

Safeguarding Adults in Stockport

Stockport Multi-Agency Escalation Policy

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It is every professional's responsibility to 'problem solve'. Communication is extremely important and is the key to resolving professional misunderstandings or disagreements.

1. General Principles of Resolution

Effective working together depends on resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies, and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard the adult at risk. The focus of this procedure is to ensure resolution and the continuation of good partnership working. Agencies should work to the principle of restoring relationships and disagreements at the lowest possible level so that each agency is satisfied both that their concerns have been listened to and with the outcome for the adult at risk.

Problem resolution is an integral part of professional cooperation and joint working to safeguard the adult at risk. Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion. Due to the nature of the work undertaken it is inevitable that there will be disagreements from time to time. Multi-agency debate and respectful challenge should be encouraged to impact positive outcomes for the adult at risk.

When practitioners are not working well together this, may have an impact on a person's development or even place the adult at risk of harm. It is therefore important that professionals have a full understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. Examples where practitioners have concerns about the welfare of adult at risk may arise where they perceive other practitioners are:

- Not recognising need or the signs of harm;
- Not sharing information about an adult at risk's welfare;
- Not accepting referrals for services;
- Not delivering services according to the threshold of need;
- Not co-operating in delivering planned interventions;
- Not attending Core Groups or Safeguarding Conference meetings;
- Not producing Plans or minutes quickly enough;
- Not fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as defined in the Care Act 2014; or other related legislation

At no time must professional disagreement undermine the safeguarding of the adult at risk. The person's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout.

When communicating disagreement, professionals should remain respectful of each other at all times and this should be evidenced in both their direct and written communication, and throughout the escalation resolution process. This may be particularly important when challenging practice or professional standards, and courtesies should be maintained. Where a practitioner does identify a concern, then that practitioner/agency has responsibility for communicating such concerns through agreed multi agency safeguarding procedures on the same working day.

Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around determining the level of need, roles and responsibilities, and the need for action and communication.

Escalation is not a process; it should be a means to achieve an outcome within a reasonable timescale. It is therefore important that the person raising the escalation is clear in respect of what they are escalating, what they are seeking to achieve, what they feel the outcome should be and within what timescale they are seeking to achieve it. The timescale may need to be subject to negotiation and in line with the potential safeguarding issues.

2. Resolving Disagreements

Stage One Escalation – Professional to professional

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem; the expectation should be to resolve difficulties at practitioner/case worker level between agencies.

When there is recognition that there is a disagreement over a significant issue, which affects the safety and welfare of the adult at risk, the practitioners must identify explicitly what the problem is and have clarity about the nature of the disagreement and what the practitioners aim to achieve.

Where the practitioner feels they do not have sufficient status or experience to challenge, they must seek guidance from their Safeguarding Lead.

Stage Two Escalation - Manager-to-Manager Procedure

If unresolved, the problem should be referred by the practitioner to their line manager or lead for safeguarding, who in turn is expected to discuss with their opposite number in the other agency.

All parties must keep a clear record at all stages to the disagreement. In particular, this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreements and how any outstanding issues be pursued.

Each partner agency of the SAB should have their own procedures in place for dealing with concerns within their own setting. On occasions where concerns need to be raised with another agency, practitioners should ensure this happens as soon as possible and that discussions are clearly recorded.

The Safeguarding Unit will offer consultation and advice on cases and will intervene to help resolve issues if that is appropriate.

Stage Three Escalation - Senior Manager to Senior Manager Procedure (No longer than 10 working days)

If agreement cannot be reached following discussions between the above 'first line' managers (who should normally seek advice from her/his line manager or designated/named/lead officer) the issue must be referred immediately through the line management of the respective agency/agencies structure.

This should be incremental and not skip lines of responsibility within the individual agency, unless in exceptional circumstances. Escalation is more productive when dealt with by peer colleagues.

In Health services, input may be sought directly from the Designated or Named Professional in preference to the use of line management but they should seek to resolve the issue in the first instance with their first line manager.

At this point, a meeting should be called to discuss the situation involving all parties. Records of discussions must be maintained by all the agencies involved. The outcome of discussions and agreed actions should also be recorded by the agency raising the escalation and shared with all other agencies involved in the discussion / meeting.

Stage 4 - Where Professional Differences Remain

Escalation should continue throughout the line management to Directorate / Chief Executive of the respective organisations but this should only be in exceptional circumstances and the expectation is that agencies will find a resolution in a timely manner.

In the unlikely event that the steps described above and/or the discussions do not resolve the issue raise significant policy issues, it should be brought to the attention to the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Adults Board/Partnership, via the Business Manager, who will determine the appropriate course of action.

3. Specific Processes

This Escalation Protocol should only be used within safeguarding practice, not for other matters, such as assessment for more general care and support needs, eligibility for care and support and funding of care and support needs are outside the scope of this process. Individual practitioner performance is also outside the scope of this document. Also, the adult subject to the safeguarding concern and/or their representative should, wherever possible, be aware of the dispute and have an opportunity to express their views and wishes, in particular, that in raising a dispute, the worker has full consideration of the adult's wellbeing.

Dissent at Referral/Enquiry Stage

Where a decision to accept a referral or progress to strategy meeting has caused concern, one or more professionals are concerned about the decisions made, or that capacity issues prevent partners to commit, they should attempt to resolve differences as already outlined.

If the professionals are unable to resolve differences through discussion and/or meeting within a time scale, which is acceptable to both of them, their disagreement, must be addressed by more experienced or more senior staff.

