

**Berkshire Local Safeguarding Children Boards
Resolving Professional Disagreements about
Safeguarding Children (Escalation Policy)**

April 2017

Bracknell Forest
Local Safeguarding
Children Board



Reading Local
Safeguarding
Children Board



1. Context

- 1.1 Safeguarding children and promoting their welfare is a responsibility shared by all organisations which often requires collaboration. This includes appropriate information sharing and working to multi-agency agreed decisions/plans. Occasionally situations arise when workers within one organisation may believe or consider that the actions, inactions or decisions of another do not adequately safeguard a child. Disagreements are most likely to arise around;
- decisions about levels of need or whether a child or family has met the thresholds for a service
 - the roles and responsibilities of the different organisations involved
 - the actions or lack of action in progressing plans
 - the quantity or quality of communication between individuals and/or organisations
- 1.2 Professionals in all agencies including schools have a duty to act proactively and assertively to ensure that a child's welfare is the paramount consideration. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) recognises that good practice will sometimes include constructive challenge between workers. Therefore, when a professional disagrees with the practice of another professional on the grounds of the child's welfare they should work with the colleague to first seek to understand the rationale for the decision. However, if concern still exists for the child's safety and wellbeing the professional concerned should challenge the practice using this policy. This policy provides workers, Designated Safeguarding Leads and managers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:
- Avoiding professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus on the child
 - Resolving the disagreements between agencies quickly and openly
 - Identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and promote resolution via amendments to multi-agency protocols and procedures
- Please note that this protocol is for use across agencies relating to safeguarding disagreements.** For disagreements within services, department or agencies you should refer to your own agency's whistleblowing or dispute resolution protocol.
- 1.3 All agencies are committed to working together to safeguard children. Consequently the assumption should, in the first instance, focus on understanding the decision. Only where disagreement continues should the escalation policy be implemented. Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected, however...

.....if a child is thought to be at risk of immediate harm the designated safeguarding lead/line manager in your agency should be informed immediately. The professional should use their professional judgement and as appropriate dial 999 and ask for Police assistance.....

2. Stages of the Policy

- 2.1 Professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within **ONE WORKING WEEK** or a timescale that effectively protects the child from harm, whichever is shortest.

Stage One – involving your line manager

- 2.2 Any worker who considers that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult a supervisor/manager and discuss their concerns. They should clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem, to be specific as to what the disagreement is about, and to identify the desired outcome.

Stage Two – involving the worker from other agency/service

- 2.3 The professionals in disagreement should seek to resolve the dispute through discussion. This discussion must take place as soon as possible and could be either a telephone conversation or a face to face meeting. There may be instances where disparity in perceived status or experience may inhibit the ability of some workers to resolve the disagreement without some support.

Stage Three – escalate line manager to line manager

- 2.4 If the problem is not resolved at Stage Two the worker should contact their supervisor/manager within their own agency. The supervisor should have a discussion with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency.

Stage Four – escalate to named/designated safeguarding leads or senior operational manager (see table attached at Appendix 1)

- 2.5 If the problem is not resolved at Stage Three the supervisor/manager reports to their respective operations manager or named/designated safeguarding representative. At this point, the local LSCB business unit should be notified (Contact details in Appendix 1) that an issue has been escalated so that it can be reported to the LSCB. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

Stage Five – resolution by Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Chaired meeting

