

Professional Disagreement Escalation Policy



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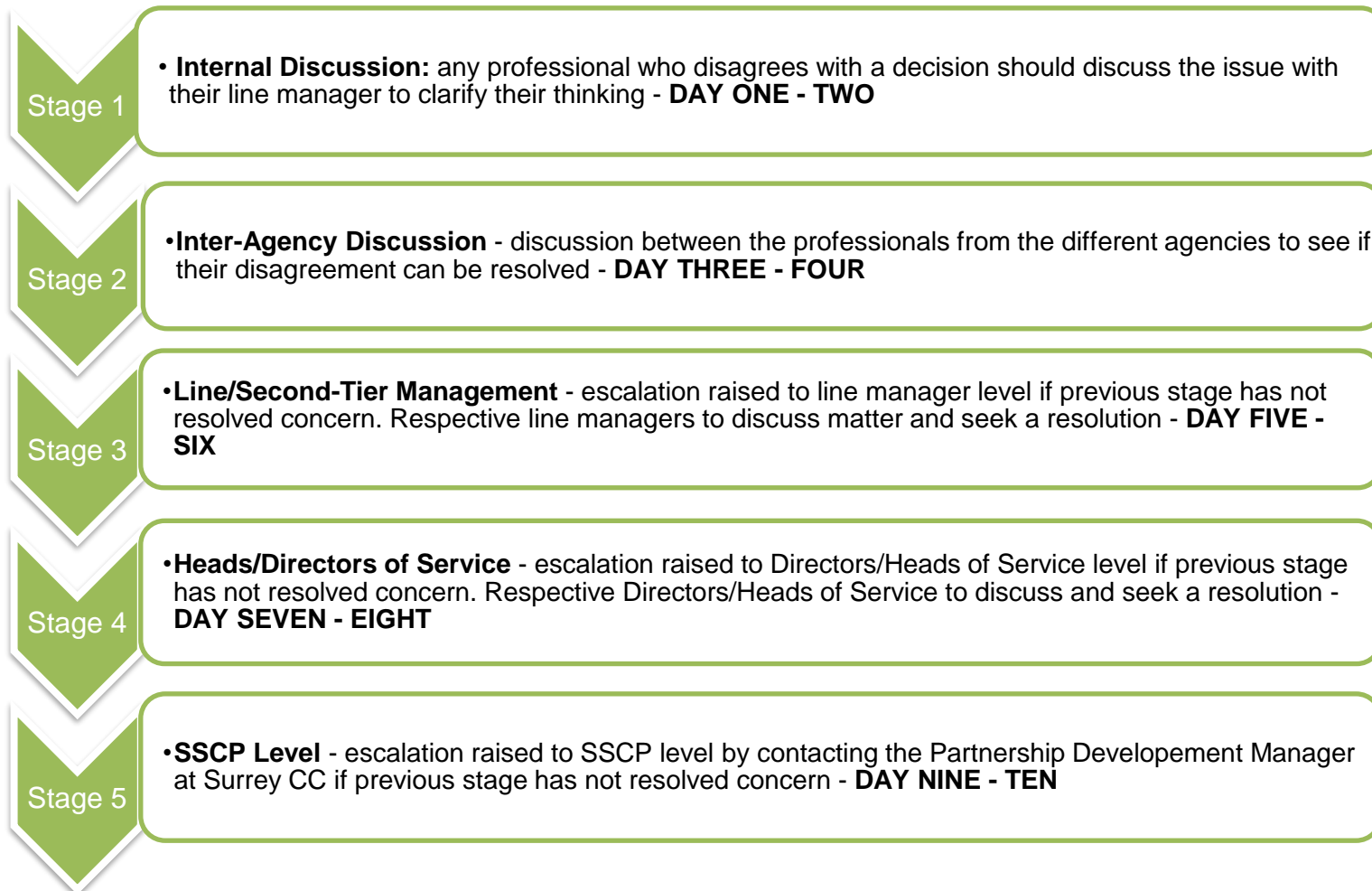
1. Introduction

