



**South Tyneside
Safeguarding Adults Board**



**South Tyneside
Safeguarding Children
Partnership**

Escalation and Challenge Protocol

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In South Tyneside we pride ourselves on good partnership relationships, but in the event of any concerns about practice we would aim to resolve any disagreements or disputes at the lowest level of each safeguarding partner's organisation.
- 1.2 The emphasis is on partners being respectful of each other's position. As a joint and shared responsibility, the onus is on each partner to communicate with each other any significant changes in their agency that may impact on the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements, consult with each other and listen to each partner's contribution. If matters cannot be resolved through discussion and negotiation between first or middle-line representatives, the issue will be brought to the attention of the South Tyneside Safeguarding Children Partnership (STSCP) and South Tyneside Safeguarding Adults Board (STSAB)
- 1.3 This guidance is aimed at colleagues across all services and agencies working with children/young people or adults. It relates specifically to inter-agency disagreement and does not cover disagreement within single agencies which should be addressed by their agency's own escalation policy.
- 1.4 At no time should professional disagreement detract from ensuring a child/young person or adult is safeguarded – the child/young person or adult's welfare and safety must remain the paramount concern throughout.

Please note:

- 1. All steps detailed in the protocol must be followed and all avenues explored to resolve the challenge, prior to any approach being made to STSCP and STSAB***
- 2. This protocol does not apply to cases where there may be concerns about the behaviour or conduct of another professional that may impact on a child/young person's or adults' safety and well-being. In such cases, reference should be made to the Allegations Management Process (Children) or Person in Position of Trust (PiPOT) (Adults)***

2. DEFINITION

- 2.1 Professional challenge is a fundamental professional responsibility. In the context of this protocol, it is about challenging decisions, practices or actions which may impact on a child / young person or adult's safety and wellbeing. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard people.
- 2.2 Occasionally situations may arise when professionals within an agency consider that the decision made by professionals from another agency is not adequate or safe. Many professional challenges will be resolved on an informal basis by contact between the professional raising the challenge (or their manager) and the agency reviewing the challenge. However, where there is a need to, unresolved concerns or worries should be escalated using the protocol.

2.3 Disagreements could arise in several areas, but are more likely to be:

- A difference of view in relation to levels of need
- A lack of understanding about roles and responsibilities
- Quality and progression of safeguarding plans
- Communication and Information Sharing
- Management of Risk

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The safety of the child/young person / adult is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and staff should be mindful of the risks in considering escalation and resolve difficulties quickly and openly.
- 3.2 Professional disagreement is reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities and there is value in exchanging and recognising differing professional views and expertise to achieve best outcomes.
- 3.3 Any learning should be applied to address any identified practice or policy issues.
- 3.4 A culture of respectful professional challenge is expected and the best way of resolving difference is through open and transparent discussion; where possible a face-to-face meeting between those concerned which will enable clear identification of the specific areas of difference and the desired outcomes for the child/young person or adult.
- 3.5 E-mail communication, whilst important, can be open to misinterpretation or make for stilted exchange of views.
- 3.6 Disagreement should be resolved at the lowest possible stage between the people who disagree but any worker who feels that a decision is unsafe should consult their manager or designated safeguarding lead, who should refer to Stage One of the pathway for escalation.

Please note: It should be acknowledged that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported.

4. TIMESCALES

- 4.1 **The safety of a child/young person or adult must not be compromised by using the Escalation Policy.**
- 4.2 **All escalations and challenges should be accurately recorded on the child/ young person / adult's record in line with your agencies recording policy, including reference to use of the stages set out in this protocol.**

It is expected that all issues will be resolved within a maximum of 5 working days and that feedback will be provided at every stage.

4.3 Any practitioner who is worried about a decision / action should contact the practitioner who made the decision / took action, to express their views and worries and discuss the rationale for the decision. (Often differences are based on a misunderstanding of agency policy and lack of communication and as such can be resolved quickly).

4.4 If professionals are unable to reach agreement about the way forward, both practitioners should raise their concerns with their line manager within one working day and progress to Stage 1 of the Escalation Pathway below.

