

Merton Council Escalation Procedure **for Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations**

Background

From time to time voluntary and community sector organisations may wish to raise issues of concern with the Council. We have put in place an escalation procedure as a guide for workers in organisations to be clear on how to do this.

Organisations will be requested to raise points of concern with Merton Council in a timely and appropriate way, in line with the council's escalation procedure as recommended by the [Compact Board](#). In accordance with this procedure, organisations can raise concerns informally through conversation, before they develop into more serious disagreements or issues.

Occasionally situations arise when people feel the need to raise a point of concern following this guidance. However, the safety of residents is a paramount consideration. If an organisation thinks that an adult they are working with is being abused, then they would need to follow the [Safeguarding Adults procedure](#).

All organisations should adopt a Think Family Approach. If any wish to raise a safeguarding concern regarding a child, they would need to refer to [Children's Safeguarding](#). If there are any concerns relating to a child, please refer to the Merton Children Safeguarding Board's Escalation Procedure.

https://www2.merton.gov.uk/mscb_escalation_procedure_june_2016.pdf

Whistleblowing, also called 'making a disclosure in the public interest', is encouraged when you report suspected wrongdoing in or to an organisation. For more information on how to make a disclosure, please follow the following link:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/council-and-local-democracy/plans-and-policies/whistleblowing-policy>

Alternatively, residents can raise concerns and complaints directly to the Council <https://www.merton.gov.uk/contact-us> (contact number: 020 8274 4901).

Escalation Procedure

All workers should feel able to raise and resolve areas of concern and to see this as their right and responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency practice.

Concerns could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to relate to:

- Threshold for interventions
- Services and support offered
- Decisions made
- Policies and procedures
- Roles and responsibilities
- The need for action
- Communication

Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure residents are protected and areas of concern should be highlighted and resolved at the lowest possible stage.

At all stages of the process, actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern. In particular, this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the concern and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

Stages of the Escalation Procedure

Stage One-Worker to Worker (with manager support)

Most disagreements can be resolved through discussion and negotiation with the workers in the different organisations involved. Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the concern at the lowest possible level. A worker should initially consult a supervisor/line manager within their respective organisation to support this. When consulting with the supervisor/line manager they should:

- Be specific as to what the concern is about;
- Be clear about what they aim to achieve.
- Adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and any local data sharing agreements

It may be useful for individuals to meet together to promote continuing good working relationships. With respect to most day-to-day concerns, the supervisor/line manager should be able to resolve the disagreement.

Stage Two-Manager to Manager

If the problem is not resolved at stage one, the concerned worker should contact their supervisor/line manager within their own agency who should raise the concerns with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency.

Stage Three-Senior Manager to Senior Manager

If the problem is not resolved at Stage Two, the supervisor/manager reports to their respective operations or senior manager. These 2 managers would review the situation and attempt to resolve the concern through discussion, then follow up in writing what has been agreed. It is understood that some organisations will have different structures, so may need to be escalated at a different level (for example manager to senior manager).

Stage Four-Formal Complaints Process

In the unlikely event that the situation remains unresolved, workers/managers in organisations are welcome to follow the council's formal complaints processes. It should be noted that the complaints process can be followed at any stage. The concern may be more relevant to go to stage 5 if it relates directly to the Merton Compact.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/council-and-local-democracy/complaints-compliments-and-comments>

Stage Five (if applicable)-Merton Compact Dispute Resolution Procedure

This stage would only apply if the matter relates to the Merton Compact.

The [Merton Compact](#) provides a framework for joint working between the public and voluntary sectors in Merton. It provides a standard against which the actions of signatory organisations can be judged and if used correctly, can help to prevent disputes from arising.

By committing to the Merton Compact, organisations are agreeing to try and solve disagreements in a constructive manner. A [Compact Dispute Resolution Procedure](#) has been developed to help organisations through the difficulties associated with disputes and disagreements.

Escalation Process

