

Neutral Citation Number: [2026] EWHC 1606 (Fam)

Case No: LV26C50313

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
FAMILY DIVISION

Royal Courts of Justice
Strand, London, WC2A 2LL

Date: 26/06/2026

Before :

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE HAYDEN

- -

Between :

Cheshire East Borough Council

Applicant

- and -

(1) M

(2) F

(3) T

(4) A

(Through their Children's Guardian)

Respondents

- -

Cheshire East Borough Council v M and Others (Discharge of Interim Care Orders)

- -

Kate Burnell KC and Peta Harrison (instructed by **Cheshire East**) for the **Applicant**
Darren Howe KC and Jo Mallon (instructed by **Bindmans LLP**) for the **First Respondent**
Lorraine Cavanagh KC and Emma Greenhalgh (instructed by **Lord, Cox & Salt LLP**) for the **Third and Fourth Respondents**

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Approved Judgment

.....

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE HAYDEN

This judgment was delivered in private. The judge has given leave for this version of the judgment to be published on condition that (irrespective of what is contained in the judgment) in any published version of the judgment the anonymity of the children and members of their family must be strictly preserved. All persons, including representatives of the media, must ensure that this condition is strictly complied with. Failure to do so will be a contempt of court.

Mr. Justice Hayden :

1. This is an application to discharge Interim Care Orders, dated 12th May 2026, granted by HHJ Parker, the Designated Family Judge for Cheshire and Merseyside. It concerns two children, T, a girl, and A, a boy, both approaching their teenage years. The applications arose in one of a series of linked cases arising from a large-scale ongoing police investigation. As a result of that investigation, information was presented to the Local Authority, by Cheshire Police, concerning allegations of sexual abuse, modern slavery, human trafficking, violence, neglect, underage marriage and sexual activity, centred at Webb House, Crewe, Cheshire.

2. On 29th April 2026, Cheshire Police raided three addresses: Webb House and two further properties in and around Crewe. All three properties are linked to the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light (AROPL). A significant number of adults and children (more than 100) were living at Webb House; others present at the time of the police raid were followers of AROPL who attended Webb House but lived elsewhere.

3. Ten individuals were arrested by Cheshire Police at the time of the raid, following allegations of sexual offences, trafficking and modern slavery. It is understood that two others have subsequently been arrested. All twelve individuals have since been released on bail under further investigation. Slavery Trafficking Risk Orders (STROs) were also made in relation to six of the original ten arrested (it is unclear whether STROs were made in respect of the additional two people arrested). The bail conditions for all ten individuals originally arrested (and the STROs for the six who are subject to them) prohibit contact between them and any person under the age of 18, except where supervised by the Local Authority. I am unaware whether, or to what extent, this bail condition is being monitored.

4. AROPL has been subject to police investigation within this jurisdiction and in Sweden. It is understood that AROPL has been strongly criticised as an organisation in Sweden. Swedish and German police are liaising with Cheshire Police, and the Swedish Police have travelled to this jurisdiction as part of the investigation.

5. The information shared by Cheshire Police, which of necessity remains limited at present, is that there is evidence from different intelligence sources, within and outside this jurisdiction, to suggest that there are harmful and illegal activities within Webb House, perpetrated by adults and which by their nature place the children in Webb House at risk of 'significant harm'.

6. The allegations as presently presented by the Local Authority, via the police, advance a litany of behaviours. I emphasise that the position is fluid, and I recognise will, at the appropriate point, require to be scrutinised closely. As presently constructed, these behaviours are characterised as communal activity in which adults are involved either proactively or by passive acquiescence. Which adults are perpetrators and which are not is for the future, contingent upon which findings, if any, are established. All this is familiar terrain in care proceedings. Paradigmatically, the investigation is in the context of a smaller domestic dwelling, but the approach is equally apposite in the context of communal living. Thus, the pervasive nature of these allegations, on the present information, inevitably extends to all the adults present at the three addresses at the time of the raid, and it follows, in the light of the allegations, that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the children of each of those adults must be at risk of significant harm. The Local Authority sets these behaviours out in these terms:

