care and then placed with the Petersons. It noted that Mrs Laurie-Blackman explained that this context and her vulnerabilities meant that these statements would have a real emotional impact on Child B. The panel therefore determined that, by telling Child B or allowing others to tell Child B to stop being a '*weirdo'* or a '*creep*', Mrs Peterson's actions were emotionally abusive.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Charge 2e)

> "Emotionally and/or verbally abused Child B, who was vulnerable, in that you or allowed others to: tell Child B that she is 'damaged, a direct product of her mother' or words to that effect"

This charge is found proved.

In reaching this decision, the panel took into account Ms Stevens's written statement and letter to the union.

In her letter to the union, Ms Stevens stated:

> *'[Child B] is also told that she will 'end up like her fucking mother' and is 'damaged, a direct product of her mother.'*

The panel was of the view that Ms Stevens's evidence has been reliable, corroborated, and consistent throughout. It preferred her evidence. As such, the panel was of the view that, on the balance of probabilities, it was more likely than not that Mrs Peterson told Child B that she is a '*damaged, a direct product of her mother*' or words to that effect.

The panel also took into account the Placement Support Report, dated 19 September 2019, which stated that *'[Ashley] also said [Child B] was exactly like her birth mother in her behaviour.'*

The panel then went on to consider whether this amounted to emotional and/or verbal abuse. The panel again considered that, in her oral evidence, Ms Laurie-Blackman referred to the complex love/hate relationship that Child B had with her mother. She informed the panel that Mrs Peterson's comparison of Child B to her mother *'would be harmful and cruel'* in light of her complex relationship with her, and would therefore very likely impact the child's wellbeing. The panel was therefore of the view that this amounted to verbally and emotionally abusive behaviour towards Child B.

The panel therefore found this charge proved on the balance of probabilities.

Fitness to practise

Having reached its determination on the facts of this case, the panel then moved on to consider, whether the facts found proved amount to misconduct and, if so, whether Mrs Peterson's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

There is no statutory definition of fitness to practise. However, the NMC has defined fitness to practise as a registrant's ability to practise safely and effectively without restriction.

The panel recognised its statutory duty to protect the public and maintain public confidence in the profession. Further, it bore in mind that there is no burden or standard of proof at this stage, and it has therefore exercised its own professional judgement.

This stage involves a two-stage process. First, the panel must determine whether the facts found proved amount to misconduct. Secondly, only if the facts found proved amount to misconduct, the panel must decide whether, in all the circumstances, Mrs Peterson's fitness to practise is currently impaired as a result of that misconduct.

Submissions on misconduct

Mr Choudhury submitted that the facts found proved in this case amount to misconduct. He submitted that the matters in the facts found proved are very serious and are not trivial. The conduct took place when Child B was under Mrs Peterson's care, and is linked to her clinical practice.

Mr Choudhury submitted that the facts found proved are significant departures from the NMC Code of Conduct, and referred the panel to the relevant areas of the Code.

He submitted that the facts proved amount to a breach of professional conduct, and would have caused harm to Child B, who was vulnerable.

Submissions on impairment

Mr Choudhury went on to make submissions as to whether Mrs Peterson's practice is impaired. He submitted that Mrs Peterson's practice is impaired.

Mr Choudhury submitted that there is no evidence from Mrs Peterson in relation to any reflection, apologies, strengthened practice, remorse, personal accountability, or appreciation for the impact of her conduct on the nursing profession, public confidence, and on Child B. He submitted that, according to documentary evidence, Mrs Peterson stated that Child B was lying.

Mr Choudhury posed the following question to the panel; *"how would this registrant act if placed in a similar position?"* Mr Choudhury submitted that the circumstances of the case are unusual, as Mrs Peterson was caring for child B as a foster parent, but was also a registered nurse. He submitted that this matter occurred some 7 years ago, which is a considerable period of time, however he further submitted that, regardless, the matters found proved are very serious.

