

### **Explanatory Note : Low Level Concerns**

The term **low-level concern** is frequently understood to relate to a situation within a family which does not involve a child protection concern and which with early support can be prevented from developing into a more serious concern. However, in England, statutory guidance for schools was introduced in 2021 which explicitly required them to have a low level concerns policy. This defined a low level concern as being “any concern, no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ that an adult working for an organisation may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with their code of conduct including inappropriate conduct outside of work.”

The use of the term in this respect has not only been recognised within education settings in England but is also referenced prominently in the likes of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and the Whyte Review (British Gymnastics).

Low level concerns may arise as a result of naivety, be accidental or unintentional, be the result of misinformed action, a failure to follow procedures, a lack of training or, more rarely, deliberate abuse.

The intention of any low-level concerns policy is to promote a safer culture within an organisation by ensuring that all allegations against staff are recorded and dealt with appropriately, promoting an openness where concerning and problematic behaviour is identified early, minimising the risk of abuse.

This is a developing approach to whole organisation child wellbeing and protection and it is recognised that the use of the term in this manner is still relatively under-developed within Scotland at the current time.