

One Minute Guide

Escalation and Professional Disagreement

September 2019

The Coventry Safeguarding Children Board has an escalation policy available on its website for all partners to use in the event of a professional disagreement. The policy is designed to be simple, clear and easy to follow, and resolve any problems at the lowest possible level.

Examples of when the partnership may wish to use the policy are as follows:

- *A referral not considered to meet the threshold for social care*
- *Disagreement over sharing of information or provision/services*
- *Disagreement over the outcome of an assessment*



Stage One – Preventing Disputes

The policy states that most disagreements between professionals can be solved using discussion and negotiation and this should happen within one working day. However, if this is not achievable staff are responsible for immediately notifying their line manager.

- Line managers should be in contact with one another within 24 hours to review the information and solve the concern.

Safeguarding leads (or equivalent) can be used in the place of line managers where appropriate. Any actions agreed should be fed back immediately to managers and the professionals involved, and all discussion and outcomes recorded on the child or young person's file.

Stage Two – Informal Dispute Procedure

Where disagreements can't be resolved at manager level, the matter should be escalated to second tier manager level without delay. These managers should discuss the matter with the designated professional, the named professional for safeguarding and the Team Around the Family where appropriate.

If the conflict involves the referral of a case or a threshold disagreement, then Early Help professionals should be involved. Again, outcomes must be recorded.

Stage Three – Formal Dispute Procedure

Should the dispute remain, the matter should be referred to the appropriate head of Service in Children's Services who will consider the matter with a manager of equivalent seniority from the agency in dispute.

The purpose of escalating the dispute to this level is to ensure all opinions have been taken into account, and efforts made to understand why the disagreement occurred and the most appropriate solution.

Ultimately a decision must be reached at the earliest opportunity:

the interests of the child take precedence over a professional stalemate!

Stage Four – Where Disagreements Remain

It is very unlikely that a dispute will reach stage four; the majority can be resolved at stages one and two through discussion and co-operation. However, if a dispute cannot be resolved then the matter must be referred to the organisation's Head of Safeguarding who will determine a course of action including, where appropriate, to refer the matter to the Chair of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board. In all cases which reach this stage, consideration should be given to holding a multi-agency review to learn lessons and develop policy as a result of the disagreement.

Remember:

- At any stage of the process actions/agreements must be fed back to the second tier management staff involved and fully recorded on the child's file
- All disputes should be resolved in a timely way to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount

Key Contacts and Further Information

Link to the Escalation Policy - https://www.proceduresonline.com/covandwarksscb/p_escalation_resol.html

Coventry Safeguarding Children Board website - https://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/206/coventry_safeguarding_children_partnership