Mr Choudhury submitted that Mrs Peterson has provided some evidence of training and character references; however, these are deep-seated attitudinal issues and she has not addressed the concerns nor mitigated them. Mr Choudhury referred the panel to NMC Guidance FTP-18, which defines "vulnerability". Mr Choudhury, in reference to FTP-18, submitted that a *"child will always be vulnerable by virtue of being a child".*

Mr Choudhury submitted that the charges found proved amount to direct and indirect emotional and verbal abuse toward Child B, who was 10 at the time of the incidents. Mr Choudhury submitted that, in light of the serious nature of the concerns, and that they related to the abuse of a vulnerable and young child, impairment should be found on the ground of public protection. He submitted that, further, a finding of impairment is in the public interest. Mr Choudhury submitted that this was a 10-year-

old child who was vulnerable by virtue of her age, but made even more vulnerable by her background and family context. Mrs Peterson was her foster carer, and acted in a verbally and emotionally abusive manner to Child B. Mr Choudhury submitted that Mrs Peterson's conduct is so deplorable that a clear message must be sent to nurses as to proper standards of professional conduct. He submitted that a finding of impairment is necessary to uphold and maintain public confidence in the nursing profession, and the NMC as its regulator.

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

Panel decision and reasons on misconduct

When determining whether the facts found proved amount to misconduct, the panel had regard to the terms of the Code.

The panel was of the view that Mrs Peterson's actions did fall significantly short of the standards expected of a registered nurse, and amounted to a breach of the NMC Code of Conduct, specifically:

'1.1 treat people with kindness, respect and compassion
1.2 make sure you deliver the fundamentals of care effectively
2.6 recognise when people are anxious or in distress and respond compassionately and politely
20.1 keep to and uphold the standards and values set out in the Code
20.2 … treating people fairly and without discrimination, bullying or harassment
20.3 be aware at all times of how your behaviour can affect and influence the behaviour of other people
20.5 treat people in a way that does not take advantage of their vulnerability or cause them upset or distress'

The panel appreciated that breaches of the Code do not automatically result in a finding of misconduct. However, the panel was of the view that charges 1 and 2 in their entirety amounted to serious misconduct.

The panel took into account NMC Guidance FtP-18 on What We Mean by Vulnerability. FtP-18 states:

> *'Children will always be considered vulnerable. By children, we mean anyone under the age of 18 (16 in Scotland), even if they are able to make their own decisions about their medical care.*
>
> *The term 'abuse' is a broad concept and may include (but isn't limited to): physical abuse (including violence and threatening or intimidating behaviour); […] psychological, emotional or other abuse. What amounts to abuse may differ between children and adults. In any abusive situation there is likely to be an imbalance of power between the abuser and the abused…'*

The panel also took into account NMC Guidance FTP-2a-i, which provides guidance when concerns take place outside of a nurse's professional practice:

> *'Outside professional practice, professionals should particularly consider the need to: act with honesty and integrity at all times, treating people fairly and without […] bullying (20.2) […] keep to the laws of the country in which they are practising (20.4) treat people in a way that does not take advantage of their vulnerability or cause them upset or distress (20.5)*
>
> *Broadly speaking, the following behaviours are more likely to suggest a risk of harm to the public and impaired fitness to practise, regardless of where they take place (although this is not an exhaustive list): […] abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable people…'*

When considering the entirety of Charge 1 and Charge 2, the panel was of the view that verbal and emotional abuse of a vulnerable child amounts to serious misconduct and would be seen by fellow nursing practitioners and the public as "deplorable", as established in the case of *Nandi v General Medical Council* [2004] EWHC 2317 (Admin).

Mrs Peterson, over an extended period of time: swore, shouted, and screamed at Child B, made several emotionally abusive statements to Child B, allowed Child B to be told to go away or leave the room by members of the family, prevented Child B from visiting [PERSON C] in the hospital, and compared Child B to her mother, with whom she had a complex relationship. The panel took into account that Child B was 10 years old and was made especially vulnerable in light of her complex family background.

