



Procedure for resolution of professional disagreement relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Multi-Agency Professional Challenge & Escalation Policy

Introduction

When working with practitioners from other agencies, at times there will be differences of opinion or concerns about professional practice in relation to a child, young person or family. Throughout our work the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is the primary concern, and professional disagreements must not obstruct this.

If you feel that a practitioner, or an agency, is not acting in the best interests of the child, young person or family, you have a responsibility to respectfully challenge the practitioner, or agency, and escalate that concern if resolution is not achieved.

All agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are supported, and know how to appropriately challenge, escalate and resolve intra-agency concerns and challenges about a child or young person's wellbeing and the response to their safeguarding needs.

Learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews nationally and locally continue to highlight a lack of professional challenge between colleagues and between agencies. This is often contributed to by a lack of awareness of, or confidence to use, escalation procedures. Encouraging a culture of appropriate and safe professional challenge (both across and within agencies) will help ensure decision-making and responses to children and families are robust and based on collective knowledge and consideration.

Principles to support resolution

It is important that practitioners feel empowered and supported within their agencies to challenge aspects of practice that they do not feel are in the best interests of the child or young person. When trying to resolve a difference of professional opinion or concern about practice, practitioners should work within the following principles:

The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is paramount, and should they be considered at significant risk the local authority children's social care front door should be contacted.

The child, young person and their family at the centre of all professional discussions.
Ensure that the right conversations are had, with the right people, at the right time, taking place face to face where possible.
Inclusive culture where professional challenge is promoted and an environment for safe professional challenge is fostered.
Challenges must be resolved in a timely manner.
Concerns, actions, responses and outcomes must be recorded.

Context

Difference of opinion, or concerns about practice between practitioners and agencies can arise at any stage in the safeguarding process, and between any of the agencies involved. Examples of professional differences could include:

- Different views about levels of need and intervention e.g., differing opinions about thresholds
- Lack of understanding about roles and responsibilities
- Disagreement regarding decision making and action to be taken e.g., at a strategy meeting, Child Protection Conference or any other professional meeting
- Concern about the lack of action of another professional in relation to a child or family member
- Concern there is a drift or unreasonable delay in progressing actions.
- Disagreement over the provision of services

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure partner agencies have a quick and straightforward means of resolving any concern, in order to safeguard the welfare of children and young people.

Effective working together depends on resolving different professional perspectives to the satisfaction of workers and agencies, and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard children. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional cooperation and joint working to safeguard children. Professional challenge can be positive, it demonstrates that professionals are willing to consider different perspectives and escalate matters that they do not feel will result in positive outcomes for the child or young person. It becomes dysfunctional only if not resolved in a constructive and timely way.

Each agency should have a recording system that can demonstrate the use of professional challenge and escalation at each step, and an entry should be made on the child's record whenever an escalation is raised. The local Safeguarding Partnership will maintain a record of all escalations and outcomes which reach step 3, and at their discretion may request information from partners about the outcomes of escalations at steps 1 and 2 as part of their quality assurance framework.

Professionals resolving disagreements (Day 1-2)

Most disagreements can be resolved between professionals by having a conversation about the reasons for the difference of opinion and without having to escalate the matter further. The matter should be recorded within each agency on the child's record.

The **discussion should take place as soon as possible, and within 48 hours of the concern arising**. If the professional with who the challenge should be raised is away, then the concern must be raised with the immediate line manager.

If the matter remains unresolved, it is the individual's responsibility to notify their line manager who should then progress step 1.

Step 1: Line Manager to Line Manager (Day 3-7)

Line Manager's should seek resolution within 5 working days of being notified of the escalation. Timescales should be based on risk assessment and if a child is deemed to be at risk of harm, then resolution must be attempted as soon as possible between the managers.

Where an acceptable resolution is reached the line manager receiving the escalation will confirm the agreed outcome and how any outstanding issues will be addressed. This must be documented, in writing to their counterpart. The managers must also ensure that the workers involved in the initial concern are made aware of the outcome.

If the manager with whom the challenge should be raised is away, then the concern must be brought to the attention of their equivalent, or their immediate line manager, in order to progress resolution.

Step 2: Designated Safeguarding Leads (Day 8-13)

If line managers are unable to resolve the concerns, they must be escalated to the agencies Designated Safeguarding Lead. They will then seek resolution with their equivalent and a record of the challenge and outcome recorded on the child's record. The outcome of the challenge should also be communicated to the line managers who were involved at step 2.

It is often the case that Line Managers in education and health settings (including early years, schools, colleges, general practice, etc.) also hold the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead, meaning they are already involved at Step 2. Where this occurs, the Line Manager / Designated Safeguarding Lead should seek support from the following at Step 3:

- Early Years – Local Authority Early Years team
- Schools – Safeguarding Children in Education Team (SCiE)
- College - Safeguarding Children in Education Team (SCiE)
- General Practice – Named Doctor
- Hospital Settings – Designated Doctor or Designated Nurse

For a full list of Designated Safeguarding Leads refer to Appendix B.