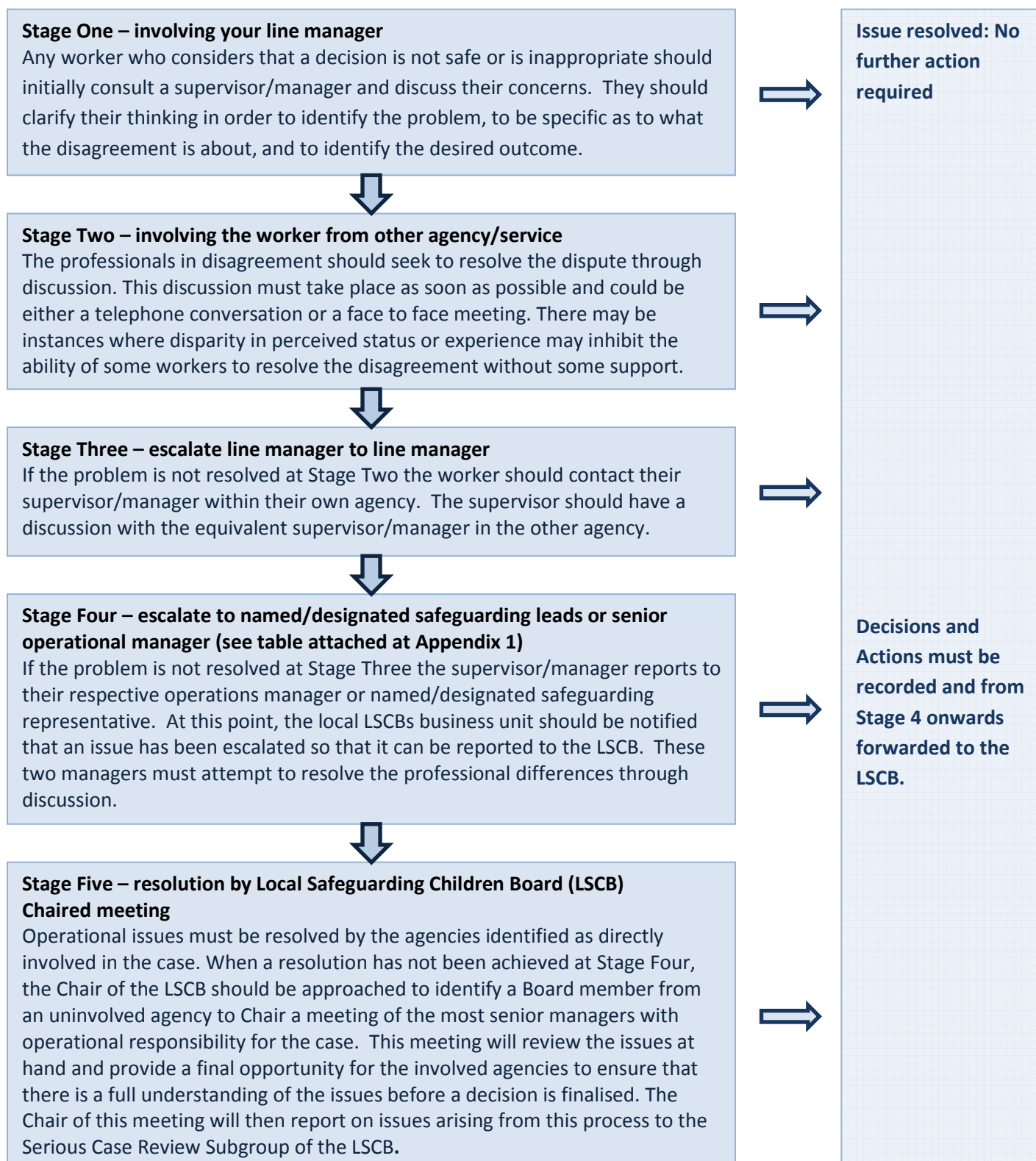
- 2.6 Operational issues must be resolved by the agencies identified as directly involved in the case. When a resolution has not been achieved at Stage Four, the Chair of the LSCB should be approached to identify a Board member from an uninvolved agency to Chair a meeting of the most senior managers with operational responsibility for the case. This meeting will review the issues at hand and provide a final opportunity for the involved agencies to ensure that there is a full understanding of the issues before a decision is finalised. The Chair of this meeting will then report on issues arising from this process to the Serious Case Review Subgroup of the LSCB.

Important Additional Notes

- At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, including the worker who raised the initial concern. This must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.
- If the process highlights gaps in policies and procedures this must be brought to the attention of the Chair of the LSCB and referred to the Berkshire LSCBs Policy and Procedures Sub Group.

Escalation process for professionals with safeguarding concerns

In cases where a professional considers the child or young person to be at imminent risk of harm due to the decision made by the other agency and the other agency professional disagrees they should refer directly to their Safeguarding Lead or line manager (where there is no safeguarding lead or they are not available) within their agency. Where time does not allow for the above due to the immediacy of the risk, the professional should use their **professional judgement** and as appropriate dial 999 and ask for police assistance. Escalation prior to referral to the LSCB should be no more than **5 working days**.



Appendix 1 – Local LSCB Business Unit Contact Details

Local Contact Details to be added

(See local resource page for information)