The panel acknowledged that the charges found proved took place outside of Mrs Peterson's professional practice, namely in her family home where she was providing foster care for Child B and Child A, for whom she was also providing nursing care. However, it bore in mind FtP-2a-i and the seriousness of Mrs Peterson's actions towards Child B, which it found to be verbally and/or emotionally abusive.

In light of all the above, the panel found that Mrs Peterson's actions fell seriously short of the conduct and standards expected of a nurse, and therefore found that all of the charges found proved amounted to misconduct.

Decision and reasons on impairment

The panel next went on to decide whether Mrs Peterson's fitness to practise is currently impaired as a result of the misconduct.

In coming to its decision, the panel had regard to the NMC Guidance on *Impairment,* (Reference: DMA-1 Last Updated:28/01/2026) in which the following is stated:

> *'Being fit to practise is not defined in our legislation but for us it means that a professional on our register can practise as a nurse midwife or nursing associate safely and effectively without restriction.'*

The panel also took into account FtP-18 and FtP-2a-i.

Nurses occupy a position of privilege and trust in society and are expected at all times to be professional. Patients and their families must be able to trust nurses with their lives and the lives of their loved ones. To justify that trust, nurses must make sure that their conduct, at all times, justifies both their patients' and the public's trust in the profession.

The panel considered Mrs Justice Cox's judgement in the case of *CHRE v NMC and Grant* [2011] EWHC 927 (Admin). Paragraph 74 states:

> *'In determining whether a practitioner's fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct, the relevant panel should generally consider not only whether the practitioner continues to present a risk to members of the public in his or her current role, but also whether the need to uphold proper professional standards and public confidence in the profession would be undermined if a finding of impairment were not made in the particular circumstances.'*

In paragraph 76, Mrs Justice Cox referred to Dame Janet Smith's "test", originating from the Shipman Report, which reads as follows:

> *'Do our findings of fact in respect of the doctor's misconduct, deficient professional performance, adverse health, conviction, caution or determination show that his/her fitness to practise is impaired in the sense that she/he:*
>
> a) *has in the past acted and/or is liable in the future to act so as to put a patient or patients at unwarranted risk of harm; and/or*
>
> b) *has in the past brought and/or is liable in the future to bring the medical profession into disrepute; and/or*

c) *has in the past breached and/or is liable in the future to breach one of the fundamental tenets of the medical profession;*

d) *...'*

The panel considered the first three limbs of the Grant test in relation to the past. It noted that Child B was not a patient in the care of Mrs Peterson, however, the panel considered the guidance at FtP-18 and was of the view that the behaviours displayed by Mrs Peterson, namely her abusive behaviour, could have resulted in a risk of unwarranted harm to patients. The panel therefore finds limb (a) engaged.

In relation to the second limb, the panel was of the view that by acting verbally and emotionally abusive toward Child B, Mrs Peterson brought the nursing profession into disrepute. She was a registered nurse, and Child B, who was a vulnerable child had been placed in her foster care. The misconduct found proved was witnessed by multiple nurses working in the family home. Therefore, her misconduct brought the nursing profession into disrepute.

In relation to the third and final relevant limb, the panel found that Mrs Peterson's misconduct had breached the fundamental tenets of the nursing profession.

The panel next considered the Grant test in relation to the future; is Mrs Peterson liable in the future to bring the profession into disrepute and/or breach fundamental tenets of the nursing profession.

The panel took into account that it had no evidence before it from Mrs Peterson to show that she has taken steps to address the misconduct or to mitigate any risk of repetition. Mrs Peterson has disengaged with the NMC and has not provided any reflections or evidence of remediation. She has not expressed remorse or provided any apologies. She has not demonstrated an understanding of the impact that her misconduct has had on public confidence in the nursing profession, her nursing colleagues who were deeply impacted by the treatment of Child B that they witnessed, and or to Child B herself.