4.5 **Stage 1 – Immediate Resolution – Line Managers – within 1 day**

The practitioner who raised the concerns should share this information with their line manager stating their evidence for the concern, what outcome they would like to be achieved and how they believe differences can be resolved. Without delay, the line manager will then contact the line manager of the practitioner who made the decision to try and negotiate a solution to the issue.

4.6 **Stage 2 – Escalation and Resolution to Senior Manager /Service Manager / Named Designated Safeguarding Lead / Role of equivalent standing**

This stage may involve a meeting between the agency raising the concern and the receiving agency (who made the original decision) to discuss the different views and find a solution that is person centred. Feedback should be provided to all involved and it may also be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships and identify possible training needs

At this point the STSCP / STSAB should be notified of the nature of the professional challenge (see Appendix 1) as the Chair for the Children Partnership and Independent Chair for the Adults Board have a role in monitoring issues identified and examining how policy and practice issues are being addressed.

4.7 **Stage 3 – Escalation and Resolution by Head of Service / Headteacher / Chief Officer or Role of equivalent standing**

At Stage 3 the Head of Service / person with equivalent role, will pass the information (including actions taken to attempt to resolve it so far and outcome expectations) to the relevant Head of Service / person of equivalent role, of the agency who made the original decision. Consideration should be given to the concerns raised and outline what action will be taken to the referring Head of Service / person of equivalent role. Feedback should be provided and if concerns remain, the matter should be passed to STSCP / STSAB Business Manager.

4.8 **Stage 4 – Formal Consideration by STSCP /STSAB**

Upon receipt of the information:

- The STSCP / STSAB Business Manager to discuss with the STSCP Chair/ STSAB Independent Chair to determine how the issue should be addressed.

- The role of the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Partnership / Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board in this process is a combination of arbitration and mediation dependent upon the circumstances.
- The STSCP / STSAB will acknowledge receipt of the issue and inform the referrer of the plan of action.
- The STSCP / STSAB Business Manager will ensure that all issues and subsequent actions will be recorded on the STSCP / STSAB Escalation and Challenge spreadsheet. This will ensure an accurate record of all challenges and outcomes is held and any themes will be considered on a 6 monthly basis by the STSCP / STSAB.

5.RECORDING AND REPORTING

- 5.1 Contemporaneous written records must be kept of all discussions, and these should be retained on the child/young person's / adult's case file/agency database. It is important that timely feedback is given to the person who raised the concern as to what action has been taken in response.

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 6.1 Issues referred via this protocol will be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis by the STSCP and STSAB Performance, Management and Evaluation sub groups.

Appendix A

Escalation Notification to the South Tyneside Safeguarding Children Partnership and South Tyneside Safeguarding Adults Board.

This template will be used to monitor use of the Escalation and Challenge Protocol and capture core issues that may relate to policy and practice

It should be completed and submitted at Stage 2 of the Escalation and Challenge Process and updated again at Stage 3 if appropriate. You do not need to include details about any child, young person, or adult.

To be submitted to STSCAP@southtyneside.gov.uk

Name	
Role	
Agency	
Contact Details	
Date	

Brief Description of the concern / worry around a decision made

Brief Description of action taken to resolve the concern / worry

Any identified learning, policy or practice issues

Appendix B

ESCALATION FLOW CHART FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Professional is unhappy with a safeguarding decision or response from any agency

Professionals - referrer and decision maker should have an open and honest conversation to try and resolve any concerns or issues ensuring that the child/young person or adult's welfare and safety remains priority.

No further escalation action required

Yes

Resolved

Aim to resolve within 1 day

No

Stage 1

Line Managers of Referring and Receiving Agencies

To discuss practitioner concerns – **within 1 day**. If not resolved move to Stage 2

Stage 2

Senior Manager /Service Manager / Named Designated Safeguarding Lead / Equivalent Role

Further discussion / meetings to resolve

Notify the STSCP / STSAB Business Manager of Escalation using Appendix A Template - email to: STSCAP@southtyneside.gov.uk

Stage 3

Head of Service / Headteacher / Chief Officer or Equivalent Role

Further discussion / meetings to resolve

If no resolution, the matter must be passed to the STSCP / STSAB for consideration see Stage 4

Stage 4

Consideration by the STSCP Chair or STSAB Independent Chair via arbitration and or mediation.

Aim to resolve within 5 working days

Feedback on outcomes to be shared at each stage with concerned professionals.