



City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership

Professional Resolutions Practice Guidance

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Document Updates and Approvals

| Revision | Group or Person | Date | Comments |
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| 1 | CYSCP Business Unit | 13/04/23 | |
| 2 | Updated by the CYSCP Business Unit | | |
| 3 | Reviewed by Dave Ellis (NYP), Jacqui Hourigan (ICB) and Danielle Johnson (CSC) | | |
| 4 | SAPP Sub-Group | 16/07/24 | Approved |



1. Introduction

This policy has been developed by the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership (CYSCP) to ensure that all agencies working within the City of York have access to a straightforward, multi-agency policy to quickly resolve and where necessary escalate professional. The policy aims to promote a healthy culture of high support and high challenge which in turn ensures children and their families are receiving the right help at the right time.

The aim of this policy is to promote a culture of partnership working, whereby all agencies working with children, young people and their families feel confident, able and supported to address concerns in situations where there are differences in professional judgements around the response to the well-being and safety of children and young people.

As a partnership we are keen to foster a culture of conversation that aims to promote healthy, collaborative relationships between practitioners. We know that when we have strong partnerships between professionals and with families' outcomes for children are better.

These conversations should take place as soon as possible with the aim of achieving a shared understanding and resolving any differences at the earliest opportunity.

Successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them (Working Together 2023). Effective working together relies on good information sharing resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies, and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard children.

Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children. Occasionally situations arise where professional disagreements occur.

Disagreements can be healthy and foster creative ways of working with children and their families. However, disagreements can also impact negatively on positive working relationships and consequently on the



ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Disagreements always require resolution.

The child's safety and wellbeing must be the paramount consideration at all times and professional differences must not distract from timely and clear decision making. All professionals working with children and families have a duty to act assertively and proactively to ensure that the child's welfare is seen as a priority at all levels of professional activity, as outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and the City of York Child Protection Procedures.

Any disagreement that may result in significant and imminent risk of harm to a child or children needs immediate escalation to line manager and the timescales will thereafter act as a guide only.

This policy is not designed to replace the statutory complaints processes already established within individual partner agencies. All agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are supported and know how to appropriately escalate and resolve interagency concerns and disagreements about a child or young person's well-being and the response to safeguarding needs.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that where issues between agencies arise involving the safety and welfare of children or young people, matters can be resolved in a timely manner.

2. Key Principles

2.1. The first and key principle should be that it is everyone's professional responsibility to problem solve and come to an agreed resolution at the earliest opportunity, always keeping in mind the child's safety and welfare.

2.2. Professionals should:

- Share information appropriately when required
- Seek to resolve an issue quickly at a practice level rather than at a management level
- Avoid disputes that place children at further risk by obscuring



the focus on the child or delaying decision making

- Liaise with lead safeguarding professionals or child protection designates in their organisation at the earliest opportunity
- Keep the focus on the child's safety and welfare at all times
- Ensure they are familiar with the escalation routes within their agency for escalation and resolution
- Ensure accurate and contemporary recording on the child's file of key decisions and reasons for the decision
 - Stay proactively involved; safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
 - Use the CYSCP resolution process set out in Section 5 "*Process for Professional Resolutions*"

3. Roles of Professionals and Agencies

- 3.1. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working. All agencies must adopt a proactive approach towards problem solving which enables professional disagreements to be resolved as quickly as possible and in most cases by practitioners.
- 3.2. Professionals providing services to children and families should work together across all agencies. Professionals working directly with children and their families should share information appropriately in line with national and local guidance.
- 3.3. Professionals' actions should always be based on a robust assessment of the risk of harm to the child(ren) and the impact of the given situation on the child's wellbeing. The timescales identified within this document are practice guidance and refer to the maximum timescales agencies should follow. In some cases it may be necessary for action to be taken sooner to protect a child or young person. Timescales should not be a reason for delaying action.
- 3.4. Professionals should always be prepared to review decisions and



plans with an open mind and revise decisions in light of new information. Regardless of the role/level of expertise, all individuals concerned about a decision/plan have the right and duty to challenge if they think a child's safety or welfare has been compromised

- 3.5. All agencies are responsible for ensuring their staff are competent and supported to escalate appropriately intra and inter-agency concerns and disagreements about a child's wellbeing
- 3.6. If a child is thought to be at immediate risk of harm the designated safeguarding lead within the agency identifying the concern should be informed immediately. It is vital that if the child is felt to be at immediate risk, the police and Children's Social Care must be contacted.

