



Protocol to Address Concerns about Provider

Protecting children from harm is at the heart of Nottingham City Council vision. The aim of the Placement Service is to provide safe, high quality, timely placements for children and young people which comply with the Ofsted Quality Standards and afford opportunity whereby children realise their full potential. As a service we endeavour to ensure the provision continues to meet the child's needs, provides good quality care & value for money and continues to meet the child's identified needs and promote positive outcomes.

However, in an instance in which a provider demonstrates a decline in quality, concerns over performance or business stability; it is the responsibility of the managing Contracts Officer and Quality Assurance Officer to follow a specific protocol to ensure the quality is maintained and poor performance is robustly and consistently monitored. This document sets out the process to be followed when any child is in a placement in which concerns have been raised. This might be as a result of Ofsted restricting accommodation, an inadequate or requires improvement judgement and information received from EMRCF, a social worker, IRO, child or other person. Nottingham City Council endeavours to ensure a clear and transparent protocol to guarantee the child remains front and for most when investigating areas of concern.

How we will do this.

- Act immediately on any information that suggests the welfare of children is not safeguarded.
- Work in accordance with relevant legislation, policy and guidance.
- Take action to raise standards and improve lives.
- Keep accurate records and an audit trail of decision-making.
- Remain consistent in our approach.
- Regularly review progress of a case.
- Revise our approach as appropriate.

We consider the protection of children and risks to their safety when we are deciding on action to be taken. We also ensure that the action we take is proportionate to the risk involved. We consider whether the provider has understood the issue, has sufficient knowledge about their responsibilities and demonstrates a willingness to put things right.

We may take emergency action, including removing children from placement or suspending a provider, if:

- We have evidence to show that any child in placement is at risk of suffering significant harm
- Any action agreed by the provider is unlikely to reduce the risk of significant harm to the child with immediate effect



The Process

1. Concerns received (from the social worker, other professional, child, family, etc) .
2. Log concerns in the individual providers file and on the Issues Log and inform the Placements Service Manager.
3. Inform the child's allocated Social Worker to gain clarity on concerns, establish the level of concern and consider if it is in the young person's best interests to remain in the placement. If there is an immediate or foreseeable risk that should the young person remain in placement, they are at risk of harm, consider what action is required to safeguard the child. If moving a child from placement, liaison must be undertaken with the provider (where appropriate) and / or Placement Officers to ensure an alternative placement is identified.
4. If the concern relates to an individual working for the organisation, inform the LADO so a Strategy Meeting can be considered / arranged.
5. Gather evidence regarding the concerns raised from social care, IRO and depending on the suitability, the young person in placement. Also ensure you have a copy of the most recent Ofsted inspection, any previous concerns raised about the provider and any action the Provider has taken to remedy these weaknesses.
6. Complete the protocol below to address concerns and advise all professionals involved in the care of the child, including the Quality Assurance Officer.
7. Raise concerns with provider, either face to face or electronically depending on the appropriateness and level of urgency.
8. Consider response from provider and determine if concerns have a satisfactory outcome.
9. Identify when the child / young person is next booked into Placement Panel and consider the need for bringing this forward.
10. Consider the need for the Quality Assurance Officer to complete an unannounced Quality Assurance, dependent on the date of the last visit, the outcome of this and the seriousness of the concerns. If a visit is undertaken, this should include specific examination of the concerns highlighted talking to the child(ren) in placement.
11. Consider sharing the concerns with the East Midlands Regional Childrens Framework and Ofsted, along with other local authorities who have children placed with the provider.

Response from Provider is satisfactory

- Log outcome of investigation in Issues Log and gain sign off from Service Manager, Anne Partington.
- Upload report to Castle, save a copy to Providers folder and re-iterate conclusion of investigation on CareFirst / Liquid Logic.
- Advise provider and all professionals involved that the outcome of the investigation was satisfactory.



