



Resolution Policy

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1. Introduction

Working with adults, children and families with identified risk factors, is often complex and means from time-to-time professionals may hold a different professional opinion. It is important that this is fully understood as a different perspective has the potential to cause conflict and lead to poorer outcomes.

Often there may be no right or wrong solution and quite legitimately practitioners may exercise their professional judgement differently and have differing opinions of what the right approach should be.

It is of vital importance that adults, children, young people and their families do not become entangled in professional disagreements and that where such disputes do occur, they can be resolved together, with minimum delay.

In reaching a resolution it is always essential that disputes are approached in a considerate manner and one which both respects and seeks to understand the views and concerns of others when engaging with the adult, child, young person and their family.

This resolution process has been agreed with all our partners, as a mechanism for seeking solutions that places the needs of the adult, child and the family at its centre.

The primary aim of the resolution process is that professional disagreements are resolved at the lowest possible level, by those working directly with adults, children and families.

The resolution process recognises that adults, children and young people are best safeguarded when professionals who support them and their families, work well together through timely, respectful, solution-focused, and person/child-centered communication and coordinated action.

The resolution process applies to and should be used by **ALL** agencies who work with adults, children and families in Swindon.

In relation to professional disagreements, Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review Case 'Alan' (2023) highlighted the importance of "encouraging both the airing of concerns about children and the expectation that those concerns will be received positively and responded to proactively, accepting that raising concerns about children by one agency to another is a critical part of keeping children safe".

Safeguarding Adult Reviews 'Sally' (2024); 'Ethan' (2024); 'Richard' (2024); 'Wendy' (2024) and 'Robert' (2024) all highlighted the need for concerns to be escalated as this was not considered by practitioners in all these reviews.

The safety of individual adults and children is the paramount consideration in any professional difference/disagreement, and any unresolved issues should be addressed with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child or adult. All workers should feel able to challenge decision-making and to see this as their professional right and responsibility in order to safeguard the adult or child and to promote effective multi-agency safeguarding practice.

This policy provides professionals with a framework within which they can raise concerns they may have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies in a way that:

- Avoids professional anxiety or disagreement that puts adults/children at risk or potentially obscure the focus on the adult/child
- Resolves the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly
- Identifies any areas of practice where there is a need to clarify or review multi-agency policies or procedures.

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

If there are significant concerns for the adult or child's well-being that requires immediate action at any stage of this process and there is potentially no resolution, then the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership and Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Executives must be informed immediately (Stage 5).

It should also be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some professionals to pursue unsupported resolutions and in these cases the safeguarding lead for that organisation should support them throughout.

Any worker who feels that a professional decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult their Safeguarding Lead or Line Manager to:

- Clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem
- Be specific as to what the concern is about; and what they aim to achieve
- Evidence the nature and source of their concerns and keep a record of all discussions

It may be useful for professionals to have a de-brief following some disputes in order to promote continued good working relationships.

It is important to remember that Swindon child protection conference decisions have a dissent process. Where disagreement relates to child protection conference decision, the dissent process should be exhausted before the resolution process is implemented.

2. Key Principles

1. Keep the focus on what is always in the adult or child's best interests.
2. Professionals must share the key information and factual evidence, their interpretation and assessment appropriately and what may be the likely impact on the adult or child
3. Professionals must seek to resolve the issue in a timely way.
4. Resolve professional disagreement which may place adults or children at further risk by obscuring the focus on the adult or child or which may delay decision making.
5. Work in a Professional way so that the adult, child and family are not aware of the professional disagreements under discussion. This may be one of the only exceptions where we would hold a professional meeting and the members of the family or adult may not be included.
6. Liaise with the lead professionals and safeguarding or adult or child protection designates in the respective organisations at the earliest opportunity. Clarity is expected from all agencies in respect of designated roles and responsibilities.
7. Ensure that at each stage of the process there is an accurate record made of the agreed actions of each agency.

If at any time a professional considers an adult or child is at immediate risk of significant harm then the professional must ensure that their concerns are escalated on the same working day using established safeguarding procedures i.e. through Children and Families Contact Swindon, Adult Safeguarding or contacting the police.

3. The Resolution Process

This process is managed through the resolution procedure which is outlined in detail in the table below. It is not always clear to professionals if the resolution process is the most appropriate approach to take, and when this happens advice should be sought from the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Strategic Support Unit who can be contacted by sending an email to Safeguardingpartnership@swindon.gov.uk

All disputes should be resolved in a timely way, at the earliest possible level, so that the welfare of the adult or child remains paramount. In some situations, it may be necessary to instigate all the stages within a short period of time or to escalate the process so that the safety of the adult or child is not compromised.

All practitioners have a positive duty to facilitate the use of the resolution process with other practitioners even when they do not agree that the use of the procedure is

necessary. For example, there is a duty to immediately provide relevant contact details for line management where this relates to the necessary next stage in the resolutions process.

Wherever possible, at each of the stages, discussions should be carried out between professionals of a similar level of seniority within their respective agencies. This is to avoid situations where there is an imbalance between the seniority of professionals which might inhibit the conduct of an open, frank and balanced discussion about the case.