   (i) Exposure to criminal behaviour including sexual harm, modern slavery and human trafficking;
   (ii) Risks of / exposure to forced marriage;
   (iii) Inappropriate living conditions – there are cameras all over the property, children are separated from their parents sleeping in dorm type rooms. Home conditions have been observed to be neglectful with dirty bedding and a lack of bedding for a number of beds / cots;
   (iv) Concerns regarding the educational provision for the children – the majority of the children are home schooled via computer screens;
   (v) Lack of appropriate medical care – one of the leading figures within Webb House is believed to have been providing medical checks and medical care whilst being unregistered with the GMC having previously been a registered and licensed doctor;
   (vi) Allegations of sexually inappropriate behaviour;

(vii) Individuals being subject to control and coercion;

(viii) A quantity of knives were recovered during the police raid on the property along with a sharps bin (there have been allegations that the former doctor has injected children at Webb House); and

(ix) Allegations of violence within AROPL.

7. The raid on Webb House was, by any standards, extensive. It involved the attendance of 500 police officers and a great many police vehicles. Following the raid, accommodation had to be found for the residents and the children. The Local Authority has supported families to secure temporary accommodation and / or to approve temporary living arrangements where families have identified properties themselves. Several families are residing in temporary accommodation, whether with wider family, in private rented accommodation or in shared accommodation.

8. Cheshire Police have advised the Local Authority that they consider the children should not return to Webb House. Webb House was 'handed back' to AROPL by the police on Sunday, 3rd May 2026. The Local Authority wrote to families to inform them that they did not support the return of any children to Webb House. Adults without children have returned to Webb House. There have been several protests outside the property, resulting in arrests, as recently as 31st May 2026 / 1st June 2026. These protests are comprised of members of the public expressing opposition to the presence of the AROPL community. Tension in the local community, or at least amongst some sections of it, appears to be running high.

9. The Local Authority has issued proceedings in relation to the families based on the information shared by Cheshire Police. This concerns a very significant number of children. The Local Authority has seen only limited material in the possession of Cheshire Police as, for the avoidance of doubt, has the Court. Police Disclosure Orders have not yet been made, save for the relatively limited police disclosure directed by HHJ Parker on 29th May 2026. At present, the Cheshire Police are asserting Public Interest Immunity, in respect of the case documentation. At some point, that will change. The information relied upon by the Local Authority has been disclosed at meetings with Cheshire Police and is set out in the statement of DI Eleanor Atkinson,

dated 6th May 2026. I have been told that there has been close multi agency working at local and national levels, including governmental ministerial briefings. I find it necessary to state that the Court plays no part in any of this. The Court process is entirely independent of the functioning of the State at all and any levels.

10. It is also important to note that many of the adult parties across the linked cases have multiple nationalities and hold more than one passport. Cheshire Police have indicated to the Local Authority that they consider that there is a risk arising from on notice applications. The concern relates to public order issues and flight risks. Cheshire Police are concerned about families dispersing either within the jurisdiction or outside it. Against this backdrop, the Local Authority considered that there was an urgent need for them to share parental responsibility for the children, given the level of risk identified by the police operation. All the children in the linked cases, 41 in total, have been made subject to Interim Orders, either by HHJ Parker or Knowles J, the Family Presider for the Northern Circuit. The Local Authority continues to work to identify which cases can effectively be linked at hearing and, inevitably, which ones cannot. At risk of understatement, this is not an easy task.

11. During the last two weeks, several applications have been made to discharge ICOs. On 2nd June 2026, at the request of the President of the Family Division, I took on the role as Lead Judge in these cases. Accordingly, the applications have been listed before me.

12. It has become very clear that, at this point, there can be no legitimate basis upon which to seek to discharge the Interim Orders, not least because there has been no or no significant basis upon which to reevaluate the risk to the children. This much is self-evident from the above history. The position may very well change, in relation to some of the children, as the police investigation proceeds and as further information is disclosed to this Court. That time has not yet come, nor is it in immediate prospect. The overwhelming majority of the children remain cared for by a parent or within their extended families. The sharing of parental responsibility reflects the nature and ambit of the risk identified above. Further, as the children were, at least ostensibly, being cared for by their parents at Webb House, the attributory criteria in Section 31(2) are also met on the prospective interim basis.

