



Escalation Policy: Resolution of Professional Disagreements

Introduction

This process sets out the steps to be taken to address professional differences of opinion when a child requires a safeguarding response. It should not be confused with the process to be followed for making a referral to Children's Social Care when there is a child protection concern. Neither should it be confused with the process for making a complaint when an agency has not delivered an action which has been agreed.

When professionals are working together in the complex business of safeguarding children there will inevitably be occasions when there are professional differences of opinion. Constructive challenge is an important component in positive partnership working, but where differences of opinion cannot be easily resolved practitioners have a duty to take action to address professional disagreements in a way that is appropriate, timely and proportionate.

Learning from Serious Case Reviews highlights the importance of resolving professional differences of opinion to ensure that children and young people are not left at risk of harm. If sufficiently serious, and when disagreements are not able to be resolved easily and quickly, it is important that they are escalated formally and recorded.

Examples of case specific professional disagreements include:

- When there is disagreement about a decision about a **referral** from one agency to another
- When there is disagreement about the outcome of an **assessment**
- When there is disagreement about a child's **plan** or its implementation
- When there is disagreement about an **intervention** to bring about the necessary changes
- When there is disagreement over the **sharing of information** in a particular case

It is important that practitioners and managers understand what action they need to take in order to address professional differences of opinion and the systems in place in their organisation to support this action. The flowchart on the next page sets out the process to be followed when seeking to resolve a professional difference of opinion.

Additional useful links:

Checking back: Ask – Do – Share Model

[http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4672/fact sheet for practitioners number 2 effective communication and checking back](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4672/fact_sheet_for_practitioners_number_2_effective_communication_and_checking_back)

WSCB membership

[http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20377/safeguarding children/208/about the safeguarding children board/4](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20377/safeguarding_children/208/about_the_safeguarding_children_board/4)

Information sharing

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419628/Information sharing advice safeguarding practitioners.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419628/Information_sharing_advice_safeguarding_practitioners.pdf)

Stage 1

Practitioner seeks to resolve professional concern or disagreement through discussion and/or meeting within one working day.

Is there agreement?

Unresolved

Resolved

- **Check back** to ensure there is shared understanding of the agreed actions
- **Record** agreed actions on child's file
- Follow **agency procedure** for logging low level concerns or disagreements
- **Check back** to ensure agreed actions have been fully implemented within agreed time scale

Stage 2

Practitioner reports disagreement to line manager. Respective managers liaise without delay and in accordance with the level of risk (no later than 2 working days) to review available information and resolve if possible. Advice is sought from respective designated safeguarding leads if necessary.

Is there agreement?

Unresolved

Resolved

- **Check back** to ensure there is shared understanding of the agreed actions
- Immediately **feedback** agreed actions to operational staff
- **Confirm actions in writing** between agencies and, where appropriate, include a date to review them
- If necessary invoke the process for reviewing the child's Plan
- **Record** agreed actions on child's file
- **Check back** to ensure agreed actions have been completed within agreed time scale

Stage 3

The professional concern or disagreement is referred without delay through the line management structures of the respective agencies and senior managers seek to resolve.

Is there agreement?

Unresolved

Resolved

- Outcome of discussion and agreed actions to be **recorded in writing** and consideration given to where the record of the meeting is to be held
- Immediately **feedback** agreed actions to operational staff
- **Record** agreed actions on child's file
- Senior managers consider the need to **review policies or procedures**, or to address any compliance or professional competence issues
- **Check back** to ensure agreed actions have been completed within agreed time scale

Stage 4

WSCB members for the respective organisations are informed who will refer to the WSCB Manager for the convening of an independently chaired resolution meeting.

Resolved

More general cumulative concerns about how another agency operates should be raised with your designated Safeguarding Lead in order for a decision to be made as to how this should be dealt with (as it may sit outside this procedure).