

## Berkshire Escalation Process for Professionals with a Safeguarding Concern

In cases where a professional considers the child or young person to be at imminent risk of harm due to the decision made by the other agency and the other agency professional disagrees they should refer directly to their Safeguarding Lead or line manager (where there is no safeguarding lead or they are not available) within their agency. Where time does not allow for the above due to the immediacy of the risk, the professional should use their professional judgement and as appropriate dial 999 and ask for police assistance. **Please Note:** responding to professional disagreements will not always be a linear process, and in emergency cases it may be appropriate to escalate concerns more quickly than the timescales set out below.

Stage	Action	Timescales
<p><b>Stage 1 - Promoting discussion to find a resolution for the child</b></p>	<p>Most differences of opinion can be resolved through discussion and negotiation. The professionals involved should attempt to resolve differences through discussion, and find a solution for the child <b>within one working day</b>.</p> <p>If they are unable to do so, the practitioner(s) must report them to their line manager / team manager. In cases where a concern is ongoing, or progress is slow, it may be useful to instigate a professionals meeting to understand the risks and the lived experience of the child. Most issues or concerns can be resolved, through discussion by the relevant line managers / team manager. This contact should take place within <b>24 hours (e.g within two working days of the start of the difference of opinion)</b>. The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern.</p> <p>It may be helpful to consider the involvement of the designated or named professional for safeguarding? at this stage. Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant practitioners and managers involved and the detail of the escalation and agreements reached should be recorded on the child's file held by each involved agency.</p>	<p>Discussion between professionals involved: Within 1 working day</p> <p>Discussion between line managers / team manager: Within 2 working days of the start of the difference of opinion</p>

<p><b>Stage 2 – Management finding solutions</b></p>	<p>Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at frontline/ team manager level, the professionals involved are expected to seek solutions at the next management level or appropriate safeguarding lead between the service/organisations concerned and <b>within 24 hours (e.g within 3 working days of the start of the difference of opinion)</b>. This is a regular occurrence and should be seen as standard practice to support resolutions for the child. The issue will then be considered at that management level, with direct communication taking place with the designated professional or named professional for safeguarding within the individual agency that raised the matter.</p> <p>Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant practitioners involved and the detail of the escalation and agreements reached should be recorded on the child's file. The details should also be shared with the Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager as evidence of escalation. The Independent Scrutineer can also be notified.</p>	<p>Discussion at the next management level or appropriate safeguarding leads: Within 3 working days of the start of the difference of opinion</p>
<p><b>Stage 3 – Formal Resolution</b></p>	<p>On the rare occasion that the difference of opinion cannot be resolved at stage two, the matter must be referred to a senior manager with responsibility for safeguarding who will consider the matter with an equivalent level of management within the concerned agency <b>within 24 hours (e.g. within 4 working days of the start of the difference of opinion)</b>. The purpose of escalating the issue to this level is to reach a position where differing professional opinions are thoroughly considered and any gaps in communication are addressed. The aim is to facilitate a constructive dialogue that clarifies the matter. Ultimately a consensus or agreement must be reached among the agencies involved, prioritising the best interests of the child over any professional disagreements or deadlock.</p> <p>Any action agreed should be communicated immediately to the relevant practitioners involved, and the details of the escalation and agreements reached must be recorded on the child's file held by each involved agency.</p>	<p>Discussion between senior managers with responsibility for safeguarding: Within 4 working days of the start of the difference of opinion</p>

	<p>The details should also be shared with the Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager as evidence of the escalation process. The Independent Scrutineer can also be notified.</p>	
<p><b>Stage 4 – When no solution is reached between senior leaders</b></p>	<p>In the unlikely event that the difference of opinion remains unresolved, the matter must be referred to the departmental head with lead responsibility for safeguarding, who will report the matter to the relevant local Statutory Safeguarding Children Partners and the Independent Scrutineer.</p> <p>They will also instigate a meeting of senior managers with operational responsibility for the case within a maximum of <b>48 hours (e.g. within 6 working days of the start of the difference of opinion)</b>. You may wish to consider an independent facilitator. The purpose of this meeting is to review the issues at hand and provide a final opportunity for the involved agencies to ensure that there is a full understanding of the issues before a decision is finalised. The Chair of this meeting will then report on issues arising from this process to the Serious Case Review Subgroup of the local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Partnership.</p> <p>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 professional involved, and the detail of the difference of opinion and agreements reached should be saved on the child's file held by each involved agency.</p>	<p>Instigate a meeting of senior managers with operational responsibility for the case: Within 6 working days of the start of the difference of opinion</p>

## **Conclusion**

All differences of opinion over appropriate intervention or support for a child should be resolved in a timely way so that the welfare of the child remains paramount. However, if a child is thought to be at risk of immediate harm the designated safeguarding lead/line manager in your agency should be informed immediately. If the professional feels the child is at risk of imminent harm they should use their professional judgement and if appropriate dial 999 and ask for Police assistance.

All decisions and actions must be recorded. From stage 2 onwards the details should also be shared with the Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Manager as evidence of escalation. From stage 4 the matter should be reported to the Local Statutory Safeguarding Children Partners.

If the above process highlights gaps in policies and procedures these must be brought to the attention of the Local Statutory Safeguarding Children Partners and referred to the Pan Berkshire Children Policy and Procedures Subgroup.

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