- 1.1 At all times the Safeguarding Partners will try to have in place arrangements which make clear how children young people and families should be able to swiftly access support through any of the recognised safeguarding agencies and other partners. Their purpose is to enable multi-agency practitioners to exercise their professional judgement and provide the best possible service in a timely and safe way. However the Partners recognise that complexity of need and range of intervention/support will not always fit into a simple formula that leads to '*the right solution*'. Often there may be no right or wrong answer and quite legitimately practitioners may exercise their professional judgement differently. It is also the case that exceptionally, the needs of some young people and families may not easily fit within a conventional application of thresholds.
- 1.2 It is of vital importance that children, young people and their families do not become entangled in professional disagreements and that where such disputes do occur they can be resolved with minimum delay.
- 1.3 In reaching resolution it is essential that at all times disputes are approached in a considerate manner and one which both respects and seeks to understand the views and concerns of others from their experience and perspective when engaging with the young person/family

2. Escalation Process – An Overview

The flow chart below shows an overview of the Escalation Process. A detailed explanation of these stages is set out at Section 5 of this policy

Stages/Timescales



3. Purpose of Escalation Policy

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to create a transparent process to set out how disagreements should be dealt with between partner agencies with regards to professional practice in relation to a child, young person or their family. Disagreements should be resolved through child centred discussion between agencies. This escalation policy outlines the process to be followed when professionals are unable to agree about what is in the best interests of the child.
- 3.2 To identify and anticipate problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures in a timely manner.
- 3.3 To ensure that where resolution cannot be found appropriate escalation of concerns ensures that the child is safeguarded.
- 3.4 To avoid disputes that:-
 - Detract from the focus on the child;
 - Delay effective decision making
 - Lead to protracted disputes that negatively impact upon the child and/or family and on inter-agency relationships and working practice.

4. Key principles

- 3.1 Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint-working to safeguard children. All agencies must work together in the interest of the child and it is recognised that at times there are differences of opinion on how to progress a case. Every effort should be made to resolve disagreements as close to the point of origin as possible.
- 3.2 At all stages of the escalation process actions and decisions must be shared in a timely manner with appropriate staff who are directly involved with the service users
- 3.3 Decisions should be recorded in writing and the referring member of staff should be kept informed of the escalation of their 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. All records should be retained on the child's case file / agency database.
- 3.4 This policy is not intended to replace or prevent day-to-day liaison between professionals.
- 3.5 It is the responsibility of all agencies to ensure that their staff are supported to challenge and escalate appropriately when they have concerns or they disagree with another professional's practice which they believe places, or could place, a child or young person at risk of harm.
- 3.6 Effective working together depends upon:
 - An open approach and honest relationships between agencies; and

- A belief in genuine partnership working.

3.7 Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected. Some disagreements regarding safeguarding decisions will require especially speedy resolution.

3.8 It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience of individual staff may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue their concerns if unsupported and internal line management process should be in place to address this and to support the escalation of concerns.

3.9 **Note:** In all cases where a professional believes a child to be at imminent risk of harm they should refer the case to the Surrey Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA) and/or Surrey Police.

5. Who this Policy applies to?

5.1 This policy applies to and is relevant for Safeguarding Partners as per the Working Together 2018 guidance;

Surrey Safeguarding Partnership:

- Practitioners, managers and leadership within the Local Authority, Health (Surrey's CCG's) and the Police;
- Any other staff working with children.

Partner organisations:

- Practitioners, managers and leadership within Education, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the voluntary sector and any other agencies that work directly with children.

4.2 To reflect the multi-agency practice this policy covers it has been ratified by the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership.

6. Escalation Process – In detail

6.1 This process is managed through an escalation procedure which is outlined in detail in the table below.

6.2 All disputes should be resolved in a timely way so that the welfare of the child remains paramount. In some situations it may be necessary to instigate all of the stages within a short period of time or to escalate the process so that the safety of the child is not compromised.

6.3 All practitioners have a positive duty to facilitate the use of the escalation procedure by the other practitioners even where they do not agree that the use of the escalation procedure is necessary. For example, there is a duty to immediately provide relevant contact details for line management where this relates to the necessary next step in the escalation process.

