



Bristol Safeguarding
Children Board

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

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History of most recent Policy Changes – **Must be completed**

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change (e.g. TU request, change in legislation etc)
16/02/2012	3-4	Clarification of when to use monitoring form	Highlighted in Audit.

Escalation Procedures - Resolution of Professional Disagreements in work relating to the Safety of Children

Purpose

To provide a clear mechanism for the resolution of professional disputes in order to ensure a timely resolution that ensures that the needs of the child or young person are met. The procedure is intended to augment the guidance provided by the South West Child Protection Procedures (www.swcpp.org.uk) and provides local procedures to be followed in accordance with this guidance.

1. General principles

- 1.1 Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children.
- 1.2 Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion.
- 1.3 Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around thresholds, roles and responsibilities, the need for action and communication.
- 1.4 It is important to:
 - avoid professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus of the child;
 - 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.
- 1.5 The safety of individual child/ren and focus on child/ren 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.
- 1.6 Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies.
- 1.7 Effective working together depends on resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies; and a belief in a genuine partnership.
- 1.8 Professional disputes are reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities and airing and sharing problems in networking forums.
- 1.9 The process resolution should be as simple as possible.
- 1.10 The aim should be to resolve difficulties at practitioner/fieldworker level between agencies.
- 1.11 Attempts at problem resolution may leave one worker/agency believing that the child/ren remain at risk of significant harm. This person/agency has responsibility for communicating such concerns through agreed channels.

2. Procedure

2.1 The following two stages are likely to be involved:

Stage 1 – Identifying the concern

- 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 you aim to achieve;
- These two stages could involve consulting a colleague to clarify thinking.

Stage 2 – Discussing the concern between individuals

Initial attempts should be taken 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.

Stage 3 – Raising concern between line management

If unresolved, the problem should be referred to the worker's own line manager or Child Protection advisor, who will discuss with their opposite number in the other agency. Disagreements at all meetings e.g. Strategy Discussions should be recorded by each respective agency.

If the problem remains unresolved, the line manager will refer 'up the line' (see flow chart).

Disagreements between professionals should be recorded in the child's file using the 'Monitoring Form' once stage 3 is initiated.

Stage 4 – Referring concern to Service Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

If the matter cannot be resolved, contact must be made with the Service Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance who will attempt to resolve the situation.

Stage 5 – Refer concern to Chair of BSCB

If the matter is still unresolved, consideration will be given to referring the matter to the Chair of BSCB who will consider whether the matter can be resolved through mediation or should be considered by a BSCB Resolution Panel.

Mediation will be offered as soon as possible bearing in mind the impact on the child or young person. The decision reached in mediation is final and binding on the agencies concerned.

In more complex matters a BSCB Resolution Panel (BSCB Exec.) will meet. The Panel must consist of representatives of three agencies who are members of BSCB, to include those agencies involved in the dispute. The Panel will receive representation from those concerned in the dispute and make a decision as to the next course of action.

The decision of the Panel is final and binding on all agencies involved.

3. Further notes

A report of dispute that have been reported and findings of Panels will be made to the BSCB on an annual basis.

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.

Once **Stage 3** is reached the monitoring form should be used to detail the issues requiring resolution and recording the agreed outcome. When the issue is resolved, any general issues should be identified and referred to the agency's representative on the BSCB for consideration by the relevant BSCB subgroup to inform future learning.

It may also be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

Reference documents:

LSCB Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland – CP Procedures and SCR research noting the risk of unresolved professional disagreement.

**Flowchart: Escalation Procedure -
for professionals with Child
Protection or Child Welfare concerns**



Stage 1

Professional is unhappy with a decision or response from any agency following a referral

Stage 2

Professional discusses with manager/ named lead for child protection in his or her own agency

Manager/named professional/CP advisor – referring agency discusses concern/response with the opposite number in the agency.

Stage 3
Complete
Monitoring
Form

Has the disagreement been resolved to both agencies' satisfaction?

Yes

Concerned professional advised of outcome by named professional.
Exit Process.

No

The Manager/named professional/CP advisor – referring agency discusses concern with relevant manager

Designated lead for Child protection will liaise with his/her equivalent lead officer once notified to enable the situation to be addressed at a senior management level as appropriate and action agreed

Stage 4

Has the disagreement been resolved to both agencies' satisfaction?

Yes

No

If concerns continue the Designated lead for Child Protection will inform the Service Manager S&QA who will consider whether the decision should be reviewed.

Stage 5

Has the disagreement been resolved to both agencies' satisfaction?

Yes

No

If concerns continue Service Manager S&QA will refer the situation to the Chair of BSCB who will either provide mediation or in more complex situations convene a BSCB Resolution Panel to resolve the situation and inform those involved of the final binding decision.

Notes and Key:
At all stages decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel (See Monitoring form to be used from stage 3).

Service Manager S&QA - Safeguarding and Quality Assurance