**Escalation Policy**

**SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER**

This chapter describes the Knowsley Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Escalation policy and process when there are concerns or differences between professionals from different agencies working with a child and their family. Emphasis is made on dealing with differences of opinion in a timely way and ensuring a child is not left at risk as a result of any delay.

**RELEVANT GUIDANCE**

[**Working Together to Safeguard Children**](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/chapters/contents.html)

**AMENDMENT**

This policy was fully reviewed and revised in March 2022 to establish the key principles and processes behind this important policy. It recognises that there will be differences of opinion between professionals, but these should be resolved promptly and with regard to the perceived risk to the child. It is anticipated that most differences of opinion can be dealt with on a practitioner-to-practitioner basis.

**1. Introduction**

This policy has been developed by Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Partnership to ensure that all agencies working within Knowsley, (including Health, Education, Housing, Children's Early Help and Social Care, Adult Services, Probation, Police and third sector organisations), have access to a straight forward, multi-agency policy to quickly resolve and where necessary escalate professional differences where there are concerns that the welfare and safety of children and young people are at risk of being compromised.

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.

Effective working together depends on 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 cooperation 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 2018**](http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/index.html) and the Knowsley 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 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.

This policy and the escalation of concerns will be monitored via the Policy and Performance Group.

**2. Key Principles**

Professionals should always:

* Share key information appropriately and often;
* Seek to resolve the issue quickly and at the practice level rather than at the manager level;
* Ensure that professional differences do not place children at further risk by obscuring the focus on the child or delay decision making;
* Keep the focus on the child's safety and welfare at all times;
* Familiarise themselves with the escalation routes within their agency for resolution and escalation;
* Ensure accurate and contemporary recording on the child's file of key decisions and conversations in relation to the resolution process;
* Stay proactively involved; safeguarding is everyone's responsibility;
* If unsure how to progress, contact the Knowsley Local Safeguarding Business Partnership Manager to consider how the issue may be resolved: (0151)4434575, Knowsley.SafeguardingChildrenPartnershipDCFS@knowsley.gov.uk.

**3. Context**

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

* Level of need/threshold;
* Concerns in relation to an agency's response to safeguarding concerns;
* Roles and responsibilities;
* Inter-agency communication;
* Step up step down decisions;
* Practice case management issues;
* Accountability.

**4. Process**

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.

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.

The professionals involved in the conflict resolution process must contemporaneously record each inter-agency discussion they have, approve and date the record and place on the child's file together with any other written communication and information. The agreed outcome of discussions and how outstanding issues will be pursued must be recorded.

**Stage 1**

In the first instance the professional with concerns should raise the matter with the relevant practitioner/decision maker verbally (a verbal exchange must be followed up in writing to provide clarity – see **Appendix 1 Escalation flowchart**)or in writing within 2 working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less) of the disagreement or receipt of a decision.

The professional with concerns should provide clear evidence based reasons for their disagreement. The receiving practitioner / decision maker must read and review the case file and must speak to the concerned professional within 3 working days and attempt to find a mutually agreeable way forward sought via discussion or meeting.

All discussions/decisions should be recorded in the child’s records to demonstrate actions taken and outcomes.

**Stage 2**

If the professionals are unable to resolve the matter satisfactorily within the timescale, the concern or difficulty should be escalated to their respective line managers within the same working day and a resolution should be achieved within a further 5 working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less). These first line managers should where necessary seek advice from their agency's designated safeguarding children professional.

Where a resolution is reached the receiving line manager will confirm the outcome with his / her counterpart in writing to the agency raising concerns within a further 2 working days.

It should be clearly documented in the child’s record that an escalation has taken place using the KSCP Escalation policy; All discussions/decisions should be recorded in the child’s records to demonstrate actions taken and outcomes.

If there are learning points identified during this escalation the KSCP manager should be notified using the KSCP ***Governance Process for Escalation form (Appendix 3).***This information will be used to identify potential training needs across the partnership which the KSCP may wish to address

**Stage 3**

If agreement cannot be reached following the involvement of first line managers the issue must be referred to the relevant senior manager, (e.g. Head of Service Safeguarding and Child Protection Head of Service/ Detective Inspector / head teacher or other designated senior manager). Alternatively (e.g. in health services), input may be sought directly from the named / designated safeguarding children doctor or nurse in preference to the use of line manager.

Referral should be escalated within the same working day and a resolution should be achieved within 5 working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less).

At this stage and where relevant, consideration should be given as to whether Commissioners be notified as some issues could be resolved by the intervention of the Commissioner who can refer to contract compliance.

The Knowsley Safeguarding Partnership Business Manager should be copied into disagreements that have escalated to this level using the **escalation template (Appendix 2).** If the comparable line managers cannot achieve resolution and the issue remains unresolved, then the KSCP manager should be notified

The senior managers dealing with the issue will involve the Assistant Directors/Director in their agency. Where a resolution is reached the senior manager in the agency receiving the concerns will confirm the outcome in writing with his / her counterpart in the agency raising concerns within a further 2 working days.

Again if there are learning points identified during this escalation the KSCP manager should be notified using the KSCP ***Governance Process for Escalation form (Appendix 3).***This information will be used to identify potential training needs across the partnership which the KSCP may wish to address

**Stage 4**

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 must be referred directly to the Chair of the Knowsley Safeguarding Children Partnership via the Knowsley Safeguarding Children Partnership (completion of the **KSCP Escalation template** **Appendix 2**). In the absence of the Partnership Chair, the matter will be dealt with by the Vice Chair of the Partnership.

The KSCP 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 matter. The KSCP Chair will make recommendations within 5 working days of the issue being brought to his/her attention.

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

**5. Governance**

On receipt of a completed escalation template **(Appendix 2)** and/or Governance Process Escalation form **(Appendix 3)** the KSCP manager will consider the information which will be used to identify potential training needs across the partnership which the KSCP may wish to address

Data regarding escalations will be collated by the KSCP Business manager and reported to the KSCP Core Business Group for oversight and identification of themes/trends that may warrant further action for the partnership

**6. Appendices**

[**Appendix 1: Escalation Process**](https://knowsleyscb.proceduresonline.com/files/escalation_process.pdf)



[**Appendix 2: Escalation Template**](https://knowsleyscb.proceduresonline.com/files/escalation_template.doc)

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**Appendix 3: Governance Process for Escalation form**

