

Escalation and resolution of professional disagreements policy

Version Control Sheet

Version	Date	Author	Status	Comment/Changes
V1.0	22/7/2019	CSAB Policy and Procedures	Author	Final
V2.0	19/5/2025	CSAB Policy/ Workforce Development	Author	

Adult Safeguarding Escalation and Resolution of Professional Disagreements

1. Introduction

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that adults are safeguarded. The welfare and safety of individuals must remain paramount throughout. The adult should also be kept informed of the process.

This procedure identifies a non-exhaustive list of potential areas of disagreement, guidance on preventing disputes and procedures to be followed when disputes cannot be resolved through discussion and negotiation between professionals at front line level. It should be noted that this relates only to disagreements in respect of safeguarding and not all disputes.

2. Potential Areas of Disagreement

- There is disagreement as to whether an Adult Safeguarding Enquiry should take place;
- If an organisation declines to undertake an enquiry or if the enquiry is not done;
- There is a disagreement over the urgency or nature of the response required;
- There is a disagreement over the sharing of information.
- There is disagreement over the outcome of a safeguarding enquiry and whether the appropriate protection plan is in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the individual.

This is not an exhaustive list.

3. Stage One: Preventing Disputes

Most disagreements can be resolved through discussion and negotiation. The professionals involved should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within one working day, but if they are unable to do so, their disagreement must be reported by them to their line managers or equivalent.

With respect to most day-to-day issues, the relevant line managers will be able to resolve the disagreement. This contact should take place within twenty-four hours. The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. It may be helpful to consider the involvement of the designated or named professional at this stage.

Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant managers involved and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded on the individual's file.

4. Stage Two: Informal Dispute Procedure

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at front line management level, the matter should be referred without delay to second tier management level.

The issue will then be considered at second tier management level, with direct communication taking place with the designated professional or named professional for safeguarding within the individual agency or at a second tier management level.

This discussion should take place in a timely manner.

5. Stage Three: Formal Dispute Procedure

If despite following the Stage Two process the disagreement remains, the matter will be referred to an appropriate Head of Service for the organisations involved.

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 so that agencies agree a way forward to ensure the interests of the adult take precedence over a professional stalemate.

6. Stage Four: Where Disagreements Remain

In the unlikely event that the professional disagreement remains unresolved, the matter must be referred to the Head of Safeguarding, who will determine a course of action including reporting the matter to the Coventry Safeguarding Adults Board Chair, if necessary.

In all cases where it has not been possible to resolve differences and/or where there may be lessons to be learned for future practice, consideration should be given to holding a multi-agency case review.

At any stage of the process, any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the second tier management staff involved and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded on the individual's file.

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