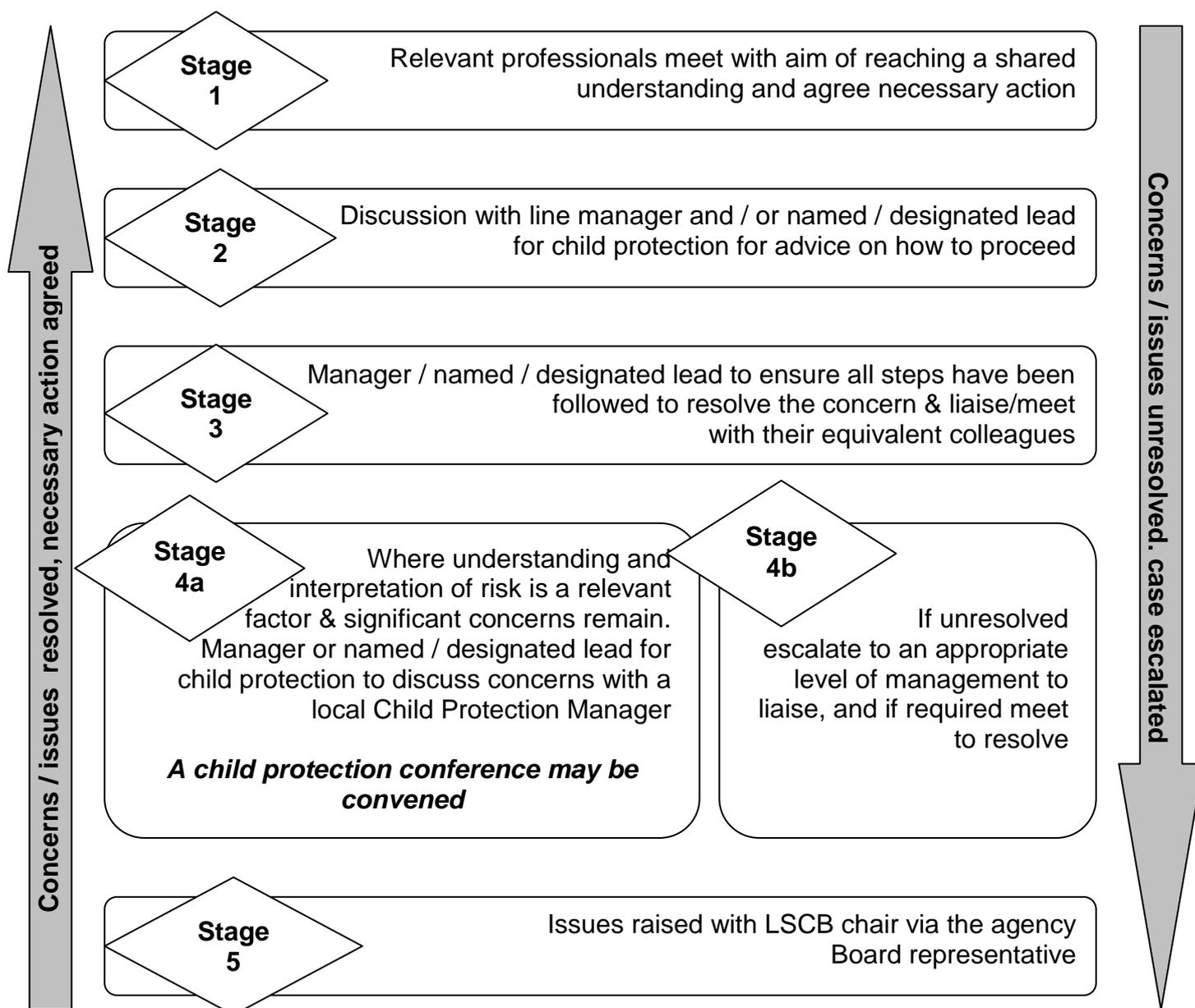


DERBY AND DERBYSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARDS ESCALATION POLICY AND PROCESS

Principle of resolving difference of professional opinion

It is every professional's responsibility to 'problem solve'. Communication is extremely important and is the key to resolving professional misunderstandings or disagreements. The aim must be to resolve a difference of opinion at the earliest possible stage, as swiftly as possible, always keeping in mind that the child or young person's safety and welfare is paramount.

Fears that difference of opinion may be getting in the way of keeping a child safe



1. Introduction

Multi-agency working to keep children safe is often complex and means that from time to time the judgement of staff from different professional backgrounds may differ, causing potential conflict. This policy sets out clear routes to escalate professional concerns where there are fears that difference of opinion may be getting in the way of keeping a child safe. This policy applies to situations where there are concerns that a child, or children, remain at risk of harm as a result of differences in professional opinion. Specific concerns about whether a child protection conference has been effective are covered separately and are included in the [Derby and Derbyshire safeguarding children procedures](#).

