

Pan Bedfordshire Multi Agency Disagreement and Escalation Procedure

Introduction

When working with practitioners from other agencies there will at times be difference of opinion or concerns about practitioners practice in relation to a child, young person, or family. Throughout our work the safety and wellbeing of the child/young person is the primary concern, and any disagreements must not obstruct this.

If you feel that a practitioner or an agency is not acting in the best interests of the child, young person, or family you have a responsibility to respectfully challenge the practitioner or agency and escalate that concern if resolution is not achieved.

All agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are supported and know how to appropriately escalate and resolve intra-agency and inter-agency concerns and challenges about a child or young person's wellbeing and the response to their safeguarding needs.

Most disagreements can be resolved between practitioners by having a conversation about the reasons for the difference of opinions and forego the need to implement this formal 'Disagreement and Escalation Multi Agency Procedure'. Good practice and positive communications between professionals and other agencies underpin an effective working relationship and it is anticipated that attempts to resolve disagreements will be pursued in the first instance.

This procedure has been developed to be used when resolving disagreements in relation to the safeguarding needs of children and young people and it is considered that the informal process has not achieved a satisfactory outcome. Disagreements over the handling of concerns reported to any agency can impact negatively on positive working relationships and consequently on the ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

It is not designed to replace the statutory complaints processes established within individual partner agencies.

All practitioners working with children, young people and families need to know what to do about a referral or case where there are concerns or disagreement about the applications of thresholds and the referral pathway for a child(ren). This includes contacts and referrals to Children's Services and on current allocated cases to a Lead Professional.

Every agency has safeguarding procedures in place within their own agency that details lines of responsibility and accountability for case management. On those occasions where concerns need to be raised with another agency, workers should ensure this happens as soon as possible and that discussions are clearly recorded on the child/young person's records. In most cases the Lead Professional should be the first contact and if that does not resolve the concerns their manager should be contacted within one working day.

Right Care Right Person

In the event of a disagreement between the person/agency and police, the requesting person/agency in the first instance should contact the Bedfordshire Police Mental Health Feedback and Multiagency Partnership (MAPE) inbox. This inbox accepts incidents and notable practice linked to Right Care Right Person (RCRP) policy and process and generic non RCRP mental health incidents.

If you wish to escalate any incident under MAPE please use the following [Multi Agency Partners Escalation Form](#) or scan this QR code



The form will be reviewed by the MAPE team, and they will contact the person/agency with the outcome. If the person/agency are raising or reporting a concern/issue linked to a non RCRP mental health incident, please can they ensure their email contains the following details in order to receive a timely response.

- Date and Time of the incident.
- CAD Ref No./Athena Ref No./Custody Ref No.
- Subject name, DOB and location of incident.
- Partners involved in the incident e.g. NHS staff, Name and collar number of Police officer and names of any other involved parties.
- Summary of concern or issue.

The inbox is monitored regularly and if the concern or issue is an emergency then the practitioner/agency is directed to dial 999.

There is a Partnership Scrutiny Panel who meet monthly, they sample incidents each month from initial contact to resolution Determine what the correct course of action should have been to prevent any of the identified issue from arising again. Identify the relevant learning to be shared with practitioners ensure that this is both positive and constructive. Review and update relevant policies and procedures as required from learning. Identify risks and issues and raise at the relevant Partnership or internal meetings for monitoring and escalation as required. Action any recommendations from recorded dis-satisfactions from members of the public that have been reviewed as part of the Beds Police and Partners Liaison Forum.

Review demand and performances levels across each partner organisation and understand the impacts of this identifying and risks or issues that need to be addressed.

Principles to Support Resolution

It is important that practitioners feel empowered and supported within their agencies to challenge aspects of practice that they do not feel are in the best interests of the child or young person. When trying to resolve a difference of opinion or concern about practice practitioners should work within the following principles:

- The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is paramount, and should they be considered to be at significant risk then the relevant Children's Services must be contacted.
 - Bedford Borough: IFDinformation@bedford.gov.uk
 - Central Bedfordshire: IFD@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
 - Luton: MASH@luton.gov.uk

- Keeping the child, young person, and their family at the centre of all practitioner discussions.
- Ensuring the right conversations are had with the right people at the right time. Taking place face to face where possible.
- Challenge must be resolved in a timely manner.
- Concerns, actions, responses, and outcomes must be recorded.