Dissent about need for an adult at risk Safeguarding Conference

The decision whether or not to convene an Adult Safeguarding Conference rests with ASC. However, those professionals and agencies who are most involved with the adult at risk, and those who have taken part in a Section 42 Enquiry, if they still remain concerned for the adult at risk's safety, they have the right to ask ASC to convene a multi-agency planning meeting. Where the agency is dissatisfied with the response from ASC, contact should be made with the Head of the Safeguarding Unit (Nuala O'Rourke) to request conference.

Any such request that is supported by a senior manager, or a Designated or Named Professional, should normally be agreed. Where there remain differences of view over the necessity for a conference in a specific case, every effort should be made to resolve them through discussion and explanation.

Dissent at any Adult Section 42 Safeguarding Conference

If a Conference Chair is unable to achieve a consensus as to the need for an adult at risk Protection Plan, (s) he will make a decision and note any dissenting views. This will include the situation where there is no majority view and where the Conference Chair exercises his or her decision-making powers as set out in Section 4.16.10, of Stockport's Multi-agency Safeguarding Policy & Procedure.

The agency or individual who dissents from the Chair's decision must determine whether (s) he wishes to further challenge the result.

If the dissenting professional believes that the decision reached by the Conference Chair places the adult at risk, at (further) risk of Significant Harm, it is expected that (s)he will formally raise the matter with their line manager and/or Designated or Named Professional in their agency. This matter should be discussed with the Head of the Safeguarding Unit, who will consider what further actions are required.

Dissent Regarding the Implementation of the Adult at risk Protection Plan

Concern or disagreement may arise over another professional's decisions, actions or lack of actions in the implementation of the Adult at risk Protection Plan, including participation in Core Group meetings.

The Front line workers should discuss such issues with their peer colleagues in the first instance and attempt to resolve informally. Where this is unsuccessful, it should be escalated as per the procedure.

If agreement cannot be reached following discussions between the above 'first line' managers, the issue must be referred immediately through the line management of each agency. The Conference Chair should be copied into all correspondence and consideration should be given to reconvening the Adult at risk Protection Review Conference, where there are any concerns, which may have a detrimental impact on the progress of the adult at risk protection plan.

Advice and guidance may be sought directly from the Designated or Named Professional in addition to the line manager.

4. De-Brief

It may be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continued good working relationships and enhance learning.

When the issue is resolved, any general issues should be identified and referred to the LSAB Business Manager who will liaise with relevant sub group chairs for consideration to inform learning and improvement.

Where concerns are identified about the practice of other practitioners, the concerned practitioner should discuss this with their own line manager / Safeguarding lead.

5. LSAB Monitoring

The LSAB has a statutory role to ensure that arrangements are in place to safeguard any adult at risk. This includes having a specific interest in how well agencies work together. Therefore, the Head of Service (or equivalent) should forward a copy of each escalation notice to the LSAB Business Manager. The logs will to be collected for regular review to consider themes and whether these need addressing in single agency or multi-agency work.

These will then form the basis of a report by the Business Manager to the Board, setting out issues in the escalations and the consequence for policy on a quarterly basis.

6. Wider learning points or gaps in policies and procedures

If the process highlights gaps in policies and procedures this should be brought to the attention of the Independent Chair of Safeguarding Adults Board.

Appendix One

BEFORE ESCALATION

Practitioners should follow up as part of the safeguarding process. Have you checked back on decision-making? What is the view of the adult or their representative?

There is disagreement about a decision or concern about the appropriateness or effectiveness of a response to an adult's safeguarding support. What is the view of the adult or their representative?

ESCALATION

STAGE 1

Practitioner attempts to address professional concern or disagreement through discussion and/or meeting.

IS THERE AGREEMENT?

Resolved



Check back to ensure there is shared understanding of the agreed actions.
Record agreed actions.
Complete Record of Escalation template and log according to agency procedure.
Check back to ensure agreed actions have been fully implemented.

Unresolved

STAGE 2

Practitioner reports professional concern or disagreement to line manager. Worker needs to be specific as to what the disagreement is about and clear on what they aim to achieve. Advice is sought from respective designated safeguarding leads if necessary.

IS THERE AGREEMENT?

Resolved



Check back to ensure there is shared understanding of the agreed actions
Immediately feed agreed actions back to operational staff.
Confirm actions in writing between agencies and, where appropriate, include a date to review them. Invoke (if necessary) the process for reviewing the adult's safeguarding plan.
Complete Record of Escalation template and log according to agency procedure.
Check back to ensure agreed actions have been fully implemented.

Unresolved

STAGE 3

Supervisors/managers must escalate the professional's concern or disagreement to their senior managers in order to seek resolution.

IS THERE AGREEMENT?

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.
Senior managers consider the need to review policies/procedures or to address any issues re compliance/professional competence.
Complete Record of Escalation template and log according to agency procedure.
Check back to ensure agreed actions have been fully implemented.

Unresolved

STAGE 4

Failure to resolve disagreement amongst managers/agencies, the professional concern is raised with the relevant head of service. If still unresolved the escalation should be referred to the LSAB Chair.

Resolved



Appendix Two

Recording template to be completed at the end of the escalation and added to the persons case record in agencies involved in the escalation. Copy also to be submitted for the attention of the SAB Business Manager

Name of person:	
Date of birth:	
Concern at stage 1 escalated by:	<i>insert name, role, agency</i>
To:	<i>insert name, role, agency</i>
Concern at stage 2 escalated by:	<i>insert name, role, agency</i>
To:	<i>insert name, role, agency</i>
Concern at stage 3 escalated by:	<i>insert name, role, agency</i>
To:	<i>insert name, role, agency</i>
Date escalation commenced	
Date escalation completed	

Brief details of resolution, including actions / contingency plans agreed and stage of escalation at conclusion:

If escalation concluded but dissatisfaction remains, summarise the outstanding areas of concern that will be considered by senior managers and the LSAB.
