**IRO Escalation Policy**

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**1.** **Introduction**

Working Together 2015 makes it clear that safeguarding children is everyone’s responsibility and effective, collaborative working is essential. Rutland’s children’s social care needs to ensure that there are robust systems in place to check that our safeguarding of children is effective and delivers good outcomes. The need for staff to feel confident in their understanding of when and how to raise effective challenges about practice is essential in achieving the best outcomes for children.

This policy sits alongside the Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework to ensure that managers at all levels are confident child protection decision making and planning is rigorous.

Child Protection Conferences are central to the Multi-Agency decision making process that keeps children safe from harm. The Child Protection Plan outlines the action required to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. It is crucial; therefore, that the social work input to Child Protection Conferences is of the highest possible standard. In Rutland the Signs of Safety model of conferencing is used with a focus on both the strengths within the family and current danger or harm for the child.

* The Child Protection Plan must be progressed between conferences by the Core Group and the family. If recommendations have not been met the social worker and Core Group must give a reasoned explanation of why this has not happened and alternative actions that may have taken place. If crucial elements of the child protection plan e.g. initiating legal proceedings have not been actioned the Independent Chair responsible for the Child Protection Plan must be kept informed between child protection meetings;
* The social worker's report to conference must be evidence based and have a clear risk analysis of the current situation and appropriate recommendations. The SW report must be available 2 days prior to an Initial Child Protection Conference and 3 days prior to a Review Child Protection Conference. The report must always be endorsed by a manager in line with the above timescales.

Significant failures in any of the above aspects of child protection can lead to the Independent Chairs initiating the raising concerns procedure.

**2.** **Procedure for Independent Chairs to Raise Concerns**

The below assumes that reports have been provided within timescales and read prior to conference therefore examples of situations where an Independent Chair might have concerns and initiate the escalation process may include:

* Significant decisions of the Child Protection Plan not being carried out by the social worker and Core Group;
* Evidence of poor partnership working amongst agencies which has compromised the effectiveness of the Child Protection Plan;
* A social worker's report being assessed as not meeting the required standard to contribute to effective decision making about the safeguarding of a child;
* Social worker visits to the child/ren not taking place or not being within the expected timescales;
* Core Group Meetings not having taken place or not within the prescribed timescales, or not being effective in progressing the plan.

There are four stages to the dispute resolution process. The Independent Chair has the discretion to proceed directly to stage 3 and 4 in more serious or urgent cases. The stages are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Manager** |
| Stage 1: | Team Manager (with line management responsibility for the worker) |
| Stage 2: | Service Manager |
| Stage 3: | Head of Service |
| Stage 4: | Director for People |
| Stage 5: | Independent Chair of the LSCB |
| Stage 6: | CAFCASS |

**If an Independent Chair is considering using the escalation process, they should in the first instance discuss the concerns with the Service Manager. If the Service manager does not agree that it is an issue that meets the threshold for using the escalation alert process, the Independent Chair should discuss the concerns with the Head of Service. If both the Service Manager and the Head of Service are not in agreement that the concerns have met the threshold for escalation, the Independent Chair may still choose to escalate the issue using the escalation alert process.**

An Independent Chair must submit the relevant form (please see [**Appendices**](http://bromleychildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_escalation.html#appendices) below) to initiate stages 1 to 3 of the dispute resolution process. At each of the first 3 stages, a response is required within 5 working days of receipt of the alert.

Stage 4 will be managed through a meeting, which should be chaired by the Director for People. The meeting should be independently minuted. All key personnel should be invited to the meeting (worker, team manager, service manager and Head of Service). The Independent Chair will not attend the meeting, but is required to provide a written statement of the alert (using Appendix 5) and detailing the action required to prevent the matter progressing to the next dispute resolution stage (stage 5). The Director for People has 10 days to hold and meeting and submit a response to the QA Manager.

If the IRO is not satisfied with the response at stage 4, the QA manager can move to stage 5 – escalation to the Independent Chair of the LSCB. This will involve a meeting with the Independent Chair of the LSCB, Director for People, QA Manager and, if relevant, the IRO. If a satisfactory response is not obtained within 10 working days, the QA Manager has the option to hand this over to CAFCASS, following the dispute resolution process.

**3.** **Recording and Communicating that a Child's Child Protection Plan has been Subject to Alerts**

The Independent Chair should verbally inform the members of a Child Protection Conference of any escalation alerts they have initiated since the previous meeting or which they intend to initiate subsequent to the current meeting.

The Independent Chair should use the relevant IRO Escalation Form (Appendices 2 - 5) to record details of any concerns that need to be escalated. Once the form has been completed the Independent Chair must log the details of the concern into the IRO Escalation Tracker located in the Team 9 shared folder and save a copy of the completed alert form in the same folder.

The Quality Assurance Manager will report  quarterly  to the Performance and QA meeting, on the number of escalation alerts that have been initiated, the themes raised as concerns and whether  the timescales for resolving them have been met.

**4.** **The Role of the Quality Assurance Manager During the Escalation Process**

The Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for management and supervision of the Independent Chairs.

The role of the manager during the escalation process is:

* To provide clear supervision to the Independent Chair, taking into consideration the issue being raised and providing feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the case being brought forward;
* To ensure that throughout the process, lines of communication remain open and clear and that the issue does not become clouded, personalised, or lost in other processes;
* To ensure that meetings take place on time and that they are present at all relevant meetings;
* To provide briefing to senior managers as to the view of the Quality Assurance Manager on the issue being raised and possible routes to resolving the issue, if necessary;
* To encourage resolution prior to the issue reaching the Head of Service stage.

**Appendices**

**Click here to view Appendix 1: IRO Escalation Process Flow**

**Click here to view Appendix 2: IRO Stage 1 Escalation Form**

**Click here to view Appendix 3: IRO Stage 2 Escalation Form**

**Click here to view Appendix 4: IRO Stage 3 Escalation Form**

**Click here to view Appendix 5: IRO Stage 4 Escalation Form**

**Click here to view Appendix 5: IRO Stage 5 Escalation Form**

**Click here to view Appendix 5: IRO Stage 6 Escalation Form**