

Professional Differences (Escalation) Policy (August 2014)

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

Introduction

Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the decision made by a worker from another agency on a child protection or child in need case is not a safe decision. Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- Levels of need
- Roles and responsibilities
- The need for action
- Communication

The safety of individual children is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be addressed with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child.

All workers should feel able to challenge decision-making and to see this as their right and responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice. This policy provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

- a) avoiding professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus on the child
- b) resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly
- c) identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures

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

Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected. Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage however if a child is thought to be at risk of immediate harm discretion should be used as to which stage is initiated.

Stages of the policy

Pre-escalation

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult a supervisor/manager within their own organisation to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem; to be specific as to what the disagreement is about; outline any actions to date that may already or potentially impact on this decision and what they aim to achieve. They should also be able to evidence the nature and source of their concerns and should to keep a record of all discussions.

Stage One – Professional : Professional

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at the lowest possible level. This would normally be between the people who disagree. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported.

Stage Two – Manager : Manager

If the problem is not resolved at stage one the concerned worker should contact their supervisor/manager within their own agency who should raise the concerns with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency/agencies as appropriate.

Stage Three – Senior Manager: Senior Manager

If the problem is not resolved at stage two the supervisor/manager reports to their respective operations manager or named/designated safeguarding representative (Senior Manager). The appropriate senior managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion. The senior manager should also notify the Safeguarding Children Board Manager who will keep a record of all on-going disagreements.

Stage Four – Refer via TSCB

If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences within the agencies concerned the matter should be referred to the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, who may either seek to resolve the issue direct, or to convene a Resolution Panel.

The panel must consist of LSCB representatives from three agencies (including the agencies concerned in the professional differences, where possible). The panel will receive representations from those concerned in the professional differences and make a decision as to the next course of action, resolving the professional differences concerned.

If you are unable to identify who the right person is to contact within the organisation, here is a link of contact details for people who may be able to help you with this:

[List of Designated Contacts](#)

Timescales

Some matters may be resolved very quickly, and this will be determined locally by the complexity of the issues. In all cases, the matter should be resolved within specified timescales, and the primary focus will be on ensuring that the safety and welfare of the child concerned is assured whilst discussions take place.

Stage 1/2: 1 week of the issues being raised (5 working days)

Stage 3: 1 additional week of the issues not being resolved at Stage 2 (5 working days)

Stage 4: 2 additional weeks of the issues not being reached at Stage 3