

ESCALATION POLICY

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 overriding consideration in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be addressed with consideration given to the risks that might be present 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. The escalation 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

Please also refer to the escalation policy flowchart at the end of this document.

Stage One

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult one of the designated persons to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem, to be specific as to what the disagreement is about and what they aim to achieve. They should also be able to evidence the nature and source of their concerns and should keep a record of all discussions.

Stage Two

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 Three

If the problem is not resolved at stage two, the concerned worker should contact a 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 PSCB Business Manager, who will keep a record of all on-going disagreements.

Stage Four

If the problem is not resolved at stage three 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 PSCB Business Manager should be advised of any outcome.

Stage Five

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 Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board, (via the PSCB Business Manager) who may either seek to resolve the issue direct or to convene a Resolution Panel. This panel must consist of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board 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.

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. The decision of the Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board Resolution Panel will be final in this matter.

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 will be resolved as speedily as possible, and the primary focus will be on ensuring that the safety and welfare of the child concerned is assured whilst discussions take place.

Contact:

For more information, please contact the PSCB Safeguarding Business Unit:

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Policy Date: October 2021

Review Date: October 2025

Escalation Policy For Professionals with Child Protection or Child Welfare Concerns