13. M's statement in this application contains the following assertions:

> *"Furthermore, the social worker says in the updating statement "their lived experience continues to reflect the influence of the wider group, including shared living arrangements and ongoing contact with the same individuals." I feel discriminated against because of our lifestyle. I wish to place on record that our communal living arrangement is an integral manifestation of our religious belief. We choose to live together and share resources. Our children choose to be together, have grown up together and love being together. I remain unclear how this can be used against me and being dictated how I am to live my life and who is able to live with me. I would add that neither of the women I live with are on the list of people accused or have proven to be any danger to children. The social worker appears to treat our religious communal lifestyle as inherently harmful to children. I do not agree."*

14. I regard this paragraph, the tone of which is reflected more broadly in the body of the statement, as tendentious and manipulative. I emphasise that I do not see this case, at least at this stage, as being in any way to do with religion. Further, I am satisfied that neither the police nor the Local Authority advance such a case. Moreover, there is no judgment being made on *"communal living"*. I repeat, the focus is on the alleged harm to the children living at Webb House arising from the allegations of sexual abuse, modern slavery, human trafficking, violence, neglect, underage marriage and sexual activity. Religion is not on that list. A similar effort to conflate the two issues (criminality and religion) was adopted in the proceedings in Sweden where it was roundly rejected at first instance and confirmed by their Court of Appeal.

The Legal Framework

15. It is necessary to revisit some basic legal principles. Section 31(2) of the Children Act 1989 provides:

> *"A court may only make a care order or a supervision order if it is satisfied -*
>
> *(a) that the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and (b) that the harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to -*

> *(i) the care given to the child, or likely to be given to him if the order were not made, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him; or*
>
> *(ii) the child's being beyond parental control."*

16. In *Re G (Children) (Care Order: Threshold Criteria)* [2001] EWCA Civ 968, Hale LJ, as she then was, made the following observations, which it is necessary to set out in full:

> *"8. The purpose of the threshold is to prevent the state interfering in the upbringing of children simply on the basis that it could do better than the parents. The Review of Child Care Law (1985, HMSO) put it this way, at para 2.13:*
>
> *' . . . "the child is not the child of the state" and it is important in a free society to maintain the rich diversity of lifestyles, which is secured by permitting families a large measure of autonomy in the way in which they bring up their children. This is so even, or perhaps, particularly, in those families who through force of circumstances are in need of help from social services or other agencies. Only where their children are put at unacceptable risk should it be possible compulsorily to intervene. Once such a risk of harm to the child has been shown, however, his interests must clearly predominate.'*
>
> *9. Once the threshold is crossed, the court has to decide what order, if any, to make. In doing so, section 1 of the 1989 Act applies: the child's welfare is the paramount consideration (s 1(1)), a checklist of factors is to be considered in determining his welfare, including the options available to the court (s 1(3)), and the court is not to make any order unless to do so will be better for the child than making none (s 1(5)). It is common ground that the court can take into account all the information available at the date of the hearing in deciding what order to make if the threshold has been crossed: the order is clearly looking to future, and it would be contrary to child's best interests to turn a blind eye to relevant matters occurring after the proceedings began.*
>
> *10. Equally, however, it is common ground that the date at which the threshold has to be crossed is when the local authority first intervened to protect the child: that is, either the date of the application or, if child protection measures (police protection or*

an emergency protection order) have been continuously in place since before then, the date when those began: see Re M (A Minor)(Care Order: Threshold Conditions) [1994] 2 AC 424. In that case, the child's father had murdered the mother. The trial judge found that at the time when the protection process began the child was suffering significant harm, 'in that he has suffered ill-treatment by being permanently deprived of the love and care of his mother when she was murdered in his presence . . . I am also satisfied that if an order were not made the child would be likely to suffer significant harm in that he is a small child with special needs, has no permanent home, and the only person with parental responsibility is the father who is unable to exercise it appropriately . . . ' The Court of Appeal held that the appropriate date was the date of the hearing. By then the child had been in foster care for 16 months and there was nothing to indicate that he was still suffering significant harm or that he was likely to do so as there was a suitable home available with his mother's cousin. The House of Lords allowed the appeal. Lord Templeman put the matter thus, at p 440B to D:

'Restrictions on the right of a local authority to apply for a care order were imposed by section 31 to prevent a local authority interfering too readily with the rights and responsibilities of parents. A local authority cannot apply for a care order unless at the date of the application the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Once the local authority has ground for making the application the court has jurisdiction to grant that application. If between the date of the application and the date of the judgment of the court, circumstances arise which make a care order unnecessary or undesirable, the local authority can withdraw its application for a care order or the court can refuse to make a care order.'