All agencies are responsible for ensuring staff are competent and supported to escalate appropriately intra-agency and inter-agency concerns and disagreements about a child or young person's wellbeing.

Practitioners should attempt to resolve differences through discussion and/or meeting within a working week or timescale that protects the child or young person from harm (whichever is less). **Practitioners must always take immediate action using safeguarding procedures when a child or young person is known or suspected to be at risk of harm.**

There are four stages to the multi-agency escalation procedure beginning with practitioners having a conversation to resolve a disagreement and ending with an escalation to the Safeguarding Partners.

Each agency should have a recording system that can demonstrate use of the Escalation Procedure from Stages 1 - 3. Alongside an entry in the child's record, agencies should be able to report to their appropriate Safeguarding Children Partnership the outcomes of escalations at Stages 2 and 3. Each Safeguarding Children Partnership will maintain a record of all escalations and outcomes at Stage 4 but may request from time-to-time information from its partners about the outcomes of escalations at Stages 2 and 3.

It is recognised that within Voluntary, Charity and Faith sector organisations the designated/named safeguarding practitioner may be the same worker as the practitioner identifying the concern in Step 1. The escalation procedure and timeframes outlined within this document should nevertheless be adhered to. 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 practitioners at front line level.

Potential Areas of Disagreement

- There is a disagreement over the sharing of information and/or provision or services.
- There is disagreement over the outcome of any assessment and whether the appropriate action plan is in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.
- A referral not considered to meet the threshold for assessment by Children's Services.
- Children's Services conclude that further information should be sought by the referrer before a referral is progressed.
- There is disagreement as to whether the child protection procedures should be invoked.
- Children's Services and the Police place different interpretations on the need for significant agency response in relation to a child protection enquiry.

Stages of Escalation

Stage 1: Preventing Disputes

Practitioners Resolving Disagreements (timescale - resolved by day 2)

Most disagreements can be resolved between practitioners by having a conversation about the reasons for the difference of opinions and without having to escalate the matter further. If resolution is reached at Stage 1 the Safeguarding Children Partnerships do not need to be informed. *However, the matter should be recorded within each agencies child's record (a template is provided at [Appendix 1](#)).* Concerns should be raised by the practitioner with the other agency within **one working day**. If the matter remains unresolved it is the individual's responsibility to notify their Safeguarding Lead/Line Manager who should address the matter on behalf of the practitioner. At this point the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership should be informed that the escalation procedure has been triggered by completing the form at [Appendix 2](#).



Stage 2: Informal Dispute

Procedure Practitioners Resolving Disagreements (timescale - resolved by day 9)

The respective parties must identify explicitly what the problem is and have absolute clarity about the nature of the professional challenge and what the respective workers aim to achieve. Please contact the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership for assistance if you are escalating to **Stage Two** and **you do not know** who the safeguarding lead is for the organisation you wish to contact. It is the manager's responsibility to attempt to resolve the disagreement between the two agencies. Agencies must record the escalation and outcome in the child's records. The relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership must also be informed of the outcome if successfully resolved using the form at [Appendix 3](#).



Stage 3: Formal Dispute Procedure

Practitioners Resolving Disagreements (timescale - resolved by day 16)

If Safeguarding Leads, Team Managers (or equivalent) are unable to resolve the concerns they should be escalated to Stage 3 by a Senior Manager to the appropriate relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership Partner agency contact using the form at [Appendix 4](#).



Stage 4: Where Disagreements Remain

Practitioners Resolving Disagreements (timescale – resolved by day 23)

The relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager will notify the Safeguarding Partners on receipt of the form at **Appendix 4**. The Partners will seek written representation initially and may request a meeting with those involved at all levels of service delivery to seek their views and solutions to the concerns raised. If a meeting is convened it is minuted and a Resolution Plan of actions is agreed, using the form at **Appendix 5**. The relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership will make a recommendation on the most appropriate way to proceed, and this will be communicated to all involved within 5 working days of the issue being brought to their attention.



Stage 4: Practitioners Resolving Disagreements (timescale - resolved by day 23)

If concerns persist following Stage 3 the matter must be raised, via the form at Appendix Four, to the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership. They will in turn notify the Statutory Safeguarding Partners. The partners will seek written representation initially and may request a meeting with those involved at all levels of service delivery to seek their views and solutions to the concerns raised.

The relevant Partners will make a recommendation on the most appropriate way to proceed, and this will be communicated to all involved within 5 working days of the issue being brought to their attention.

