

Pre School At St Saviours

Inter-agency Escalation Policy:

For the resolution of professional disagreements and instigation of responses to exceptional issues in work relating to the safety of children.

1. Introduction

Occasionally situations may arise when workers within one agency feel that the decisions made by a worker from another agency working on a child protection case is not a safe decision.

Disagreements could arise in a number of areas but are most likely to arise around:

- level of need / risk assessment
- roles and responsibilities
- intervention
- communication
- information sharing

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.

This escalation policy seeks to identify how resolution can be sought where there are differences of opinion.

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.

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.

2. Aim and Objectives

To avoid disputes that:

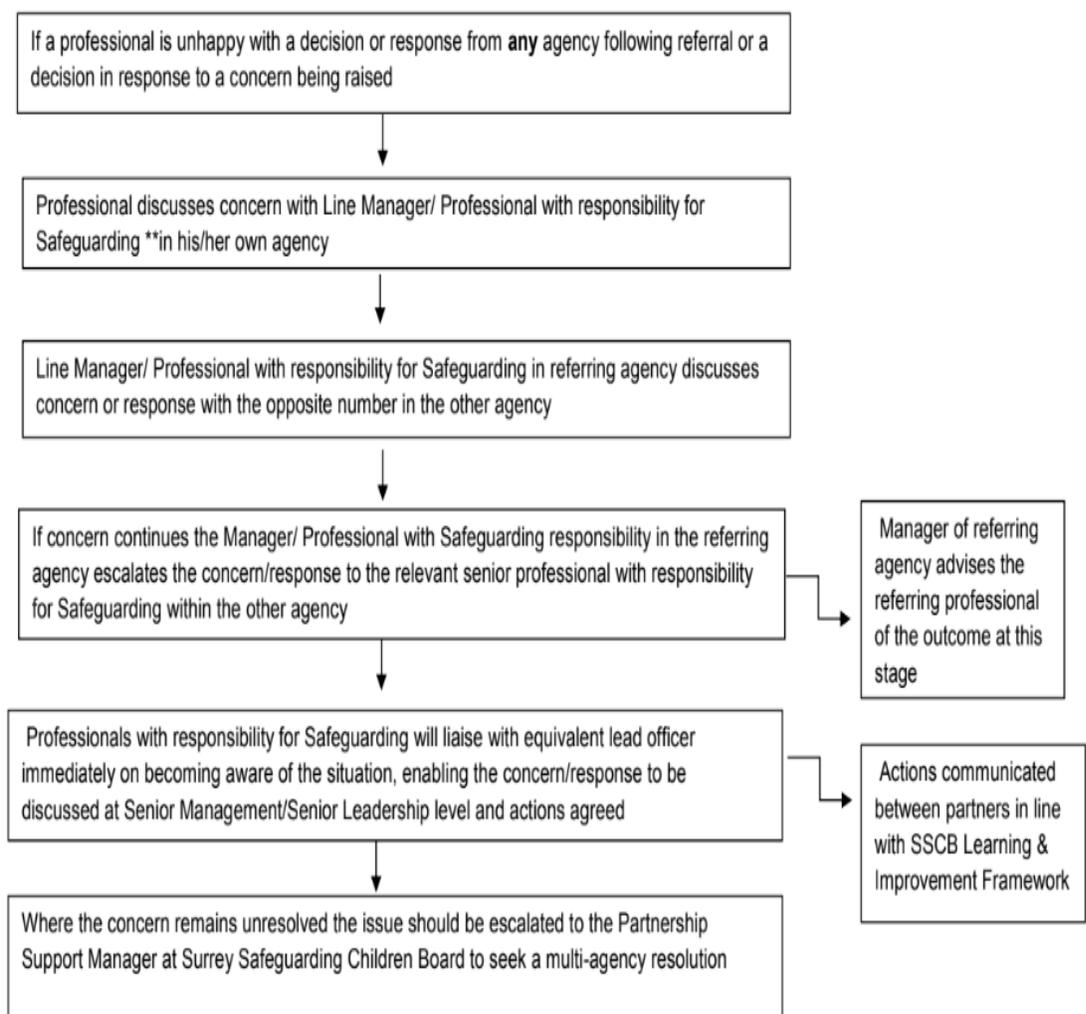
- detract from the focus on the child
- delay decision making
- resolve difficulties within and between agencies

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.

To ensure that where resolution cannot be found appropriate escalation of concerns ensures that the child is safeguarded.

3. Inter-Agency Escalation Procedure for Professionals where there is disagreement in relation to Child Welfare Concerns

Surrey Safeguarding Board now know as Surrey Children's Safeguard Partnership



** The job title and job description of the professional with safeguarding responsibility within an organisation will vary between partner agencies. Individual organisations should ensure that as part of their induction training employees are aware of who to contact to discuss a safeguarding concern or where to seek advice/supervision

Effective working together depends upon:

- An open approach and honest relationships between agencies;
- Resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies;
- A belief in genuine partnership working.

Professional disputes are reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities and airing and sharing problems in networking forums.

The principles of effective dispute resolution are:

The process of resolution should be as simple as possible;

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

The aim should always be to resolve difficulties at practitioner level between agencies.

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

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.

Learning from the resolution of disputes:

When the issue is resolved, any issues that suggest there is learning to be disseminated or that policies and procedures may need to be amended should be identified and referred to the agency's representative on the SSCP for consideration by the appropriate SSCP subgroup to take this forward.

It is useful for individuals to debrief following a dispute in order to promote continuing good working relationships and identify possible training needs and to ensure that the employee is satisfied with the outcome.

Please note that this Procedure does not apply to cases where there may be concerns about the behaviour or conduct of another professional that may impact upon a child's safety and well-being. In such cases, reference should be made to the agency's own Whistleblowing Policy or Professional Standards for Conduct. Specific issues of concern relating to an employee's behaviour or actions towards a child or young person should be referred directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

4. Professional Dissent at Child Protection Conferences

In any situation where it becomes apparent that professionals disagree about the need or otherwise for a Child Protection Plan, the relevant professionals, where possible, will

discuss this before the conference. In cases of professional dissent the Surrey County Council CP Chairs Escalation Policy should be followed. For further information please contact partnership.team@surreycc.gov.uk

5. Exceptional issues and incidents

There are occasions that are low in frequency but high in impact where existing systems, processes and resources do not meet the needs of a child or children, leaving that child unsafe and in crisis despite the best efforts of relevant agencies.

For these most serious circumstances there is a need to ensure that agencies can and do quickly secure the level of senior input required to bring resources and authority to bear to resolve the crisis, including where necessary through actions that are out of the ordinary and that may require sign off to deviate from usual policy, practice and guidance.

Such situations may include but not be restricted to children and young people for whom a secure order is in place but no placement can be found, children and young people in crisis with needs crossing a range of disciplines but where the relevant threshold for a high level crisis response is not met.

In these cases escalation would be to the senior officers:

Executive director for nursing, quality and safeguarding in health

Chief Executive Officer in Surrey County Council

Chief Constable in Surrey Police

Independent Review Service - irunit.duty@surreycc.gov.uk

Child Protection Unit - cpunit.duty@surreycc.gov.uk

Signed on behalf of the Partnership

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Jeanette Samuel - Partner