Response from Provider is unsatisfactory

Advise the Provider formally that their response to the concerns remain unsatisfactory and arrange a provider meeting within 2 weeks. During the meeting, outline a clear and comprehensive action plan for the Provider to rectify the concerns raised and identify a date in which this plan will be reviewed. Share the plan of action with the allocated Social Worker, IRO and subsequent Social Care Service Manager.

If concerns remain following the provider meeting, liaise with the Placements Service Manager and agree initiation of the process to consider suspending a provider from use.

Consideration of Suspending a Provider from Use:

A formal investigation will only come into effect should the provider demonstrate a lack of understanding of the concerns outlined within the Plan of Action; despite previous communication and provider meetings; and / or the provider exhibits an unwillingness to address the issues to a satisfactory end; and / or the concern is significant (eg death of a child in care; serious allegations of harm; provision considered inadequate by Ofsted)

1. Compile a comprehensive report outlining the details of the concerns; the action plan; any progress made and outstanding concerns / risks. Within the report clearly outline the reasons why it is felt that it is no longer safe to continue utilising the provider, incorporate evidence of this conclusion and include a clear timescale and list of actions should the provider wish to be re-considered. The latest quality assurance report should be included, along with the views of the Social Worker & Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).
2. The Placements Service Manager should add comments and signature to the report prior to it being passed to the following people for decision:
 - a. Head of Contracting & Procurement
 - b. Head of Children In Care
 - c. Director of Social Care
3. The decision and the reasoning behind it will be confirmed to the provider in writing within ten working days (unless there are exceptional circumstances that make this not possible). This should include the following information:
 - a. Proposed length of suspension
 - b. Action required prior to consideration of re instating a provider
4. Inform East Midland Regional Childrens Framework team of any decision to suspend and consider informing Ofsted.

Re-instating a suspended provider

Before the Local Authority re-instates a provider on to the distribution list, the Placements Service Quality Assurance Officer is to complete an unannounced Quality Assurance visit, specifically to address the concerns leading to the Provision's suspension. During this visit, the Quality



Assurance Officer is to see all related evidence that demonstrates the action the provider has taken and the outcomes of this.

Following this, a follow up report a report detailing the action undertaken, the outcome of this and recommendations from the Placements Service should be compiled, authorised by the Service Manager and sent to the Heads of Service & Directors named above for decision. This report should include any proposed Contract Management arrangements to be undertaken if the provider is re-instated. This decision will be confirmed in writing to the provider within 10 working days.



Recording Concerns

This protocol is to be used in every instance in which a concern has been raised regarding an external provider.

Name & Address of Provider		Date concerns reported	
How the Local Authority was made aware of the concern?	<i>ie. Name & Contact Number of Informant</i>	CareFirst ID of child in placement	
Provide an overview of concerns being reported.			
Current Ofsted report & judgement and review any requirements / recommendations	Details, including grading, date, issues.		
Date of last Nottingham City Council quality assurance visit, overview of report / issues identified.			
Who has been made aware of the concerns (inc. date this was completed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Corporate Director of Children and Families ▫ Director of Procurement and Commissioning ▫ Head of Contracting & Procurement ▫ Placement Service Manager ▫ Director of Social Care ▫ Head of Children’s Social Care / Children in Care ▫ Social Care Team (directly responsible for the child or young person in placement) SW, TM and SM 		



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Looked After Police Officer ▫ Local Authorities who also have children placed in the provision. 		
Is a provider meeting required?	YES	NO	Date of Provider Meeting
Outcome of Provider Meeting			
What actions / recommendations have been identified to rectify the concerns? Does Ofsted, EMRF or other LA's who have children placed, require notification of concern? (If so, date completed)			
Assess the appropriateness of the young person remaining in the placement.	<i>ie. Seek view of Social Worker</i>		
Date update shared with all relevant professionals		Concerns Review Date	
Date record was uploaded to Castle		Flag as Red Provider – RAG Framework	
Date of Placement Panel			
Date & signature - Officer completing Protocol		Date & signature - Service Manager	