Resolving Professional Disagreements Process and Timescales

Stage 1: when concern regarding practice or decision-making by a practitioner/agency arises, initial attempts should be made **between workers** to resolve the issue. If resolution cannot be achieved practitioners must escalate to the **safeguarding lead and/or team manager** in their organisation. Relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership notified at this point.

Stage 1 (day 1-2) - Take action within 24hrs of the concern arising - record escalation (using form at Appendix 1). Act immediately if harm is known or suspected.



Stage 2: The Line Manager/Safeguarding Lead should discuss the concerns/response with their opposite manager in the other agency. If resolution cannot be achieved practitioners must notify their Senior Managers (or in the case of schools, the Chair of Governors alongside the Head)

Stage 2 (to be concluded by day 9) inform the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership Safeguarding Children Partnership if resolved (using form at Appendix 2).



Stage 3: The Senior Manager will escalate to the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership Partner Agency Representative who will arrange a meeting to seek resolution. If agreement cannot be reached the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership should be informed and refer the matter to the relevant Safeguarding Partners

Stage 3 (to be concluded by day 16) inform relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership if resolved (using the form at Appendix 3). If unresolved (using the form at Appendix 4).



Stage 4: The relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership Statutory Partners will seek written representation and may request a Resolution meeting with those involved. The Partners will make a recommendation on the most appropriate way to proceed and communicate this within 5 days of notification.

Stage 4 (to be concluded by day 23) If a meeting is convened it is minuted and a Resolution Plan of actions agreed (using the form at Appendix 5).

At all steps of the process decisions should be taken in a timely way and shared with the relevant practitioner who is involved with the child or young person.

Details of the disagreement, decisions taken, and the outcomes must be recorded on the child or young person's records. Parents and carers should also be informed of the escalation and outcome (unless doing so would place the child at risk of significant harm).

Senior Managers should ensure there is a system in place within agencies to evidence and report on all escalations at stages 2 – 4.

Stage 4 – Resolution meeting required.

The meeting will be chaired by one of the Safeguarding Partners i.e.

- Either Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council or Luton Borough Council
- Bedfordshire Police
- Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board.

If concerns are raised and involve 2 of the 3 Safeguarding Partners agencies, then the chairing of the meeting should fall to the agency not involved with the case or escalation who will also act as a fresh pair of eyes on the case or escalation.

Referral forms and any supporting documentation will be circulated one week in advance of the Resolution Meeting by the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership to give members the opportunity to prepare and to allow time for additional members to attend.

Meeting process

1. A delegated Chair shall lead the meeting with the administration support from the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership.
2. The agency making the referral will present a case summary, followed by focused consideration of the practice concern, risk, options and solutions and finally conclude and agree actions with a review date (if required).
3. Consideration may be given where a referral may require more time to consider the issues effectively.
4. At the beginning or end of the meeting a short update on previous referrals maybe shared to monitor agreed outcomes otherwise these will be monitored and reported back on to the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership.
5. The meeting representatives or agencies agree to take responsibility for delegated actions and principally support the referring agency with resolving concerns and managing risk.
6. Each Safeguarding Children Partnership will keep an action log for accountability and the purposes of review, circulated within 5 working days or sooner of the meeting as appropriate.
7. Referring agencies agree to provide the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership with an update on progress towards outcomes and the lived experience of the child or young person.

Confidentiality and GDPR Information discussed in the meeting is confidential in nature. As such all details will remain confidential and are only to be shared with those with a legitimate need or where there is an adult or child safeguarding concerns.

Conflicts of interests should be openly declared and revisited regularly. Where a clear conflict of interest arises, then it may be appropriate for members to withdraw completely or from part of the meeting and come back after the relevant agenda item has been discussed.

Equality and Diversity Practice – the meetings will recognise that people have individual needs and will work in a way which allows for individuality to be recognised and promoted.

Learning

The development of learning, good practice, knowledge, and skills across the multi-agency partnership in both statutory, targeted, and early help services because of this process shall be identified and reported to the Pan Bedfordshire Assurance and Improvement Group for review, monitoring and action and place into multi-agency safeguarding training and practice and be subject to evaluation upon impact and outcomes for the child.

Appendix 1: Template for Recording Escalation/Resolution on Child/Young Person's Record

This template should be used to record an escalation/resolution on the child/young person's record.