The panel took into account that the charges found proved occurred in 2019. The evidence before it shows that 2019 [PRIVATE], it was of the view that this in no way excuses Mrs Peterson's abusive treatment toward Child B.

The panel took into account that the misconduct took place over a period of time and was not a single, isolated incident. It was of the view that the nature of the charges and the absence of any reflection or remorse suggests the misconduct is linked to deep-seated attitudinal concerns.

The panel noted that Mrs Peterson practised until 2023 while employed with Diversity. It has no information around whether she is currently practising as a registered nurse, however, took into account that there have been no further concerns reported during this period of time. However, the panel was of the view that there is no evidence to suggest that the misconduct in this case has been remediated in any form. It determined that Mrs Peterson is liable to repeat misconduct of the kind found proved in the future. The panel therefore found that limbs (a), (b) and (c) of the Grant test, in relation to the future, were engaged.

The panel therefore decided that a finding of impairment is necessary on the grounds of public protection.

The panel bore in mind the overarching objectives of the NMC: to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety, and well-being of the public and patients, and to uphold and protect the wider public interest. This includes promoting and maintaining public confidence in the nursing and midwifery professions and upholding the proper professional standards for members of those professions.

The panel determined that public confidence in the profession would be seriously undermined if a finding of impairment were not made in this case. The misconduct is very serious, relating to the verbal and emotional abuse of a vulnerable 10-year-old child who was in Mrs Peterson's care. Mrs Peterson has taken no steps, as far as the evidence before the panel is concerned, to remediate the misconduct and address the concerns arising from the misconduct.

The panel was of the view that public confidence in the nursing profession would be undermined if a nurse who behaved in an abusive manner toward a child over a prolonged period of time were allowed to practise as a registered nurse, without a finding of impairment. In light of this, the panel therefore also found Mrs Peterson's fitness to practise impaired on the ground of public interest.

Having regard to all the above, the panel determined that Mrs Peterson's fitness to practise is currently impaired.

Sanction

The panel has considered this case very carefully and has decided to make a striking-off order. It directs the NMC registrar to strike Mrs Peterson off the nursing register.

The effect of this order is that the NMC register will show that Mrs Peterson has been struck-off.

Submissions on sanction

Mr Choudhury submitted that, in light of the panel's findings, the NMC is now seeking a striking off order. It previously sought a suspension order, as outlined in the notice of hearing sent to Mrs Peterson. However, due to the seriousness of the concerns and the panel's findings on impairment, the NMC revised its sanction bid. Mr Choudhury submitted that a striking off order is now the appropriate order in this case.

Mr Choudhury submitted that the matters found proved are very serious and involve the emotional abuse and neglect of a vulnerable child. He submitted that this sanction bid is not meant to punish a registrant; such an order also sets an example of what conduct is expected and not expected of a registered nurse.

Mr Choudhury submitted that the following aggravating factors are present in this case:

- Child B was a vulnerable child
- Facts found proved took place over a period of time and involved more than one occurrence
- Emotional harm and/or abuse and/or emotional neglect caused to Child B
- Conduct was witnessed by three separate nurses
- Mrs Peterson has not demonstrated any insight or apologies, and has not provided any reflections
- Mrs Peterson showed a willingness to blame Child B
- Breach of trust by nature of being a foster parent
- Impacted the nurses, Ms Stevens and Ms Bratton, who witnessed the incidents

Mr Choudhury submitted that the following mitigating factors are present in this case:

- Mrs Peterson has an otherwise unblemished nursing career
- No clinical concerns raised

Mr Choudhury submitted that, although this case is unusual, a striking off sanction would send a clear message to nurses, and in particular, those who may also be carers of vulnerable children and/or adults, that this kind of behaviour is unconscionable and reprehensible and will not be tolerated.

