

PART 34

ESCALATION PROCEDURE

Escalation Procedure

Policy

1. Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board expects members of staff working directly with families to share information appropriately and work to plans agreed in all relevant forums. Good practice includes the expectation that constructive challenge amongst colleagues within agencies and between agencies provides a healthy approach to the work. Where members of staff from any agency feel concerns regarding a child are not being addressed it is expected that the escalation process should be used until a satisfactory conclusion is reached.
2. The process of resolution should be kept as simple as possible and the aim should be to resolve difficulties at a professional practitioner level wherever possible. It should be recognised that differences in status and experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this course of action and support should be sought from the nominated or designated child protection adviser within that agency.
3. If there is immediate danger to a child the police should be contacted immediately although in many cases there will be opportunity for the practitioner to discuss the situation with their manager before making that decision. Each agency should also follow their individual escalation procedure.

Initial Child Protection Conferences

4. Where a member of staff or an agency consider that a child's safeguarding needs are better met by a child protection plan, and a senior manager or designated professional has made a request for a case conference to be called and been refused, there is an existing process for resolving differences through appropriate discussion and explanation. It should be noted that enduring differences of opinion between agencies are themselves a criterion for proceeding to an initial child protection conference (Sec 4a para: 173-175).

Where disagreements might arise

5. Disagreements are most likely to arise in terms of differing views about thresholds and eligibility criteria, a lack of understanding about respective roles and the need for action and communication e.g.:
 - Where one professional disagrees with the action of another around a particular course of action, such as closing involvement.
 - Where one professional or agency considers another professional or agency has not completed an agreed action for no acceptable or understood reason.
 - Where one agency considers that the plan is inappropriate and that a child's needs are not being best met by the current plan. This could include a disagreement that a particular agency does not feel it needs to be involved, but another does.

Principles

6. Professionals providing services to children and their families should work co-operatively across all agencies, using their skills and experience to make a robust contribution to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare within the framework of discussions, meetings, conferences and case management.
7. All agencies are responsible for ensuring that staff are competent and supported to escalate appropriately intra-agency and inter-agency concerns and disagreements about a child's wellbeing.
8. Concern or disagreement may arise over another professional's decisions, actions or lack of actions in relation to a referral, an assessment or an enquiry.
9. Professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion and/or meeting within a working week or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less).
10. If the professionals are unable to resolve differences within the timescale, their disagreement must be addressed by more experienced and more senior staff.
11. Advice may be sought directly from the agency's nominated or designated child protection adviser at any stage of the process.

Procedure

Stage 1

12. In the first instance workers should raise the matter with their fellow professional, either verbally or in writing, within 48 hours of the disagreement or on receipt of the disputed decision and they should provide clear evidence based reasons for their disagreement.
13. The receiving professional must read and review the case file, speak to the referring professional as soon as possible and attempt to find a mutually agreeable way forward via a meeting or discussion. If agreement is reached the receiving professional will advise the agency of the outcome within 48 hours and confirm by letter.
14. The professionals involved in this resolution process must contemporaneously record each intra- and inter-agency discussion they have, approve and date the record and place a copy on the child's file together with any other written communications and information.

Stage 2

15. If the professionals are unable to resolve the disagreement following consideration of the facts they should raise their concerns with their respective line managers who should attempt to resolve the differences within a further 48 hours.
16. Each agency will need to define, through their respective scheme of delegation, who their appropriate line management equivalents are eg:
 - A Police Detective Sergeant
 - A Named or Designated Nurse/Doctor

- A Social Work Team Manager
 - A Designated Teacher
17. It is acknowledged that some organisations, particularly in the third sector, may not have extended schemes of delegation. In these cases peer support should be considered as a means of additional advice and support.
 18. Most day-to-day inter-agency differences of opinion will require professionals to liaise with their first line manager equivalent and they should always seek advice from their agency's nominated or designated child protection adviser.
 19. If agreement can be reached the responsible line manager will advise the agency of the outcome within 48 hours and confirm by letter.

Stage 3

20. If agreement cannot be reached following discussions between line managers the issue must be referred without delay to the appropriate Head of Service and by the agency line manager to their equivalent Service Manager within 48 hours.
21. The Head of Service will contact their agency equivalent within 48 hours and convene a meeting within five working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less).
22. If resolution is reached the manager will advise the agency of the outcome within 48 hours, confirm in writing and send a copy to the Safeguarding Board manager.

Stage 4

23. Where a resolution is still not agreed the Head of Service will raise the disagreement with their Assistant Director, or equivalent level in the organisation, who will contact and meet their agency equivalent within five working days.
24. The respective agency representatives on the Safeguarding Children Board should be alerted that a disagreement has reached this stage
25. The Assistant Director will make a final decision and will write to the professional who raised the disagreement and their manager within 48 hours.
26. It will be unusual for many situations to reach this stage and for this reason there should be some consideration the Safeguarding Children Board as to whether there are wider lessons to be learned including any procedural or policy matters.

Appendix 1

ESCALATION FORM

From:
(Practitioner)

To:
(Manager)

Date:

Name of Child:	DOB:
Social Worker/Practitioner	Agency/Team

Summary of Concerns:

Requested Action:

Response:

Date:

Resolution of Issues:

Date: