



Merton
Safeguarding
Children Board

Escalation Procedure

To be read in conjunction with the London Child Protection Procedures

http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/profess_conflict_res.html

Authors: Paul Bailey Merton Lead:	Date: March 2016 Version 1	Approved By MSCB: 28 June 2016	Review Date: June 2018
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure is a guide to be referred by managers and practitioners working in the London Borough of Merton when managing and seeking to resolve situations of professional disagreement and conflict between partner agencies in relation safeguarding children and young people.
- 1.2 Single agency professional disagreement is to be managed using individual agency procedures
- 1.3 This procedure should be read in conjunction with the London Child Protection Procedures http://www.londoncpc.co.uk/chapters/profess_conflict_res.html
- 1.4 Professional disagreement and conflict must not place children and young people at risk and adherence to this procedure in regard to the time frames and escalation process is essential to good practice. The timely and effective resolution of professional disagreement and conflict between professionals is important to ensure there is no delay in the assessment and decision making process.
- 1.5 Professional disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around thresholds, roles and responsibilities, the need for action and communication. Some examples may include:
 - Where one professional disagrees with the action of another around a particular course of action, such as closing involvement with a child or family.
 - Where one worker or agency considers that another worker or agency has not completed an agreed action for no acceptable or understood reason.
 - Where one agency considers that the plan is inappropriate and that a child's needs are not being best met by the current plan. This could include a disagreement that a particular agency does not feel it needs to be involved, but another does.
 - Where a member of staff or an agency considers that the child's safeguarding needs are better met by a Child Protection Plan and have requested that a Child Protection Conference be called and feel that this has been refused.

2. Aim of this procedure

- 2.1 This procedure aims to the promote effective management professional disagreements and conflict and achieve the following;
 - avoid professional disputes that put children at risk, obscure the focus on the child, or delay decision making;
 - resolve difficulties (within and) between agencies quickly and openly;
 - identify problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures.
- 2.2 The safety of children and young people is paramount and any professional disagreement or unresolved issues should be escalated using this procedure and with an understanding of safeguarding risks for the child.

3. Escalation Process

- 3.1 Professionals providing services to children and their families should work cooperatively across all agencies, using their skills and experience to make a robust contribution to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare within the framework of discussions, meetings, conferences and case management.
- 3.2 All agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent and supported to escalate appropriately intra-agency and inter-agency concerns and disagreements about a child's well-being.
- 3.3 Concern or disagreement may arise over another professional's decisions, action or lack of actions in relation to a referral, an assessment or an enquiry.
- 3.4 Professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion and/or meeting within a working week or a timescale that protects the children from harm (which ever is less).
- 3.5 Most day-to-day inter-agencies differences of opinion will require a LA social care manager to liaise with their (first line manager) equivalent in the relevant agencies e.g.
 - Police detective sergeant
 - Designated safeguarding children health professional
 - Designated safeguarding children teacher
- 3.6 Resolution should be sought between agencies at practitioner level in a prompt and timely way. Where attempts to resolve the professional disagreement are unsuccessful and one worker/agency continues to believe that the child remains at risk of significant harm the escalation process is to be followed. The agency / practitioner have the responsibility to escalate the concern using this procedure.
- 3.7 Management of profession disagreement and escalation involves the following stages;
 - Recognition that there is a disagreement over a significant issue, which impacts on the safety and welfare of a child
 - Identification of the problem, and clarity about the disagreement and what you aim to achieve.

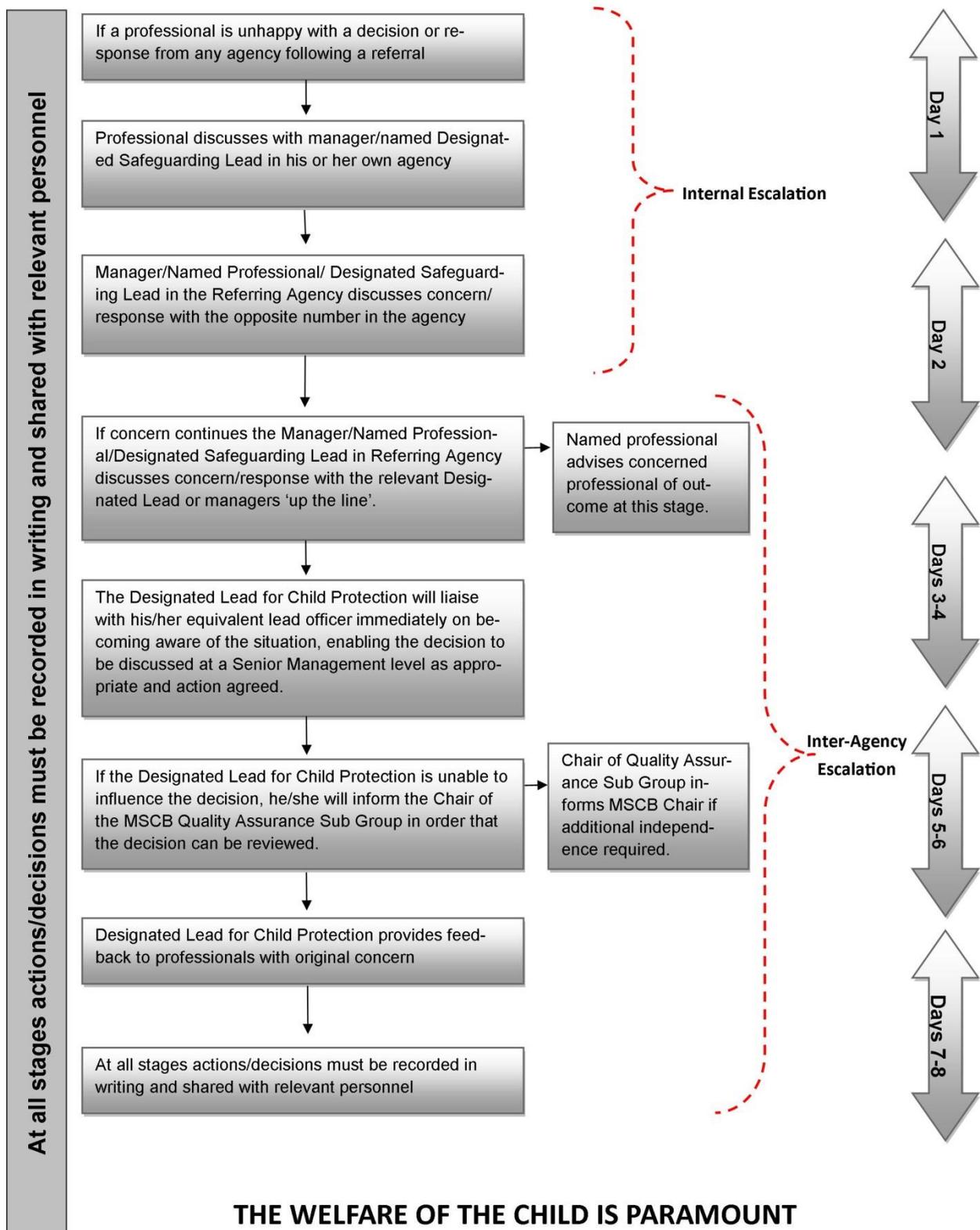
These two stages could involve consulting a colleague to clarify thinking.
- 3.8 Initial attempts should be made to resolve the problem. This should normally be between the practitioners who disagree, unless the child is at immediate risk. (**timeframe 2 Working days**)
- 3.9 It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported.
- 3.10 If unresolved, the problem should be referred to the worker's own line manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will discuss with their opposite number in the partner agency. (**timeframe 1 Working day**).
- 3.11 If the problem remains unresolved, the line manager will escalate the professional disagreement (see flow chart).

- 3.12 If the professional disagreement remains unresolved, consideration will be given to referring the matter to the MSCB Quality Assurance Sub Group to offer mediation as soon as possible bearing in mind the impact on the child or young person. The Chair of the Quality Assurance Sub Group may decide to involve the MSCB Independent Chair.
- 3.13 Each agency will keep a record at all stages, by all parties. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.
- 3.14 At each stage it is important that the person who originally raised the concern is given feedback on what action has been taken in response. It is the responsibility of the person to whom the issue is referred to ensure that clear and timely feedback is provided.
- 3.15 When the issue is resolved, any other concerns arising from the process should be identified and referred to the agency's representative on the MSCB for consideration by the relevant MSCB Sub-Group to inform future learning and possible changes to existing policies and procedures.
- 3.16 It may also be useful for individuals to debrief following professional disagreement to facilitate reflection and learning from the process.

Whistleblowing and LADO

Please note that this procedure does not apply to cases where there may be concerns about the behaviour or conduct of another professional that may impact on a child's safety and well-being. In such cases, reference should be made to the agency's own Whistleblowing Policy / Raising Concerns at Work Policy, Safeguarding Policies and the Local Authority's Designated Officer (LADO).

Appendix A: Local Safeguarding Children Board Inter-agency Escalation Procedure for Professionals with Child Protection or Child Welfare Concerns



Appendix B Escalation Contacts within Agencies

Where professional disagreements have not been resolved at a local level, escalation to the following key roles must be considered:

Childrens Social Care

Quality Assurance & Practice
Development Manager
0208 545 3211

Education

Education Schools:
Assistant Director for Education

LBM Education Staff
Immediate Line Manager

Health

Merton CCG
Designated Nurse
0203 668 1848

Metropolitan Police Service

MPS Crime Manager,
Detective Chief Inspector
020 8649 3046