4. Disagreements between Professionals and Agencies

4.1. Disagreements between practitioners can arise at any stage in the process and between any of the agencies involved. Some examples of potential areas of disagreement may include:

- Thresholds, roles and responsibilities, the need for action and communication. Where one professional disagrees with the action of another around a particular course of action, such as closing involvement with a child or family.
- Where one worker or agency considers that another worker or agency has not completed an agreed action for no acceptable or understood reason.
- Where one agency considers that the plan is inappropriate and that a child's needs are not being best met by the current plan.
- This could include a disagreement that a particular agency does not feel it needs to be involved, but another does.
- Where a member of staff or an agency considers that the child's safeguarding needs are better met by a Child Protection Plan and have requested that a Child Protection Conference be called and feel that this has been refused.



- Where a range of professionals have concerns about an agency's response to safeguarding concerns
- This is not an exhaustive list and disagreements may arise in a number of areas.

5. Process for Professional Resolutions

In cases where there is a difference of professional opinion and a professional considers a child or young person is at immediate risk of significant harm, concerns must be escalated to a manager and/or safeguarding lead immediately. Escalation can be via telephone, face to face meeting or teleconference calls.

When there is a disagreement over a significant issue, which potentially impacts on the safety and welfare of a child but the child is not considered at immediate risk, the respective workers must identify explicitly the issue they are concerned about, the risk to the child, the nature of the disagreement and what the respective workers aim to achieve.

Should a professional/agency believe that a situation is in need of urgent resolution, it may be appropriate to begin the resolution process at Stage three Senior Manager level rather than working through the other levels of resolution.

The professionals involved in the professional resolution process must contemporaneously record each inter-agency discussion they have, approve and date the record. The agreed outcome of discussions and how outstanding matters (within a specified timescale) will be addressed must be recorded.

Stage 1: Direct Professional to Professional Conversation

In the first instance the professional with concerns should raise the matter with the relevant practitioner/decision maker. As a partnership we are keen to foster a culture of conversation that aims to promote healthy, collaborative relationships between practitioners. We know that when we have strong partnerships between professionals and with families' outcomes for children are better.

These conversations should take place as soon as possible with the aim



of achieving a shared understanding and resolving any differences at the earliest opportunity.

If professionals are unable to resolve differences the disagreement should move to stage two.

Stage 2: Direct Line Manager to Line Manager Conversation

If the professionals are unable to resolve the matter satisfactorily within a timely way, then each of the professionals should discuss the matter with their respective line managers within the same working day. The line managers should then liaise with each other in an attempt to reach a resolution. A resolution should be achieved within a further 5 working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less).

Where necessary the line managers should seek advice from their agency's designated safeguarding children professional.

Where a resolution is reached the (receiving) line manager will confirm the outcome in writing to the agency raising concerns within two working days of resolving the matter.

If a resolution cannot be reached, the disagreement should be escalated to stage three.

Stage 3: Senior Manager to Senior Manager Conversation.

If concerns remain unresolved following the involvement of line managers, the matter must then be escalated to relevant senior managers within their agency (e.g. Head of Service/ Detective Inspector / Head teacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Designated Professional) whereby further conversations should take place between the agencies to resolve the matter as soon as possible.

If appropriate, a meeting should be convened with the practitioners and line managers to work through differences with the aim of achieving a shared understanding and resolving any differences at the earliest opportunity.

Where a resolution is reached the (receiving) senior manager will confirm the outcome in writing to the agency raising concerns within two working



days of resolving the matter.

If there are learning points identified during this escalation then these should be identified and referred to the agency's representative within the CYSCP for consideration at the relevant sub-group to inform future learning.

If a resolution cannot be reached, the disagreement should be escalated to stage four

Stage 4: Support from the CYSCP to resolve the matter

In the unlikely event that the professional disagreements remain unresolved following discussions between respective senior managers and/or the discussion raises significant policy issues, or the matter unresolved within the timescale, then the matter should be referred directly to the Chair of the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership via the Business Unit: CYSCP@york.gov.uk. This should include forwarding a written account of the dispute and what attempts have been made to resolve this.

The CYSCP Chair may seek further written information and will confer as necessary with senior managers/Named/Designated professionals in the agencies involved, and others as required, and will make recommendations to the agencies for the resolution of the matters within 15 working days of the issue being brought to their attention.

The CYSCP is not an operational body and cannot direct the actions of partner agencies. However, the CYSCP as a body has a strong expectation that the recommendations of the CYSCP Chair will be acted upon.