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

Decision and reasons on sanction

Having found Mrs Peterson's fitness to practise currently impaired, the panel went on to consider what sanction, if any, it should impose. The panel bore in mind that any sanction imposed must be appropriate and proportionate and, although not intended

to be punitive in its effect, may have such consequences. The decision on sanction is a matter for the panel independently exercising its own judgement.

The panel took into account the following aggravating factors:

- Abuse of a position of trust as a foster parent caring for a vulnerable child
- Conduct which deliberately or recklessly put a child, receiving foster care, at risk of harm
- Pattern of misconduct over a period of time
- Failure to engage in the Fitness to Practise process without good reason
- Absence of insight, reflection, and remorse
- Child B was especially vulnerable; 10 years old with a complicated family background

The panel also took into account the following mitigating factors:

- No concerns raised to the NMC since these incidents
- Otherwise unblemished nursing career
- [PRIVATE]

The panel first considered whether to take no action. However, it concluded that this would be inappropriate in view of the seriousness of the case, the public protection concerns, and the public interest concerns identified in the impairment stage. The panel determined that it would be neither proportionate nor in the public interest to take no further action.

The panel next considered a caution order. It had regard to the NMC Guidance SAN-2b (last updated 28/01/2026), which states:

> *'A caution is only appropriate if the Committee has decided there's no risk to the public or to people using services that requires the professional's practice to be restricted. This means the case is at the lower end of the spectrum of*

impaired fitness to practise, but the Committee wants to mark that what happened was unacceptable and must not happen again.'

The panel considered that Mrs Peterson's actions were not at the lower end of the spectrum, as it involved the emotional and verbal abuse of a vulnerable child in Mrs Peterson's foster care. The panel therefore determined that a sanction that does not restrict Mrs Peterson's practise would not protect the public, nor would it meet the public interest. The panel therefore determined that a caution order would be neither appropriate nor proportionate.

The panel next considered whether to place a conditions of practice order on Mrs Peterson's registration. In considering whether conditions of practice are appropriate, the panel had regard to the factors set out in the NMC Guidance SAN-2c (last updated 28/01/2026). The panel took into account that the facts found proved and the misconduct are very serious, and involved the emotional and verbal abuse of a vulnerable child. It took into account that the facts found proved took place in Mrs Peterson's capacity as a foster parent rather than a nurse providing clinical care, and that no concerns around her clinical practice have been raised. It considered that Mrs Peterson's treatment of and behaviour toward Child B, and her tendency to blame Child B, suggest deep-seated attitudinal concerns.

The panel considered FtP16(a) which states:

'Examples of conduct which may not be possible to address, and where steps such as training courses or supervision at work are unlikely to address the concerns include: incidents of … neglect or abuse of people receiving care, children...'

The panel was of the view that it is difficult to formulate workable conditions that address the potential deep-seated attitudinal concerns in this case, and further noted that Mrs Peterson has not engaged with the NMC or attended these proceedings. Therefore, the panel has no evidence that Mrs Peterson would engage with any conditions, if a conditions of practice order were to be imposed.

In light of all the above, the panel determined that a conditions of practice order would not be appropriate in the circumstances.

The panel went on to consider whether a suspension order is appropriate in this case. The panel had regard to the NMC Guidance SAN-2d (last updated 28/01/2026) which sets out when a suspension order may be appropriate:

- *'the impairment is very serious but not fundamentally incompatible with continuing to be a registered professional*
- *an outcome less severe than strike-off would still satisfy the over-arching objective.'*

The panel also had regard to the key considerations as set out in the NMC Guidance to weigh up before imposing a suspension. It noted the following list of circumstances that may make a suspension order an appropriate sanction:

- *'the charges found proved are at the most serious end of the spectrum and call into question the professional's suitability to continue practising, either currently or at all*
- *while it is possible that the professional could be fit to practise in future, only a period out of practice would be sufficient to allow them to fully strengthen their practice through reflection, … and / or development of insight and remediation*
- *what went wrong is so serious that public confidence in the profession and professional standards could not be maintained if the professional were able to continue practising without stopping for a period of time.'*

The panel took into account that no concerns around Mrs Peterson's clinical practice have been reported, and no further regulatory concerns have been reported since the incidents in the facts found proved. However, the panel was concerned by Mrs Peterson's lack of engagement with the NMC, and the lack of evidence around her insight, reflection, and any learning that may demonstrate that she has learnt from her actions. She has not shown that she recognises the potential impact that her behaviour could have on her clinical practice.

The panel also took into account the unusual circumstances which provided the background when the concerns were raised. Mrs Peterson was allowed to foster Child B because of her links to both Child A and Child B in her role as a registered nurse. In addition to her fostering role for both children, she was commissioned to provide clinical care for Child A. The panel also [PRIVATE].

The panel considered NMC Guidance SAN-4 (last updated 31/07/2026), which outlines:

> *'**Abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable people***
>
> *Safeguarding and protecting people from harm, abuse and neglect is an integral part of the standards and values set out in the Code. Any allegation involving the abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults should always be treated seriously.*
>
> *If the Committee decides to impose a less severe sanction, they will need to make sure they explain the reasons for their decision clearly and carefully. This will allow others, including the victims of such behaviour, to properly understand the decision.'*

The panel took into account that these incidents took place in 2019, and Mrs Peterson has had a substantial amount of time to engage with the NMC and provide evidence of insight and reflection. The panel was mindful that a suspension order would allow Mrs Peterson some time to reflect on her conduct and demonstrate a greater understanding of the impact that her misconduct. However, the panel was of the view that the potential deep-seated attitudinal concerns arising in this case are underscored by Mrs Peterson's failure to engage with the NMC in any meaningful way.

The panel noted SAN-3 (last updated 28/01/2026) which states:

> '*Consider the professional's insight and attitude to addressing the concerns, and whether it is realistically possible that these will change positively during*

the suspension period. If it is unlikely the professional will try to address the concerns, there may not be appropriate for them to be suspended in the hopes that they will eventually return to practice.'

As outlined above, Mrs Peterson has failed to engage, and has provided no insight, remorse, apologies, or any indication that she takes responsibility for her actions. Therefore, the panel is unable to be satisfied that there is a realistic prospect that the behaviours will change positively during a period of suspension.

The panel also noted, in SAN-3, that:

'Professionals are under an obligation to cooperate with their regulator. Where professionals have failed to engage with the fitness to practise process, it wont usually be appropriate to use a suspension order as a means of giving them a "last chance" to engage, reflect, or show insight."

The panel was of the view that Mrs Peterson has clearly failed to meet the above criteria.

In addition, the panel noted that the misconduct is very serious in this case. Mrs Peterson, on multiple occasions and over an extended period of time, behaved in an emotionally and verbally abusive manner toward Child B. This behaviour included: shouting, screaming, and swearing at Child B, telling Child B that she did not belong in the family home, telling Child B that her carer found her annoying and did not like her, allowed others to tell Child B to leave the room when the family was present, allowed others to call Child B names, called Child B 'damaged', and compared Child B to her mother, with whom she had a complex relationship. This seriousness is exacerbated by Child B's vulnerabilities stemming from her complicated family background.

Therefore, the panel determined that a suspension order would not be sufficient to uphold public confidence in the profession and maintain professional standards due to the seriousness and nature of the facts found proved, Mrs Peterson's lack of

engagement, and the potential deep-seated attitudinal concerns which may be present. Further, given Mrs Peterson's lack of engagement, no insight, and lack of remorse, the panel considered that there is no realistic possibility that she would address the concerns to such a level where she could return to practise safely.