1. Escalation Raised by (Practitioner)	
2. Practitioner's Agency	
3. Escalation Raised with (agency and team)	
4. Date Escalation Raised	
5. Circumstances of Escalation (include the reason for the escalation the nature of the disagreement, what it was about, whether it stemmed from a meeting or referral etc.)	
6. How was the Escalation Resolved?	
7. Date Escalation Resolved	

Appendix 2: Triggering of Escalation: Notification to the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP - details below)

This form should be used to notify the relevant SCP that the escalation process has been triggered, and the escalation is moving to Stage 2

1. Name of Child	
2. Date of Birth	
3. Escalation Raised by (practitioner)	
4. Practitioner's Agency	
5. Escalation Raised with (agency and team)	
6. Date Escalation Raised	
7. Circumstances of Escalation (include the reason for the escalation, the nature of the disagreement, what it was about, whether it stemmed from a meeting or referral etc.)	
8. Date Escalation moved to Stage 2	
9. Name and Position of Person Completing Form	

The form must be completed by the agency raising the escalation. Please securely email a copy of the form to the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership.

- **Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership – LSCB@bedford.gov.uk**
- **Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership - cbscb@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk**
- **Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership - lscbteam@luton.gov.uk**

Appendix 3: Informing the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership about Successful Resolution of Escalation

This form should be used to notify the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership that the escalation process has reached a resolution.

1. Name of Child	
2. Date of Birth	
3. Escalation Raised by (practitioner)	
4. Practitioner's Agency	
5. Escalation Raised with (agency and team)	
6. Circumstances of Escalation (include the reason for the escalation, the nature of the disagreement, what it was about, whether it stemmed from a meeting or referral etc.)	
7. How was the Escalation Resolved?	
8. At what Stage of the Procedure was it resolved (2 or 3)?	
9. Has the escalation been recorded on the child/young person's file?	
10. Has there been learning for you/your agency from raising the escalation?	
11. Name and Position of Person Completing Form	

The form must be completed by the agency raising the allegation. Please securely email a copy of the form to the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership.

- Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership – LSCB@bedford.gov.uk
- Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership - cbscb@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
- Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership - lscteam@luton.gov.uk

Appendix 4: Informing the relevant Safeguarding Children

Partnership about Escalation to their Chair (Stage 3)

This referral is not a substitute for raising a child safeguarding concern and should only be used if attempts to resolve the practitioner's disagreement at Stage 3 have failed.

Referrer details	
1. Date of referral:	
2. Name of referrer:	
3. Position/Role of referrer:	
4. Agency and team:	
5. Contact number:	
6. Email address:	
7. Your manager: <i>Please Note: a referral must be made with the support and awareness of your manager/agency.</i>	

Child/Young Person concerned				
1. Last name:				
2. First name:				
3. Date of birth & age:				
4. Current Address:				
5. Post Code:				
6. Telephone:				
7. Current Need level:	Early Help	Targeted Support	CiN Plan	Child Protection Plan
8. Please provide a pen picture of the child, agency intervention /involvement and a summary of your concerns, risk /barriers.				
9. Circumstances of Escalation (include the reason for the escalation, the nature of the disagreement, what it was about, whether it stemmed from a meeting or referral etc.)				
10. What attempts have been made to resolve this escalation at Stages 1-3?				

Disclosure:	
11. Is the child/young person/parent/carer aware a meeting is taking place and information may be shared as part of the multi-agency safeguarding approach to the resolution of escalations?	Please confirm. Yes / No
12. The Safeguarding Children Partnerships, with their partners are working to understand if what they do makes a difference. They therefore may wish to ask the child/young person/parent/carer for their views. Please can you confirm if they have agreed to do this?	Please confirm. Yes / No

The form must be completed by the agency raising the allegation. Please securely email a copy of the form to the relevant Safeguarding Children Partnership

- **Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership – LSCB@bedford.gov.uk**
- **Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership - cbscb@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk**
- **Luton Safeguarding Children Partnership - lscbteam@luton.gov.uk**

Appendix 5: Record of the Stage 4 Multi Agency Resolution Meeting.

The following section is not to be completed by the Referrer.

Stage 4 – Multi-Agency Meeting and Resolution Plan (to be completed at the meeting)

Meeting Date:	
Meeting Chair: (role and agency)	
Review Date (as appropriate):	

Attendees	
Name	Role and Agency

Details of the meeting discussion

(This section is not to be completed by the Referrer.)

	Resolution Plan Actions	Person responsible	Completion Date
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			