

Escalation Policy and Procedure

**Resolution of professional
disagreements in work relating
to the safety of children**



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Inter-agency Escalation Policy:

Resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to the safety of children

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children. Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies.

1.2 Professional disputes are reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities and airing and sharing problems in networking forums. Effective working together depends on resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies; and a belief in a genuine partnership.

1.3 Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion. Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around thresholds and roles and responsibilities. Some examples may include:

- Where one professional disagrees with the action of another around a particular course of action, such as closing involvement with a child or family.
- Where one agency considers that the plan is inappropriate and that a child's needs are not being best met by the current plan.
- Where a member of staff or an agency considers that the child's safeguarding needs are better met by a Child Protection Plan and have requested that a Child Protection Conference be called and feel that this has been refused.

2.0 Aim and Objectives

2.1 It is important to:

- avoid professional disputes that put children at risk, obscure the focus on the child or delay decision making
- resolve difficulties (within and) between agencies quickly and openly
- identify problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures.

2.2 The safety of individual children and focus on children are the paramount considerations in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be escalated with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child.

3.0 Escalation Policy

3.1 The process of resolution should be as simple as possible.

- 3.2 The aim should be to resolve difficulties at practitioner / fieldworker level between agencies. Attempts at problem resolution may leave one worker/agency believing that the child/ren remain(s) at risk of significant harm. This worker/agency has responsibility for communicating such concerns through agreed channels.
- 3.3 The following stages are likely to be involved:
- recognition that there is a disagreement over a significant issue, which impacts on the safety and welfare of a child
 - identification of the problem and clarity about the disagreement and what the aim is.
- These two stages could involve consulting a colleague to clarify thinking.
- 3.4 Initial attempts should be made to resolve the problem. This should normally be between the people who disagree unless the child is at immediate risk. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported.
- 3.5 If unresolved, the problem should be referred within 1 working day to the designated/named Child Protection advisor in their own agency or their line manager who will discuss with the manager or their equivalent in the other agency.
- 3.6 If the problem remains unresolved, the line manager will refer within 3 days 'up the line' (see flow chart).
- 3.7 If the matter is still unresolved, a referral will be made within 5 days to the Head of Service, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service. The role of the Head of Service, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service is:
- To give independent consideration to the issues being raised providing feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the case being brought forward.
 - To ensure that throughout the process, lines of communication remain open and clear and that the issue does not become clouded, personalised, or lost in other processes.
 - To provide a briefing to senior managers across agencies on the issue being raised and possible routes to resolving the issue.
- 3.8 A clear record should be kept at all stages, by all parties. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued. All records should be retained on the child's case file / agency database.
- 3.9 At each stage it is important that the person who originally raised the concern is given feedback on what action has been taken in response. It is the responsibility of the person to whom the issue is referred to ensure that clear and timely feedback is provided.

3.10 When the issue is resolved, any policy issues should be identified and referred to the Policy and Practice subgroup of the ISCB to inform future learning and possible changes to existing policies and procedures.

3.11 It may also be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships and identify possible training needs.

Please note that this policy does not apply to cases where there may be concerns about the behaviour or conduct of another professional that may impact on a child's safety and well-being. In such cases, reference should be made to the agency's own Whistleblowing Policy.

Local Safeguarding Children Board Inter-agency Escalation Procedure For Professionals with Child Protection or Child Welfare Concerns