11. Re M was concerned with both the actual and likely harm limbs of section 31(2)(a). Although much of the discussion was directed at when the condition that the child 'is suffering' significant harm must be met, the case also raised the problem of likely harm: by the time of the hearing his father was serving his sentence but alternative loving homes were available with the foster mother or with his mother's cousin. It would be odd indeed if actual and likely harm had to be judged at different dates. Further, the policy considerations are equally strong in each case. Just as it would be odd if the local authority were precluded from obtaining a care order on the ground of actual harm because their own intervention had cured the problem, it

would be odd if a court could make an order based on the likelihood of harm from an immediate return home even though the factual basis for the interim removal had not been proved and the proceedings had taken so long to be heard that a return home would be unsettling for the child. Obviously, if the initial likelihood of harm has been removed or reduced by later events (such as the separation of the mother from an abusive partner) the court may decline to make a care order because it will not be best for the child. By contrast, a local authority may launch proceedings on the basis that a child in local authority accommodation is likely to suffer harm if returned home, because that would be so at date when the application was made.

12. *However, real life is not quite as simple as this. Care cases, like all children cases; look to the future and not the past. Things are changing all the time while the case progresses. The local authority are not required to plead their case at the outset or indeed at all. It is now the practice in many courts to require the local authority before the final hearing to make a clear statement of the facts they wish the court to find and the basis upon which they allege that the threshold is crossed. In my view this should be routine, so that the parents can know the case they have to meet and have a fair opportunity to meet it. The judge lamented the lack of such a statement in this case.*

13. *But it is often the case that measures are taken to protect a child, often in something of an emergency, before anything approaching a full picture has emerged. The question then is the extent to which the local authority can rely upon matters, which have come to light or taken place since the proceedings began. At one end of the spectrum, there will often be <u>information</u> discovered after the relevant date, which throws light on what the facts were at the relevant date. The most obvious examples are further medical evidence about the injuries which promoted removal, new complaints by the child about other forms of abuse within the home or admissions made by the parents. Often these will emerge in the course of expert assessments conducted partly for the purpose of establishing the threshold and partly for the purpose of considering the way forward.*

14. *At other end of spectrum, there may be entirely new <u>events</u> which introduce a completely different risk which did not exist at the relevant date. Examples of this are not so easy to devise: it could be that proceedings are begun because a baby*

> *has suffered injuries which turn out to be completely accidental; unfortunately, the stress and strain of the proceedings has led to one parent leaving home and the complete collapse of the other. More commonly, the removal of the child on the basis of suspicions, which turn out to be unwarranted, may make it harder for the child to return home.*
>
> 15. *In the middle are new events, which may, or may not, be capable of proving that there was a risk of significant harm at the relevant time. Acts of violence occurring while the proceedings are pending might be capable of showing that a risk of such violence existed when the proceedings began. Subsequent neglect or abuse might be capable of showing that such neglect or abuse was likely when the proceedings were brought. This raises more difficult questions because there are obvious dangers of retrospectively validating a concern which was not in fact justified at the time: there may, after all, be other reasons for things to go badly wrong after proceedings are started."*

16. In *Re C (A Child) (Interim Separation)* [2019] EWCA Civ 1998; [2021] FLR 853, Jackson LJ made the following observation, at paragraph 2:

> *"(i) An interim order is inevitably made at a stage when the evidence is incomplete. It should therefore only be made in order to regulate matters that cannot await the final hearing and it is not intended to place any party to the proceedings at an advantage or a disadvantage.*
> *...*
> *(iii) Accordingly, in all cases an order for separation under an interim care order will only be justified where it is both necessary and proportionate. The lower ('reasonable grounds') threshold for an interim care order is not an invitation to make an order that does not satisfy these exacting criteria."*

17. Thus, at this stage, the Local Authority does not have to plead a specific case (for that matter, given the investigative nature of public law care proceedings, 'pleading a case' is itself an inaccurate and maladroit concept). Neither is the Local Authority required to anticipate the likely cogency of the evidence which may emerge from future disclosure. Section 38(2) of the Children Act sets out the interim criteria:

> *"A court shall not make an interim care order or interim supervision order under this section unless it is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the circumstances with respect to the child are as mentioned in section 31(2)."*

