



Luton Safeguarding Adults Board

Escalation process to resolve professional disagreements

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1. Introduction

Occasionally situations arise when workers in one agency feel that the decision made by a worker from another agency regarding safeguarding an adult at risk is not a safe decision. Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies.

All workers should feel able to challenge decision-making and to see this as their right and responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice.

This policy provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by professionals from other agencies. It aims to:

- Avoid professional disputes that put adults at additional risk or obscure the focus on the adult at risk;
- Resolve the difficulties between agencies quickly and openly;
- This procedure is not a forum for complaints about professional conduct;
- If a disagreement arises within one organisation, internal procedures should be followed and the worker may consider using their agency's whistle-blowing process.

2. Safety of the Adult at Risk

The safety of the adult at risk, and the person's desired outcomes should be the primary considerations in any professional disagreement. Disagreements should be resolved as speedily as possible and at the earliest possible stage in the process. Steps must be taken, involving the person wherever possible, to ensure their safety and welfare whilst discussions take place. If an adult is at risk of immediate harm or where delay could cause further harm to the adult, it may be appropriate to initiate the process at an earlier stage.

Examples

This procedure may be appropriate in the following situations:

- Whether a concern should lead to a safeguarding enquiry at the screening stage;
- Whether the police should take action in relation to a safeguarding referral;



- Who is the most appropriate professional to lead on a safeguarding enquiry;
- Whether an agency has taken sufficient action following a safeguarding enquiry.

Timescales for implementing the procedure:

High Risk of Harm	RED	Medium Risk of Harm	AMBER	Low Risk of Harm	GREEN
Within 24 hours		With 3 working days		Within 5 working days	

3. Stages of the Procedure

Stage 1: Professionals involved

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the disagreement between the professionals involved. Differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported. It may be useful for individuals to debrief with their line manager following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

If the process needs to progress to a higher stage, it is important that the professionals involved are included in discussions at each stage of the process. They will be able to provide detail around the issues, information about the person's preferred outcomes and will know the person well enough to ensure well-informed discussions take place.

Stage 2: Line Managers

If the disagreement cannot be resolved at stage one, the professionals should consult a line manager within their own agency to clarify their thinking in order to specify what the disagreement is about and what they aim to achieve through the escalation procedure.

The line manager should raise the concerns and attempt to resolve the disagreement with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency. The line manager should also confirm that steps have been taken to ensure the safety of the adult whilst discussions take place.

At stage 2, the line manager involved should notify the safeguarding lead within their organisation of the dispute and of the outcome, regardless of whether the dispute needs to progress to stage 3.

Stage 3: Organisational Safeguarding leads

If the disagreement is not resolved at stage 2, the line managers should request that their respective safeguarding leads attempt to resolve the professional disagreement.

It is important that the professionals involved in the original disagreement are included in discussions. They will be able to provide detail around the issues, information about the person's desired outcomes and will know the person well enough to ensure well-informed discussions take place.



The safeguarding leads should confirm that steps have been taken to ensure the safety of the adult whilst discussions take place. It may be helpful to convene a multi-agency safeguarding meeting or best interest meeting to review risks to the individual and ensure an interim protection plan is in place.

At stage 3, the safeguarding leads in the organisations involved should notify the safeguarding lead within their commissioning organisation of the dispute.

Stage 4: Safeguarding Board Representatives

If the disagreement is not resolved at stage 3, the matter should be referred to the agencies' nominated Plymouth Safeguarding Adults Board representative. They should agree a resolution with their colleagues at Board level.

Board representatives must be mindful of the need to resolve disagreements as speedily as possible, ensuring that the safety of the adult at risk is the primary consideration.

4. Recording and Communicating Decisions

At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in the case record and shared with relevant professionals, including professionals involved in the original disagreement. There should be written confirmation between the parties about the agreed outcome and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.