

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

- By making your manager aware of the situation you have done the right thing. It was right to highlight the potential conflict of interest and professional boundaries issues. However, you should have done this when you first learned colleagues were involved with Kay's case.
- You made a serious mistake when you accessed Kay's records on the social work database without authorisation or legitimate reason. Even though you have now done the right thing, you must take responsibility for your error.
- You should revisit the SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers. It is essential that you understand and comply with the Code. All social service workers are expected to respect confidential information. You must promptly declare issues that might create conflicts of interest and make sure these do not influence your judgement or practice.
- Make sure you know and comply with your employer's policies on confidentiality. Appreciate that people who use services have the right to expect they will have their privacy and confidentiality upheld by social service workers in whom they and the public place their trust and confidence.
- All social service workers must be able to explain and account for their practice. It is important to communicate with colleagues and people who use services in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way.
- You must recognise the power that comes from your work with people who use services and the community and use this responsibly. You are expected to respect and maintain the dignity and privacy of people who use services. A breach of confidentiality relating to people who use services may put them at risk of harm.
- You need to act in a way that demonstrates you are trustworthy and reliable. Through your actions you earn the trust of colleagues, people who use services and the public. A failure to comply with guidelines on confidentiality constitutes a breach of trust.
- You are now doing the right thing but if you had not it could have called into question your suitability to be a registered social worker. An investigation by your employer or the SSSC may have resulted in disciplinary action and even the loss of your eligibility to remain on the SSSC register. You may still be questioned about what has happened and expected to take action to address your mistakes.

When you first learned colleagues in your service were involved with your cousin's family the right thing to do was to make your manager aware and highlight the potential conflict of interest and professional boundaries issues.