18. I am not sure whether the term *"lower bar"* to describe the interim criteria is entirely apposite, though it is widely used in the case law. In fact, as Jackson LJ emphasises, the exercise at the interim stage is a different one. The criteria remain just as exacting, but at this stage, the emphasis is upon whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that they are met, not whether they are met at present. Necessarily, the evidence here is far from complete, the Order made (ICO) is that which is both necessary and proportionate to regulate those issues which require to be addressed now, in order most effectively to protect the subject children. The forensic objective under the interim legal scaffolding is to provide a structured framework for the allegations to be properly investigated in order that evidence can be marshalled, tested, and where necessary, put to the assay in cross-examination at the final hearing. It also provides a basis from which further evidence can be considered, which may enhance, reduce, or completely change the nature of the identified risk of harm. At present, the ABE interviews of some of the children remain ongoing.

19. The proportionality of intervention is evaluated by reference to Section 1(3) of the CA 1989, the *"welfare checklist"*. Here, it requires to be set out:

> *"In the circumstances mentioned in subsection (4), a court shall have regard in particular to —*
>
> *(a)the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned (considered in the light of his age and understanding);*
>
> *(b)his physical, emotional and educational needs;*
>
> *(c)the likely effect on him of any change in his circumstances;*
>
> *(d)his age, sex, background and any characteristics of his which the court considers relevant;*
>
> *(e)any harm which he has suffered or is at risk of suffering;*

> *(f)how capable each of his parents, and any other person in relation to whom the court considers the question to be relevant, is of meeting his needs;*
>
> *(g)the range of powers available to the court under this Act in the proceedings in question."*

20. The applications to discharge the ICOs, made to date, have not engaged, meaningfully, with the welfare checklist. They concentrate, as in this instant case, on seeking to rebut the allegations levelled by the police. The overwhelming majority of the children are, as here, living with a parent or family member. The intervention into their lives is as minimal as it could reasonably be in care proceedings brought against this backdrop. Discharge of the ICO would permit the parents independently to exercise parental rights and responsibilities in circumstances where very serious allegations have been made, and which continue to be investigated. As is clear from the Mother's (M) statement in this case, what is being sought is the speedy return of the children to Webb House. With respect to this and the other applications, that is simply not a sustainable proposition at this point. Some ABE interviews are, as I have said, ongoing and it has not yet been possible to achieve any significant disclosure from the police. I am keeping the timetable for that disclosure in close view, balancing the competing rights and interests which require to be considered. At this point, the circumstances faced by me are very little different from those faced by HHJ Parker. At present, this application to discharge the ICOs is unarguable. Some well-established principles require to be restated:

(i) The objective of an interim order will usually be to 'hold the ring', i.e. maintain a balance which causes the least possible harm to the child, see *Hampshire County Council v S* [1993] 1 FLR; *B v B (Interim Care Order with Grandparents)* [1993] Fam Law 393;

(ii) An Interim Care Order is not a step involving any advanced judgment of the final issue: *Re H (A Child)* [2002] EWCA Civ 1932. It follows that an application to discharge an Interim Care Order cannot become a vehicle to challenge the final issues before the evidence has been properly garnered, this would potentially facilitate tactical or adventitious benefit;

(iii) In circumstances where the Court should refrain from resolving contested finding of fact at an interim stage of the proceedings, the Court may refuse to hear oral evidence: *Re W (Interim Care Order)* [2012] 2 FLR 240, CA; and

(iv) An Interim Care Order may be used as a temporary measure to safeguard the child's welfare whilst sufficient information is gathered to inform a final decision by the Court as to whether a Care Order should be made; the investigative process, as always, will have as its lodestar the avoidance of delay principle: Section 1(2) of the Children Act 1989*; Re G (Interim Care Order Residential Assessment)*[2006] 1 FLR 601 HL.

21. The submission that the criteria for an ICO is not met in this case is misconceived. Similarly, having regard to the nature and gravity of the allegations, the ICOs (I repeat, with the children remaining with M) are entirely proportionate. Having indicated to M's solicitors (by email) that the written application did not, in my judgement, establish a basis to discharge the ICOs, I asked if they wished to file a skeleton argument. Mr. Howe KC and Ms. Mallon took up the invitation and submitted a detailed written argument on very short notice. I am grateful to them both. Their elegant document traversed a broad range of issues, but it has not succeeded in changing what was my preliminary view and now my settled decision.