For example, it would be appropriate for a school Head Teacher to discuss the disagreement with the member of staff in the relevant organisation of the equivalent seniority, closest to practice in the first instance. If an imbalance arises due to inappropriate escalation, the more junior member of staff should escalate the issue to their line manager, who should do the same until a similar level of seniority between the professionals discussing the case between the agencies is achieved.

Notwithstanding the above, at all times it should be recognised that the different partnership agencies have different structures and that it may not always be possible for discussions to take place between partnership colleagues of the same equivalent grade. In every case, anyone raising a safeguarding concern/disagreement with a partnership colleague, irrespective of position or grade must be listened to and their concern treated with professionalism and respect.

All communication between agencies, from Stage 2 onwards, should be documented, within an email. At Stage 3 and 4, the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership should be copied into emails. At Stage 5 of the process, Swindon Safeguarding Partnership should receive an escalation email with Appendix 1 completed and attached.

Each agency is also required to keep their own log of any instances where they have used the resolution process themselves. This log should include a record for each stage of the process; start date, who the concern was raised with, and the outcome or resolution agreed. These logs will provide the information needed to enable the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the resolution process on a regular basis.

4. Resolution Stages

Stage	What	When
Stage 1: Internal Discussion	Any professional who disagrees with a decision should initially consult with their line manager so that they can discuss the issue to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem and be specific about what the disagreement is about. This discussion may help clarify the issues at this stage so that the professional in question no longer disagrees with the decision made by the other professional.	The discussion should take place within two working days of the disagreement or concern arising.
Stage 2: Inter-agency Discussion	Most disagreements can be resolved between professionals by discussing the reasons for the difference of opinion and without having to escalate further. The professional who has a concern should speak to the other professional to better understand their position and discuss their concern. These discussions should be conducted in an open and professional manner without the need for either party to be accusatory or defensive. At all times the needs of the child should be paramount. From Stage 2 onwards any communication between agencies should be documented.	The discussion should take place within five working days of the completion of Stage 1 above.
Stage 3: Team/Service Manager	If the professionals cannot resolve their disagreement at Stage Two, their disagreement must be reported to their line managers or second-tier managers or equivalent. In most cases the relevant line managers /second-tier managers will be able to resolve the disagreement between them.	The line manager should contact their opposite number in the partner agency, copying in the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership, within five working days of the completion of the Stage 2 above.

	The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant professionals and the details of the dispute and agreements reached should be recorded on the adult or child's file. Any communication between agencies should be documented and sent in an email. Swindon Safeguarding Partnership, safeguardingpartnership@swindon.gov.uk should be copied into the email.	
Stage 4: Heads/ Directors of Service/Senior Managers	Where it is not possible to resolve the disagreement at second-tier management level (Stage three), the matter should be referred without delay to Heads/Directors of Service/Senior Managers The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant professionals and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded in the adult or child's file. The purpose of escalating the dispute to this level is to reach a position where differing professional opinions have been considered and efforts made to explore whether the dispute has arisen through lack of clarity or understanding in the professional dialogue. Ultimately a decision will need to be reached where agencies agree a way forward where the interests of the adult or child take precedence over a professional stalemate. Any communication between agencies should be documented and sent in an	The Heads/Directors of Service/Senior Manager should contact their opposite number in the partner agency within five working days of the completion of Stage 3 above

	email. Outcome of Stage 4 should be emailed to Swindon Safeguarding Partnership, safeguardingpartnership@swindon.gov.uk	
Stage 5: Swindon Safeguarding Partnership	In the unlikely event that the professional disagreement remains, the disagreement should be escalated to the Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Manager at the Partnership Strategic Support Unit. This can be done by completing the form at Appendix 1 and sending it to Safeguardingpartnership@swindon.gov.uk The Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Manager will then contact the person(s) who represent the organisation within the Partnership or its Executive Group member to seek a final resolution via a Resolution Panel. The Resolution Panel should involve relevant Directors/Heads of Service and will be chaired by the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership chair. The Partnership's Independent Scrutineer should also be included at this stage. It is important to also understand that on occasions the decision of director/head of director/head will stand, and they are accountable for the decision made. Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant people with details of the agreements reached.	A referral should be made to the Safeguarding Partnership by, or on behalf of the Heads/Directors of Service within five working days of the completion of Stage 4 above using the form at Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Resolution Form (for use at Stage 5 of the process)

RESOLUTION FORM	
Name and D.O.B of the Adult(s)/ Child(ren)/ Family	
Address	
Name of the agency seeking a solution	
Name, role and contact details of agency representative seeking a solution	
What are you worried about?	
What action do you believe is needed?	

Tell us what you have done so far

Stage	Date Contact Made	Who did you contact (Name & Title)	How did you contact them	Outcome/Reason for moving to next stage
1				
2				
3				
4				

If you have not found a suitable resolution on completion of Stage 4 (Day 17) then please forward this completed form on to the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Safeguardingpartnership@swindon.gov.uk

It may be useful for individuals to have a de-brief following some disputes in order to promote continued good working relationships. A post decision reflective learning event should be held with all stakeholders if the escalation reaches stage 5.