6.4 Stages of Escalation

N.B. Wherever possible at each of the stages 2 - 3 below the discussions should be carried out between professionals of a similar level of seniority within their respective agencies. This is to avoid the situation where there is an imbalance between the seniority of professionals which might inhibit the conduct of an open, frank and balanced discussion about the case.

If an imbalance arises due to inappropriate escalation, the more junior member of staff should escalate the issue to their line manager who should do the same until a similar level of seniority between the professionals discussing the case between the agencies is achieved.

Notwithstanding the above, at all times it should be recognised that the different partnership agencies have different structures and that it may not always be possible for discussions to take place between partnership colleagues of the same equivalent grade. In every case, anyone raising a safeguarding concern/disagreement with a partnership colleague, irrespective of rank or grade must be listened to and their concern treated with professionalism and respect.

Stages	What	When
<p>Stage 1: Internal Discussion</p>	<p>Any professional who disagrees with a decision should initially consult with their line manager so that they can discuss the issue to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem and be specific about what the disagreement is about.</p> <p>This discussion may help clarify the issues at this stage so that the professional in question no longer disagrees with the decision made by the other professional.</p>	<p>The discussion should take place within two working days of the disagreement or concern arising.</p>
<p>Stage 2: Inter-agency Discussion</p>	<p>Most disagreements can be resolved between professionals by having a discussion about the reasons for the difference of</p>	<p>The discussion should take place within two working days of the completion of Stage 1 above.</p>

	<p>opinion and without having to escalate further. The professional who has a concern should speak to the other professional to see better understand the position and discuss the concern. These discussions should be conducted in an open and professional manner without the need for either party to be accusatory or defensive. At all times the needs of the child should be paramount.</p>	
<p>Stage 3: Escalation to Line Management/Second-Tier Management</p>	<p>If the professionals are not able to resolve their disagreement at Stage Two their disagreement must be reported to their line managers or second-tier managers or equivalent. In most cases the relevant line managers/second-tier managers will be able to resolve the disagreement between them.</p> <p>The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant professionals and the detail of the dispute and agreements reached should be recorded on the child's file.</p>	<p>The line manager should make contact with their opposite number in the partner agency within two working days of the completion of the Stage 2 above.</p>

<p>Stage 4: Escalation to Heads/Directors of Service.</p>	<p>Where it is not possible to resolve the disagreement at second-tier management level (Stage Four), the matter should be referred without delay to Heads/Directors of Service.</p> <p>The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant professionals and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded on the child's file.</p> <p>The purpose of escalating the dispute to this level is to reach a position where differing professional opinions have been taken into account and efforts made to explore whether the dispute has arisen through lack of clarity or understanding in the professional dialogue. Ultimately a decision will need to be reached where agencies agree a way forward where the interests of the child take precedence over a professional stalemate.</p>	<p>The Heads/Directors of Service should make contact with their opposite number in the partner agency within two working days of the completion of Stage 3 above.</p>
<p>Stage 5: Escalation to the Surrey Safeguarding</p>	<p>In the unlikely event that the professional disagreement</p>	<p>A referral should be made to the SSCP by or on behalf of the</p>

<p>Children Partnership ('SSCP')</p>	<p>remains, the disagreement should be escalated to the Partnership Development Manager at the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership to seek a multi-agency resolution. The Partnership Development manager will then make contact with the within the relevant organisations who represents the organisation on the Partnership or its Executive Group. The learning from this resolution meeting or review will be disseminated to all parties within one month of the meeting or review.</p> <p>Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the Heads of Service and Second tier management staff involved with details of the agreements reached.</p>	<p>Heads/Directors of Service within two working days of the completion of Stage 4 above using the form annexed at Appendix 1.</p>
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6. Appendix 1 – Escalation Standard Form

ESCALATION OF A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN TO THE SURREY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Name of Child / Children:	Date of Birth:	Date of referral	Date of escalation

Name of Professional (with which there is a concern):	Agency (with which there is a concern):

Brief description of nature of concern:

Outcomes sought:

Name of Referrer:

Agency / Department:

Telephone number: **Email:**

Signature: **Date:**