22. Mr. Howe and Ms. Mallon's document addresses, in some detail, the domestic and Strasbourg jurisprudence relating to faith and religion. They submit that the precepts captured there *"apply equally to belief systems that are not avowedly religious"*. I am not sure that point is correct, but it is not necessary for me to determine it here. Nobody is inviting me to *"weigh one religion against another"*. As I have said, now on a number of occasions, I do not regard myself as concerned with religion at all. No religious group that I am aware of has, as part of its creed, human trafficking, violence, and neglect. These are the issues raised and which in due course I will have to determine.

23. Neither is the police investigation an attack on the religious liberties of the adults. Discharge of the ICOs, under which regime parental responsibility is shared with the Local Authority, would remove a crucial protective shield for the children whilst the investigation is pursued. Further, these Orders also serve to protect the integrity of the

investigation, the desirability of which is likely to be as important for many of the adults as it is for each of the children. Given the size and breadth of this case and the fact that these precepts apply to each of the families involved, I have concluded that the present slew of applications to discharge the Interim Orders, particularly in respect of those children who remain with their families, is misconceived.

24. For this reason, I would actively discourage any further applications to discharge the Interim Orders at this stage. If those acting for a family feel strongly that there are particular circumstances which genuinely bring into question the continuing need for an Interim Order, an application may be made in writing. If it is arguable, it will be allocated an oral hearing. The Local Authority has a large and complex case to manage. It must not be deflected in that task by applications which needlessly take up time, generate inevitable delay, provoke antagonism, and serve to raise the forensic temperature of the case for no meaningful gain. The Court must be vigilant to ensure that this litigation is kept securely on course and in proportionate scope. In investigative proceedings such as these, even where the issues, as here, are inevitably polarising, there is a responsibility, as the very many experienced advocates in this case will appreciate, to ensure that the focus remains unwaveringly on the allegations of significant harm to the subject children. With some diffidence, I would also add that experience shows that a misguided or intentionally disruptive application has an uncanny habit of redounding to the detriment of the Applicant.

25. Following circulation of this judgment, it came to my attention that the Guardian's team had uploaded a Position Statement on the Portal (The Public Law Portal is part of HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) digital reform programme. It provides a centralised digital platform for handling cases brought by local authorities under public law). This had not come to my attention nor to the Local Authority's, despite vigilant monitoring of the Portal by several people. When constructed, the system had not anticipated a case of this magnitude and is ill-equipped to deal with it. In future, all Position Statements and Skeleton Arguments should be sent to my clerk directly, in addition to being uploaded to the Portal. I emphasise that this directive is limited only to these documents.

26. In their Position Statement, Ms. Cavanagh KC and Ms. Greenhalgh submit that there are reasonable grounds to believe that T and A are *"at risk of significant physical and sexual harm arising from living at Webb House which is a site where acts of abuse… are being investigated by the police"*. Both parents, whilst seemingly knowing little of the allegations, strongly refute the truth of them and are eager to return to Webb House. Accompanying the Position Statement are two letters to the judge, one from each of the children. Both children have told me that they would like to go home to Webb House. A told me it was *"great fun"* there and that he is scared to *"get taken away from my parents"*. Ms. Cavanagh and Ms. Greenhalgh link these facts in this way:

> *"The dynamics of the community are not yet fully understood and whether the parents are actors with the freedom to protect their children free from influence by those who lead AROPL and have been arrested and bailed and/or free from imperatives to protect the religion itself. The question of where in the sphere of potential influence the parents sit is unclear at this stage."*

27. As has been said before by many judges and in a variety of ways, evaluation of risk must always be undertaken in the context of the known facts and the identified harm. A low risk of minor harm can be contemplated, but where the degree of potential harm is large, the tolerability of risk shrinks considerably. I reiterate here, the contemplated harm is very serious indeed and until such time as the evidential landscape becomes clearer, the risk of return to Webb House is manifestly too great. The danger of these children being returned if an ICO were not made is, even on the case presented by the parents, far too great and is a risk which could not sensibly be taken. The Guardian has recognised this and opposes the parent's application. In all the circumstances, therefore, I refuse the application to discharge the Interim Care Orders.