NOTE

Where a disagreement or concern relates to the behaviour or conduct of an employee, the Southwest Adult in a Position of Trust Framework should be followed.

https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/download/106/south_west_position_of_trust_framework

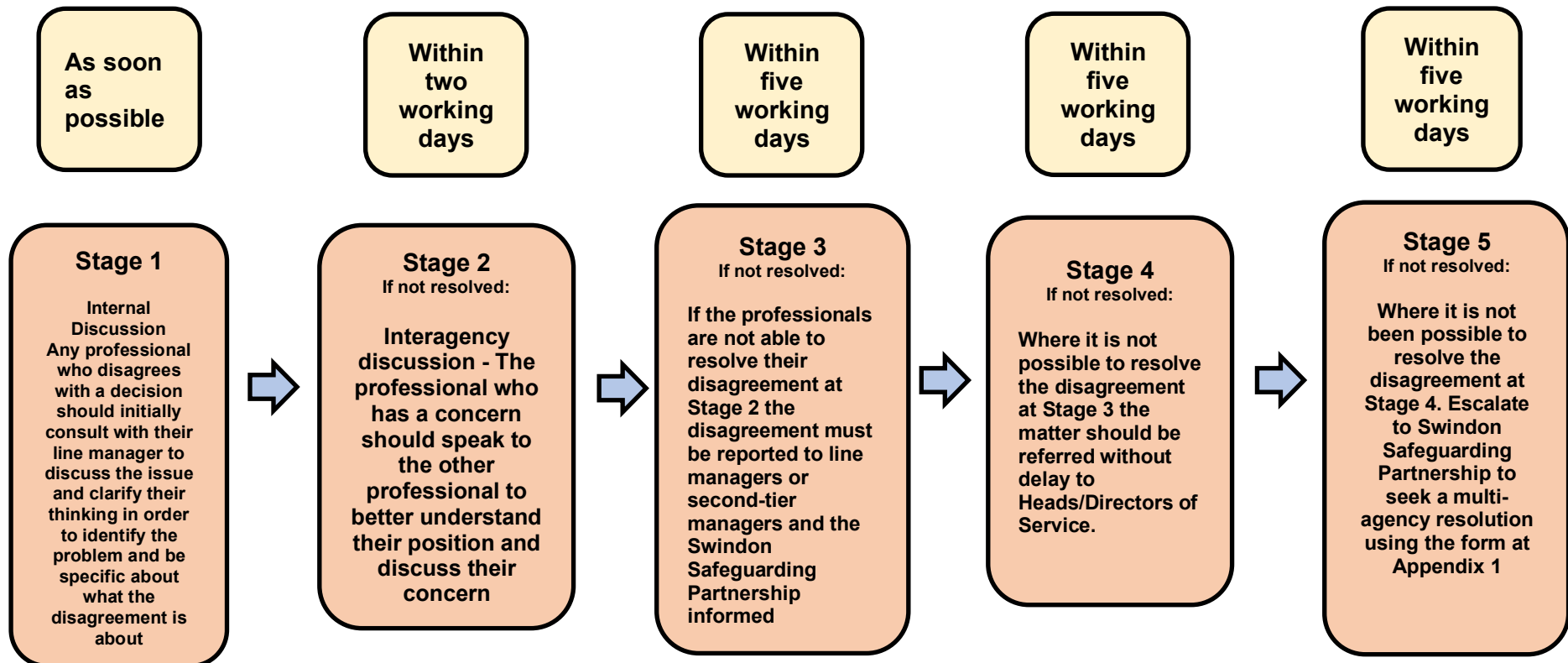
Where there are concerns relating to an adult who works with children and may have caused the harm or could cause harm to children and young people. The LADO should be informed.

[Allegations against those who work with children and the role of the local authority designated officer lado](#)

Appendix 2

Swindon Safeguarding Partnership Resolution Process Flowchart

Do not delay in taking action if you consider the adult/child to be at risk of significant harm
Contact: Children and Families Contact Swindon for concerns about a child, Adult Safeguarding or dial 999



Details of the disagreement must be recorded in each agency's records and resolution forms at Stage 5 must be completed within five working days.

Any learning opportunities for multi-agency practice should be referred to the Safeguarding Partnership Strategic Support Unit
Safeguardingpartnership@swindon.gov.uk

Appendix 3

Examples of utilizing resolution policy for health professionals:

Example 1: Professionals remain concerned that the response to their safeguarding referral has not mitigated risk. If they believe the child or adult with care and support needs is still at risk, they should use the escalation process. The policy should state clearly that this situation must not result in a delay of action followed by a repeat safeguarding referral; escalation should occur immediately if concerns persist.

Example 2: If the Local Authority has concerns about the safeguarding response of a health-commissioned provider:

At Stage 3 within General Practice, escalation should go to the Named GP.

At Stage 4, to Primary Care commissioners.

For other health-commissioned services, internal escalation routes should be exhausted before Stage 5, where the ICB becomes involved as the representative safeguarding partner for Health.