

Here are some points that you need to consider. You should have included all of these in your reflective activity.

- Your action in responding to Jenny's private message and agreeing to meet her in this situation indicates that you do not have a clear understanding of professional boundaries. Although Jenny is no longer in your direct care and support, you and your organisation may still have statutory responsibilities towards her. By forming this relationship with Jenny, you could place yourself in a conflict of interest. For example, what would happen if she disclosed something to you as a friend and asked you to keep it confidential but you felt you should pass on to a worker?
- If you are concerned that she may be feeling lonely and not coping, you should share this with her care manager rather than agree to meet Jenny. You may not be aware of the plan of care and all the support that is being given to Jenny, so your actions could actually undermine work that is already being done with her.
- When you met with Jenny, her behaviour indicated to you that she was at greater risk of harm because she was not coping so you were right to contact her care manager. This will enable Jenny to get the appropriate support.
- However, you are likely to be asked by your manager to explain why you did not tell the care manager about your contact with Jenny before now, particularly as you had arranged to meet her outwith work. It could be regarded that you are now trying to cover your back because the situation is becoming more serious and your social media relationship with Jenny might be discovered anyway.
- Your judgement and suitability to be a social service worker could be called into question as you have shown that you do not have a clear understanding about professional boundaries. You are placing yourself at risk of breaching the SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers. The Code states that you must not form inappropriate relationships with people using services, so you could find yourself subject to an investigation regarding your relationship with Jenny.
- Now that the photograph is now published in social media, this could not only affect your reputation but also the reputation of your colleagues and employer. As you are accountable for your actions, your employer might take disciplinary action against you and your actions may be investigated by the SSSC.
- As you met Jenny in your own time, outside of work, you might think that has nothing to do with your employer or the SSSC. However, the SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers states that you must not behave in a way outside of work that calls into question your suitability to be a social service worker. So, you could still find that your actions are investigated.

When you received the initial friends request from Jenny, the right thing to do was to not to respond to it and to contact her care manager right away.