

Children's Services

Procedure for escalation of disagreements between practitioners that involve children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

1. Purpose

This document sets out the procedure to be followed where a practitioner disagrees with another practitioner with respect to the interests of a child or young person who has special educational needs or a disability (SEND). It aims to ensure that the interests of children and young people are promoted and upheld in all our work, irrespective of practitioner or organisational differences.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The escalation procedure should be used by any education, [SENDIASS](#), health, police, criminal justice or children's social care practitioner (other than Dorset Council employees) who disagrees with the views, actions or decisions of a Dorset Children's Services' employee, and has been unable to resolve that disagreement by informal means.
- 2.2 The procedure should not be used by Children's Services employees, who should use line management, and failing that the Grievance Procedure, where they disagree with a colleague. [Escalation Policy \(proceduresonline.com\)](#)
- 2.3 Young people, parents and carers who are unhappy with a service they are receiving should initially raise their concerns with practitioners working with them. If this does not resolve the issue or concern, they should refer to the [complaints](#) and [disagreement resolution and mediation](#) sections of Dorset's Local Offer.

3. Procedure

- 3.1 Where a practitioner whose role meets the criteria set out at 2.1 above disagrees with the professional judgement or actions of a Dorset Children's Services employee with respect to a child or young person who has SEND, they should first seek to resolve the matter informally through discussion with the Dorset Children's Services employee.
- 3.2 Where informal discussion is unsuccessful, or the practitioner raising the matter deems it to be too serious for informal discussion, they should escalate the matter to the Dorset Children's Services employee's Team Manager. The Team Manager may ask the practitioner raising the concern to put the matter in writing. The Team Manager will investigate the matter, speaking with both

the practitioner raising the concern and the Children's Services Employee, and reviewing any relevant records. They will make a written response to the practitioner raising the concern within 10 working days of receiving notification of the matter.

- 3.3 If the practitioner raising the concern is not satisfied with the response, within 5 working days of receiving it, they should put the matter in writing to the relevant Service Manager. The Service Manager will review the Team Manager's investigation and make further enquiries of their own as they judge appropriate; within 10 working days of notification, they will make a written response to the practitioner raising the concern.
- 3.4 If the practitioner raising the concern remains dissatisfied, they may further escalate the matter, in writing, to the Strategic Lead for SEND within 5 working days of the Service Manager sending their response. The Strategic Lead will review the previous investigations and make further enquiries of their own as they judge appropriate. They will send a written response to the practitioner raising the concern within 10 working days.
- 3.5 If the practitioner raising the concern remains dissatisfied the final stage of the escalation process is for them to raise the matter in writing to the Corporate Director for Education. They should do this within 5 working days of the response being made by the Strategic Lead. The Corporate Director will complete their own investigation within a further 10 working days and notify the practitioner raising the concern of the outcome.

4. Reporting and recording

It is important that any professional disagreement is recorded in the file of the child or young person. Full, accurate and impartial recording should be undertaken by the Children's Services Employee responsible for any given stage of escalation. For example, if a matter has been raised to a Team Manager, it is their responsibility to record the fact of escalation, its outline and its outcome, on the child's records. The content of the record should solely reflect the goal of correctly identifying and promoting the child or young person's needs and goals; it should not impute blame.