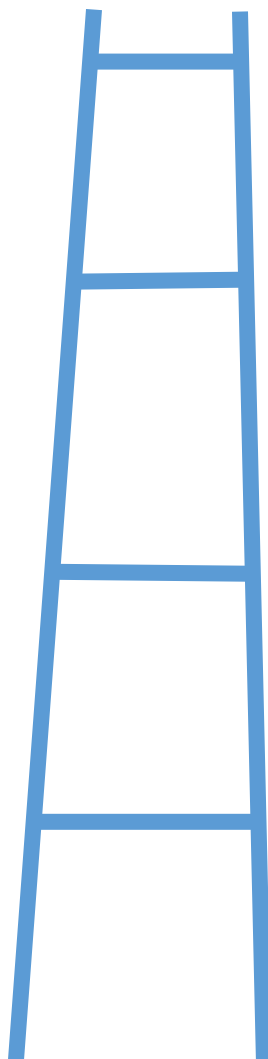
Step 3: Delegated Safeguarding Partners (Day 14-19)

In circumstances where the Designated Safeguarding Leads are unable to resolve the concern, it should be escalated to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (often referred to as the Safeguarding Children Partnership) using the form at Appendix A.

The Delegated Safeguarding Partner may resolve the issue directly or choose to convene a resolution meeting. The designated safeguarding leads should be included in the resolution meeting and where appropriate, delegated safeguarding partners should seek support from their Lead Safeguarding Partners and should make use of key stakeholders in their local systems, e.g., Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Lead Members, and/or independent persons, who can be brought to the table to assist them.

A record of the outcome at Step 3 should be communicated to all parties involved and recorded on the child's record. The outcome of the challenge should also be communicated to those involved at earlier points in the escalation process.

Please note that the timescales provided within this policy are guidelines. Escalation and resolution should be achieved at the earliest opportunity and with urgency when there is any indication that the child could be at risk of suffering significant harm.



Step 3: Days 14 to 19

Statutory partners will ask for written representation and may request a meeting with the involved parties. A recommendation will be made based on the most appropriate action and resolution for the dispute.

Step 2: Days 8 to 13

The Designated Safeguarding Leads will arrange to seek resolution. They may request a meeting with the involved parties. If an agreement can't be achieved the issue should be brought to the Safeguarding Partnership Manager who will draw it to the attention of Delegated Safeguarding Partners and the escalation will move to step 3.

Step 1: Days 3 to 7

The line manager should discuss the concerns with their opposite manager in the other agency. If a resolution can't be achieved, the professionals must notify their designated safeguarding lead and the escalation will move to step 2..

Day 1 - 2

When concerns arise, initial attempts should be made between workers to resolve the issue. If a resolution can't be reached, professionals must escalate the issue to their line manager. This is when the escalation moves to step 1.

Please note that the timescales provided within this policy are guidelines. Escalation and resolution should be achieved at the earliest opportunity and with urgency when there is any indication that the child could be at risk of suffering significant harm.

Appendix A

Form for submitting professional challenge cases for escalation and resolution to the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership

(Step 3)

| | |
|---|--|
| Name of Child/Young Person: | |
| Date of Birth: | |
| Address: | |
| Name of Manager who escalated concern at Step 1, Role and Agency: | |
| Name of Manager who escalated concern at Step 2, Role and Agency: | |
| Date that Step 2 was concluded | |
| Name of Board Members, Roles and Agencies Involved: | |

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| Brief details about the inter-agency disagreement: | |
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| What was the methodology used to resolve the disagreement? | |
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| Please submit this referral to: | Cheshire West SCP via SCP@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk Cheshire East SCP via CESCP@cheshireeast.gov.uk Halton SCP via CYPsafeguardingpartnership@halton.gov.uk Warrington SCP via safeguardingpartnerships@warrington.gov.uk |
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Appendix B

Area Specific List of Key Contacts to support Designated Safeguarding Leads at Step 2

Cheshire West

Information Access and Referral Team 0300 123 7047 Mon – Thurs 08.30- 17.00 Fri 08.30 – 16.30
Emergency Duty Team 01244 977 277

Cheshire East

Cheshire East Children Consultation Service 0300 123 5012 (opt 3 opt 2) Mon – Thurs 08.30- 17.00
Fri 08.30 – 16.30 Emergency Duty Team 0300 123 5022

Warrington

Multi Agency Referral Service 01925 443322 (opt 1) Mon – Thurs 08.30- 17.00 Fri 08.30 – 16.30
Emergency Duty Team 01925 443322 (opt 2)

Halton

Integrated Contact and Referral Team 0151 907 8305 Mon- – Thurs 09:00- 17.00 Fri 09:00 – 16.30
Emergency Duty Team 0345 0500148