2. Factors to Consider

Often there are factors that affect professionals and how they gather and analyse information about the circumstances of a child, and the level of professional anxiety they experience. Are these factors affecting professional judgement and would it help to clarify any of them:

- Exercise of discretion and judgement; is this being done with limited information and / or liaison with other agencies? **Remember in all situations the over-riding consideration as to whether to share information should be the safety and welfare of the child.**
- Strong emotional issues are likely to be raised; how is this impacting upon judgement?
- Managing power and authority issues between individual staff, agencies and with the family; what impact is this having? Do issues relating to professional status, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexuality have a bearing on the case?
- Are the disputes within the professional group mirroring disputes and conflict within the family?
- Are organisational issues e.g. structural changes, access to support or resources, affecting judgements?

3. Resolving the difference of opinion

“Effective problem solving occurs when both the problem and its solution are owned by all parties involved” (Morrison 2002)

Practical measures should be taken to ensure that escalation occurs through the following stages, unless the situation is **so serious** and requires urgent action to protect a child. Children's Social Care or the Police are responsible for taking urgent action to protect a child.

Stage 1: Relevant professionals meet and discuss the following with the aim of reaching a shared understanding and agree necessary action. There may be a number of different points of view about a case.

Do all parties clearly understand why there is a difference of opinion?

- Do the different people involved understand what they are?
- What information are the views are based on?
- Does everyone have access to the same information?

What are the specific areas of difference of opinion?

- Is this clear?

Can more information clarify this for either party?

- What is known or not known about the child or family?
- What additional information is needed? How could this be gathered?
- What facts or evidence exist? Has it come from more than one source?
- What are the conclusions and analysis? Do they draw on theory and research?

Analysis and reaching a judgement

- What is life like for this child and how serious are the concerns?
- Has additional information helped to clarify the opinions of the people involved?
- Is a multi agency meeting needed to bring together historical and current information from different agencies to decide how to proceed?
- Can a judgement be agreed, or does a significant difference of opinion remain?

Have we done enough to safeguard this child?

- Is there agreement about the actions that now need to be taken, by who, timescales and when these will be reviewed?

Stage 2: If agreement cannot be reached and someone still has concerns that a child remains at risk of significant harm, they must discuss this with their manager and / or named / designated lead for child protection.

Stage 3: Escalation of concerns

- The manager / named / designated lead for child protection should make sure that the professional raising the concern has cooperated with other professionals to ensure all the steps have been followed to resolve the concern.
- A clear record should be kept at all stages, by all parties.
- It is essential that where concerns are raised these are evidenced and that factual matters are clear.
- The manager or named / designated lead for child protection should liaise with the equivalent colleague in the other agency involved to resolve outstanding concerns. They may require a face to face meeting and may involve more than one agency.

Stage 4a: In cases where significant concerns remain, especially if understanding and interpretation of risk is the relevant factor, the manager or named / designated lead for child protection should contact the Child Protection Manager (in their local area) to discuss the concerns, and decide whether a Child Protection Conference should be convened.

Stage 4b: If the matter remains unresolved, and especially if resources are a relevant factor, this should be escalated to an appropriate level of management within each agency to liaise and if necessary meet. This means that the manager / named / designated lead for child protection should escalate internally up to their agency lead for safeguarding/child protection. Often this person is the agency representative for the Local Safeguarding Children Board and would include for example the Chief Nurse for Safeguarding and Director of People.

Stage 5: Where there is no resolution, having exhausted all other possibilities, the agency lead for safeguarding/child protection should raise the matter with the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This should be done via the agency representative for the Board if they are not already aware.

The Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board will involve all relevant representatives to obtain satisfactory resolution and involve the Chief Executive Officer for individual agencies should the need arise.

At each stage professionals must ensure that appropriate records are made in the child's or family's case records. This should include the action taken to escalate the concern, any agreed actions arising from this as well as timescales.

END

Version Control

Policy to be read in conjunction with the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Procedures					
Version	Author/s	Updated by	Signed off by	Date	Review Date
1.	Multi Agency Task & Finish Group	N/A	DSCBs Policy & Procedures Group	Oct 2013	Nov 2014
2.	-	Derby SCB Policy Officer & Derbyshire SCB Child Protection (development) Manager	DSCBs Policy and Procedures Group	Sept 2015	Nov 2017
3.	-	Derby SCB Independent Chair and Board Manager	DSCBs Policy and Procedures Group	Nov 2017	Nov 2020, pending publication of updated national guidance