

Multi Agency Escalation Policy

This Policy applies to all agencies

Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the decision made by a worker from another agency is either not safe or not in the best interests of a child; this may relate to professional involvement in early help services, children in need, child protection or children looked after.

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children.

Ensuring the safety of individual children is the paramount consideration in resolving any professional disagreement.

As professionals, we should always be curious about why decisions are made and question if we do not feel this is right. Whatever agency we are from, we should feel confident and able to challenge decision-making. We have a professional responsibility to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice and therefore raising such concerns is an entirely legitimate activity.

If we are on the receiving end of a professional challenge, we should see this as an opportunity to reflect on our decision making.

St Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) Escalation Policy provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

- Encouraging professional curiosity
- Avoiding professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus on the child
- Resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly
- Identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures

Resolution of the issues raised should be sought within the shortest possible timescale to ensure the child's safety and best interests are safeguarded.

Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage.

However, if a child is thought to be at risk of immediate harm, discretion should be used as to which stage is initiated.

Issues relating to looked after children should be taken up with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), who has a role in overseeing services for looked after children. For Child Protection conferences, make sure you utilise the Child Protection Chairs.

The escalation process is outlined and shown in the diagrammatic form below

Stage One

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem. This should normally be between the people who disagree. It should be recognised however that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some practitioners to pursue this unsupported. Practitioners should consult with their line manager or practitioner lead as appropriate.

Stage Two

If unresolved the problem should be referred to the practitioner's own line manager or their organisations safeguarding children lead, who will discuss with their opposite number in the other agency. At this stage it may be useful for the line managers/safeguarding children leads to agree a meeting between themselves and the concerned practitioners to assist with the exploration of the problem.

If the problem remains unresolved the line managers will refer to their line managers for consideration. This process will continue until a resolution can be found.

Note: some organisations may not have a defined line management structure and in these circumstances the practitioner with concerns about an unresolved disagreement should take responsibility for raising their concerns through the line management structure in the other agency.

Stage Three

In the rare circumstances where the problem cannot be resolved through line management arrangements, the matter will be referred to the relevant Head of Service or equivalent.

At this stage The Escalation Notice needs to be completed and sent to those involved.

Stage Four

If the Escalation is still unresolved the Chair of the Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) Board or one of the other key partners will offer mediation. Where felt appropriate, a mediation meeting will be set up involving as a minimum one key partner, the respective organisations representatives and the SCP manager.

A clear record should be kept at all stages, by all parties. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement (See outcomes form) and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

When the issue is resolved, any general issues should be identified and referred to the agency's representative on the SCP to inform future learning.

It may also be helpful for individuals to debrief following some disputes to promote continuing good working relationships.

3. Timescales

Stage One

Concern raised by practitioner about decision-making, practice or practitioner from another agency.

- 1 day

Stage Two

Practitioner raising concern to discuss with line manager within one working day.
Line manager to seek resolution within 1 working day.

- 2 days

Stage 3

At this point the Service Manager or equivalent post is consulted.

The Escalation Notice should be completed at this point and should record information and document the issue raised. This will be forwarded to the Service Manager or agency equivalent) within 5 working days. A copy of this notice will be sent to the SCP (Safeguarding Children Partnership) Business Manager at SCPescalations@sthelens.gov.uk

- 5 days

Stage 4

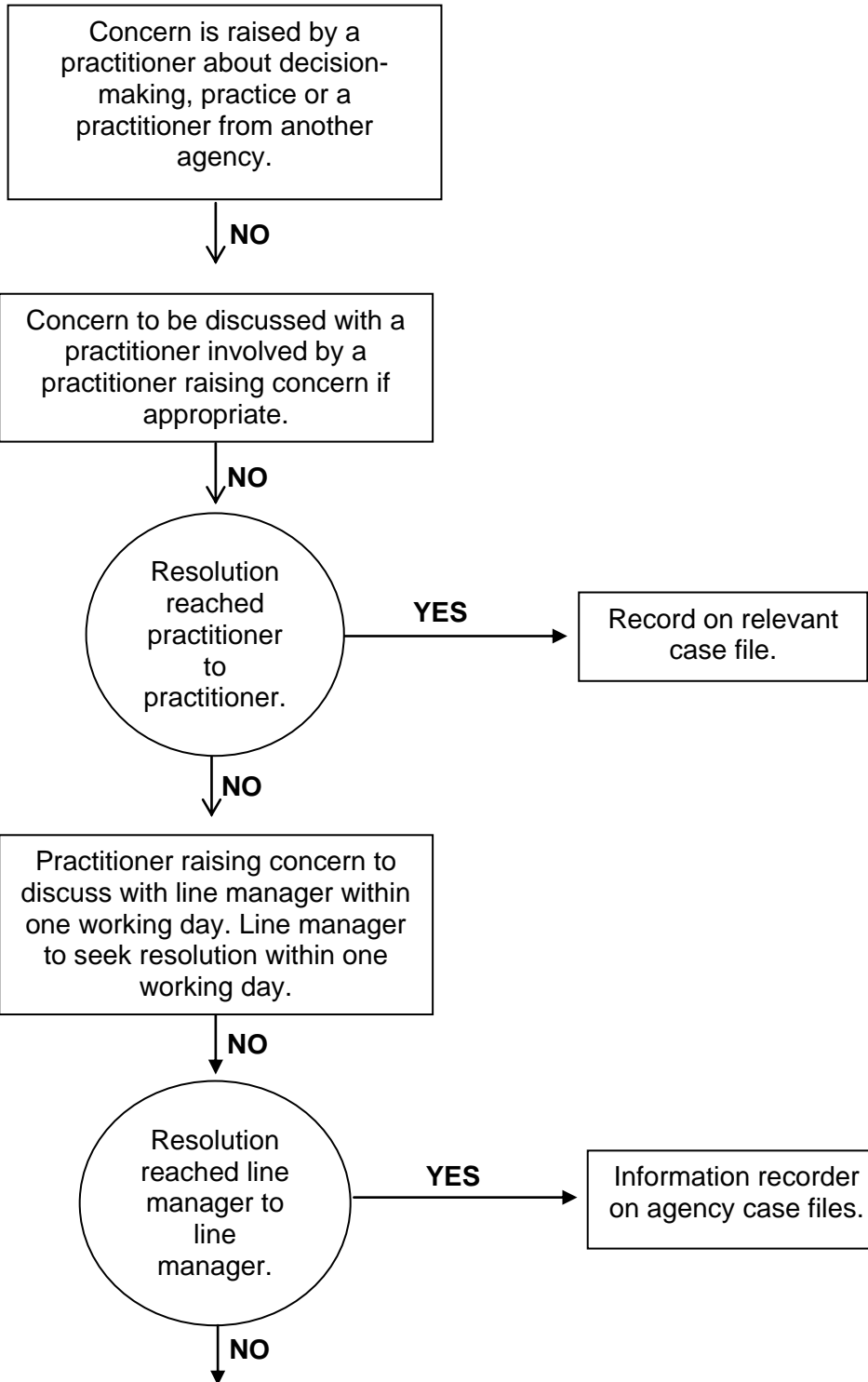
It is rare for an escalation to reach this stage – however should the Escalation remain unresolved. The Chair of the SCP or one of the Key Partners will be asked to mediate.

- 3 Days

Resolution

Once the Escalation is resolved a Resolution Form should be completed and returned to SCPescalations@sthelens.gov.uk

Dispute resolution prior to invoking the Escalation Procedure



Escalation process invoked

Escalation notice to be completed within 5 working days and copy sent to SCP Business Manager and agency service manager or equivalent.

NO

