

WSSCB Escalation Policy

Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the decision made by a worker from another agency is either not safe or not in the best interests of a child; this may relate to professional involvement in early help services, children in need, child protection or children looked after. 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.

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

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

All workers should be encouraged to be curious about why decisions are made and question if they do not feel this is right. Staff from any agency should feel confident and able to challenge decision-making; they will have a professional responsibility to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice and therefore raising such concerns is an entirely legitimate activity.

Those receiving any professional challenge should be encouraged to see this as an opportunity to reflect and give their rationale which supports good decision making.

This protocol provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

- Encouraging professional curiosity
- Avoiding professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus on the child
- Resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly
- Identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures

Resolution of the issues raised should be sought within the shortest possible timescale to ensure the child's safety and best interests are safeguarded. 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.

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Stages of Escalation

At all stages conversations should be specific and evidence based as to what the difference in opinion is about; and what are the best outcomes for the child.

Stage One

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult a supervisor/manager to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem, and be specific and evidence based as to what the difference in opinion is about and what they aim to achieve. Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at the lowest possible level. This would normally be between the people who hold the differing views and ideally be a conversation to discuss followed by email confirming the resolution or ongoing concern. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported.

Stage Two

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. The manager should also notify the WSSCB Business Team, who will keep a record of all ongoing disagreements.

Stage Three

If the problem is not resolved at stage two the supervisor/manager reports to their respective operations manager or named/designated safeguarding representative. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion. The WSSCB Business Team should be advised of any outcome.

Stage Four

If it is not possible to resolve the professional differences within the agencies concerned the matter should be referred to the Chair of the WSSCB, who may either seek to resolve the issue direct, or to convene a Resolution Panel. The panel must consist of WSSCB representatives from three agencies (including the agencies concerned in the professional differences, where possible).

Additional Notes

At all stages of the process, actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern. 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.

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

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Process flow

