



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## Cases of Most Concern Protocol

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## Document Control Information

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Version 1	September 2022	Cases of Most Concern Protocol – first version.
Version 1.2	October 2022	Clarified email address for sending completed forms, updated flowchart.

*Any questions or concerns about the contents of this policy should be raised with the Quality Assurance and Policy Team via email at: [ImpactAndInspectionTeam@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:ImpactAndInspectionTeam@wokingham.gov.uk).*

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## Introduction

The upward sharing of cases that are of “most concern” to us is an integral component of our approach to safeguarding in Wokingham. An effective protocol for sharing these types of cases ensures an appropriate level of leadership oversight of our most vulnerable children. It also promotes a collective understanding of our vulnerabilities as an organisation. Ultimately, it means that our management and mitigation of risk is a shared responsibility.

This document provides a brief overview of our approach to identifying the cases that we deem to be of most concern, as well as what we will do in response to these cases.

## Identifying a Case of Most Concern

The definition of what should constitute a case of most concern is not fixed. Consideration will be given to both the unique circumstances of the child involved, as well the impact that our intervention is having on that child. As a general guide, cases will typically involve situations where there are significant and current risks to a child’s welfare, which are not reducing or being mitigated by our current levels of intervention.

There are a variety of reasons that could lead to a case meeting this criteria, however, the below provides a (non-exhaustive) list of the types of risks that can often be a feature. These fall into two categories, Category A (Risk to the child) and Category B (Organisational risks). Some cases might fall into both categories.

### Category A - Risks to child

- Children who are at a high risk of criminal or sexual exploitation (CSE), gang affiliation, radicalisation, forced marriage or female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Children within tier 4 psychiatric adolescent provision or secure accommodation.
- Children with a high level of self-harming behaviour, the effects of which are likely to be life-changing
- Children in distance placements who are perceived as not being settled.
- Children subject to Section 38 Care Orders who are placed with parents.
- Children assessed to be at risk of significant harm, but where we have been unable to secure the right care plan
- Any serious and significant injury to a child or unexpected and unexplained death of a child.

### Category B - Organisational risks

- Any case which is likely to attract media attention
- Any case where there is a reputational issue or risk to Wokingham Borough Council
- Cases which are likely to require high-cost packages
- Any case where there is risk of judicial review, or threat of costs - such as those where breaches of human rights are alleged.
- Any complaints that are referred to the Ombudsman
- Cases where there is significant multi-agency disagreement about the child’s plan and/or its implementation
- Cases where a child (under 16) is placed in an unregulated placement

It is important to note that almost all children across our collective caseload will pose some level of concern to us at some point - after all, Children’s Services should not be involved in a child or family’s life if there are no presenting issues or risks. However, the purpose of this protocol is to

provide a particular focus on the children who are not only experiencing a heightened level of risk at that point in time, but also to identify those who do not fit - or are not responding to - traditional social work methods or interventions. As such, and as indicated by the examples listed under Category A, this can very often include those at risk of factors from *outside* of the home.

It is our intention that the list will help us to review these children and ensure that our leadership team are doing all that can be done to support practitioners with these challenging cases, which often require a large and complex multi-agency response.

## How is the list updated and maintained?

The list of cases of most concern is very much a live document, which is under continuous review and scrutiny. The Director of Children's Service and Assistant Director for Social Care and Early Help will regularly discuss the list and may add or remove a case at any point. The list is also a standing item for review at all Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings.

When a case is added to the list, it is the responsibility of the Service Manager to liaise with relevant colleagues to collate a succinct case narrative, which includes the relevant details about the case. (See *What information is held on the list?* Below for more details). This case summary will need to be emailed to [childrenservicescasesofconcern@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:childrenservicescasesofconcern@wokingham.gov.uk). The case will be then discussed at the next available SMT meeting, to ensure that there is management oversight and to agree if any action is needed by the leadership team.

Where a Service Manager feels that a case should be removed from the list, they must provide an update to the next available SMT meeting, evidencing that the previously identified risk is now being managed, or has been addressed.

## What information is held on the list?

When a case is added to the list of Cases of most Concern, the following information is required:

- a. Case ID
- b. Child's names(s)
- c. Date of birth and ethnicity
- d. Whether or not there is an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- e. Legal/case status
- f. Date added to list
- g. Presenting Risks
- h. Team responsible for operational delivery and oversight
- i. Multi-agency risk management plan (brief details – not verbatim)
- j. Likely consequences of a failure to manage the risk for the child, the family and/or the staff and the department.

## What happens when a case is identified and added to the list?

- Social Workers can raise any child or young person that they feel is of concern with their line managers at any point. An Independent Reviewing Officer, Child Protection Chair or any other Children Service's Practitioner may also raise a child for inclusion on the list, and when doing so will need to make contact with the social worker and their line manager in the first instance, to request that the child is considered for inclusion.

- The social worker and supervisor will then discuss the case with the Team Manager. The discussion will be recorded on a case note on the child's file and if it is agreed that the criteria is met, a [Case of Note and Concern Form](#) will be completed and sent to all Service Managers for consideration, (including the Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards).

The Independent Reviewing Officer or Child Protection Chair for the child will also need to be notified at this point.

In addition to the form being submitted by email to the Service Manager group, supplementary discussions may also be organised by the Team Manager with the lead Service Manager, to ensure that the child's current plan and circumstances are clearly understood.

- Following the submission of a [Case of Note and Concern Form](#), the Team Manager will need to consider increasing the frequency of supervision for the case. Consideration should also be given to implementing 3-way supervision, as well as the possibility of incorporating Multi-Agency Group Supervision, Case Formulation, or Systemic Discussion. **Appropriate levels of oversight are maintained until the risk has diminished.**
- Upon receipt of the [Case of Note and Concern Form](#), the lead Service Manager adds Management Oversight and a copy of the form to the child's file. A copy of the form is also sent to the Assistant Director for Social Care and Early Help for their consideration.
  - Completed **Case of Note and Concern Forms** should be sent to:  
[childrenservicescasesofconcern@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:childrenservicescasesofconcern@wokingham.gov.uk).
- At this point the case is formally added to the list of cases of concern, and along with any other cases on the list, is subject to review by the SMT group on at least a monthly basis. The latest list is prepared and circulated to all Service Managers (including QAST) at least 5 working days before each SMT meeting.
- Following each review of the case by the SMT group, relevant oversight/direction is added to the child's file and is discussed with the operational team. Assistant Director oversight is added to Mosaic where required.
- For those cases where there is multi agency disagreement, the case will be escalated at the appropriate level in accordance with the [BWSCP Escalation Policy](#).
- Should a Service Manager feel that a case should be removed from the list, they must provide an update to the next available SMT meeting, evidencing that the previously identified risk is now being managed or has been addressed. With the agreement of the Assistant Director for Social Care and Early Help, the case is then removed.

## Case of Concern Process Flow Chart