In this particular case, the panel determined that a suspension order would not be a sufficient, appropriate or proportionate sanction.

In considering a striking-off order, the panel had regard to the SAN-4. The panel determined that this case falls within the definition of being a '*highest risk case'*.

The panel had regard to the following considerations as set out in the NMC Guidance SAN-2e (last updated 28/01/2026):

- *Do the charges found proved raise fundamental questions about their professionalism?*
- *Can public confidence in the profession be maintained if the professional is not removed from the Register?*
- *Is there any amount of insight and reflection which could keep people receiving care and members of the public safe, maintain public confidence in the profession, and uphold professional standards?*
- *Is there a realistic prospect that, after suspension, the professional will have gained insight and strengthened their practice such that the risk they pose will have reduced?*

The panel found that the charges found proved do raise fundamental questions around Mrs Peterson's professionalism, namely her treatment of children and her behaviour in a position of trust. Mrs Peterson has not provided any evidence to suggest that she has addressed or mitigated these concerns in any way.

The panel was of the view that public confidence would not be maintained if Mrs Peterson were not removed from the register, in light of her disengagement with the NMC and the seriousness of the charges found proved, which involved a 10-year-old vulnerable child in Mrs Peterson's foster care. The panel took into account that there

is no evidence before it to suggest that, if Mrs Peterson were temporarily suspended, she would engage with the NMC and realistically gain insight and reflection to reduce the risk of harm and meet the public interest.

The panel was of the view that the findings in this particular case demonstrate that Mrs Peterson's actions were very serious, and to allow her to continue practising would not protect the public and would undermine public confidence in the profession and in the NMC as a regulatory body.

In light of all the above, the panel determined that Mrs Peterson's actions were significant departures from the standards expected of a registered nurse, and are fundamentally incompatible with her remaining on the register.

Balancing all of these factors and after taking into account all the evidence before it during this case, the panel determined that the appropriate and proportionate sanction is that of a striking-off order. Having regard to the effect of Mrs Peterson's actions in bringing the profession into disrepute by adversely affecting the public's view of how a registered nurse should conduct herself, the panel has concluded that nothing short of this would be sufficient in this case.

The panel considered that this order was necessary to mark the importance of maintaining public confidence in the profession, and to send to the public and the profession a clear message about the standard of behaviour required of a registered nurse.

This will be confirmed to Mrs Peterson in writing.

Submissions on Interim order

As the striking-off order cannot take effect until the end of the 28-day appeal period, the panel may consider whether an interim order is required in the specific circumstances of this case. The panel may only make an interim order if it is satisfied

that it is necessary for the protection of the public, is otherwise in the public interest, or in Mrs Peterson's own interests until the striking-off sanction takes effect.

Mr Choudhury submitted that there is a mandatory 28-day appeal period before the striking off order can come into effect, and should there be an appeal, this period may take longer. He submitted that, as the panel has identified public protection and public interest concerns, an interim suspension order should be imposed to protect the public and meet the public interest during any period of appeal.

Mr Choudhury submitted that an interim suspension order is the most appropriate and necessary order, in light of the panel's findings and reasonings for imposing a striking off order.

The panel accepted the advice of the legal assessor.

Decision and reasons on interim order

The panel was satisfied that an interim order is necessary for the protection of the public and is otherwise in the public interest. The panel had regard to the seriousness of the facts found proved and the reasons set out in its decision for the substantive order in reaching the decision to impose an interim order.

The panel concluded that an interim conditions of practice order would not be appropriate or proportionate in this case, due to the reasons already identified in the panel's determination for imposing the substantive order. The panel therefore imposed an interim suspension order for a period of 18 months. It determined that an interim suspension order is necessary, appropriate, and proportionate in order to protect the public and meet the public interest during any period of appeal.

If no appeal is made, then the interim suspension order will be replaced by the striking off order 28 days after Mrs Peterson is sent the decision of this hearing in writing.

That concludes this determination.