



## **Resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to the safety of children**

### **Introduction**

Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the decision made by a worker from another agency on a child protection or child in need case is not a safe decision. Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- Levels of Need
- Roles and responsibilities
- The need for action
- Communication

The safety of individual children is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be addressed with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child.

All workers should feel able to challenge decision-making and to see this as their right and responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice. This policy provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

- a) avoiding professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus on the child
- b) resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly
- c) identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of healthy challenge, professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children.

Professionals should utilise existing processes within their own agencies when seeking advice regarding concerns about children and young people. Professionals should seek advice in the first instance from their designated/nominated safeguarding or child protection lead in order to differentiate between a safeguarding and service decision.

### **Timescales**

Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected. Some disagreements regarding safeguarding decisions will require speedy resolution. In all cases where a professional thinks a child is at imminent risk of harm and another agency disagrees they should refer direct to their Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board nominated person named overleaf after consulting quickly with their named Safeguarding Lead or line manager (where the safeguarding lead is not available) within their agency. For all other cases, efforts should be made by all involved to resolve the dispute in a timely way. The primary focus must always be on ensuring that the safety and welfare of the child concerned is assured whilst discussions take place.

As a guide the timescales for escalation through the stages set out below should be no longer than **5 working days**, where the child is not felt to be at imminent risk of harm.

## Stages of the policy

### Pre-escalation – Professional: Professional

*In my service this is me*

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe should initially consult their safeguarding lead or line manager to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem; to be specific as to what the disagreement is about; and what they aim to achieve. They should also be able to evidence the nature and source of their concerns and should keep a record of all discussions. Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at the lowest possible level. This would normally be between the people who disagree. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this option unsupported.

### Stage One Manager: Manager

*In my service this is Karon Levett (Playleader)*

If the problem is not resolved between the professionals as above, the concerned worker should contact their manager within their own agency who should raise the concerns with the equivalent manager in the other agency to seek resolution. If this relates to the Conference and Review Service (CRS) Dissent Process this will be reviewed by the CRS Service Manager and CRS Development Lead on receipt of the formal letter of dissent.

### Stage Two Senior Manager: Senior Manager

*In my service this is Jack Luxford (Chair of Committee)*

If the problem is not resolved at stage one the managers will report to their respective senior service manager (sometimes referred to as a tier 3 manager) or their organisations' named safeguarding lead. The two senior managers or safeguarding leads must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion. In relation to the CRS Dissent process where there continues to be a disagreement with the outcome of a Child protection Conference this will be referred to the Head of Service.

### Stage Three Refer via the WSCB

If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences at stage two the matter should be referred to the nominated WSCB representative for the agency as set out overleaf. If the agency does not have a nominated representative the matter must be referred to the Safeguarding Board Manager.

In each case the nominated representative/Board Manager will liaise with the Independent Chair of the Board as a matter of urgency and, in discussion with the nominated WSCB representative of the agency with whom the dispute is being raised (where applicable) a final decision will be reached and communicated to all parties within **3 working days**. Please contact WSCB if you are not sure who your nominated representative is.

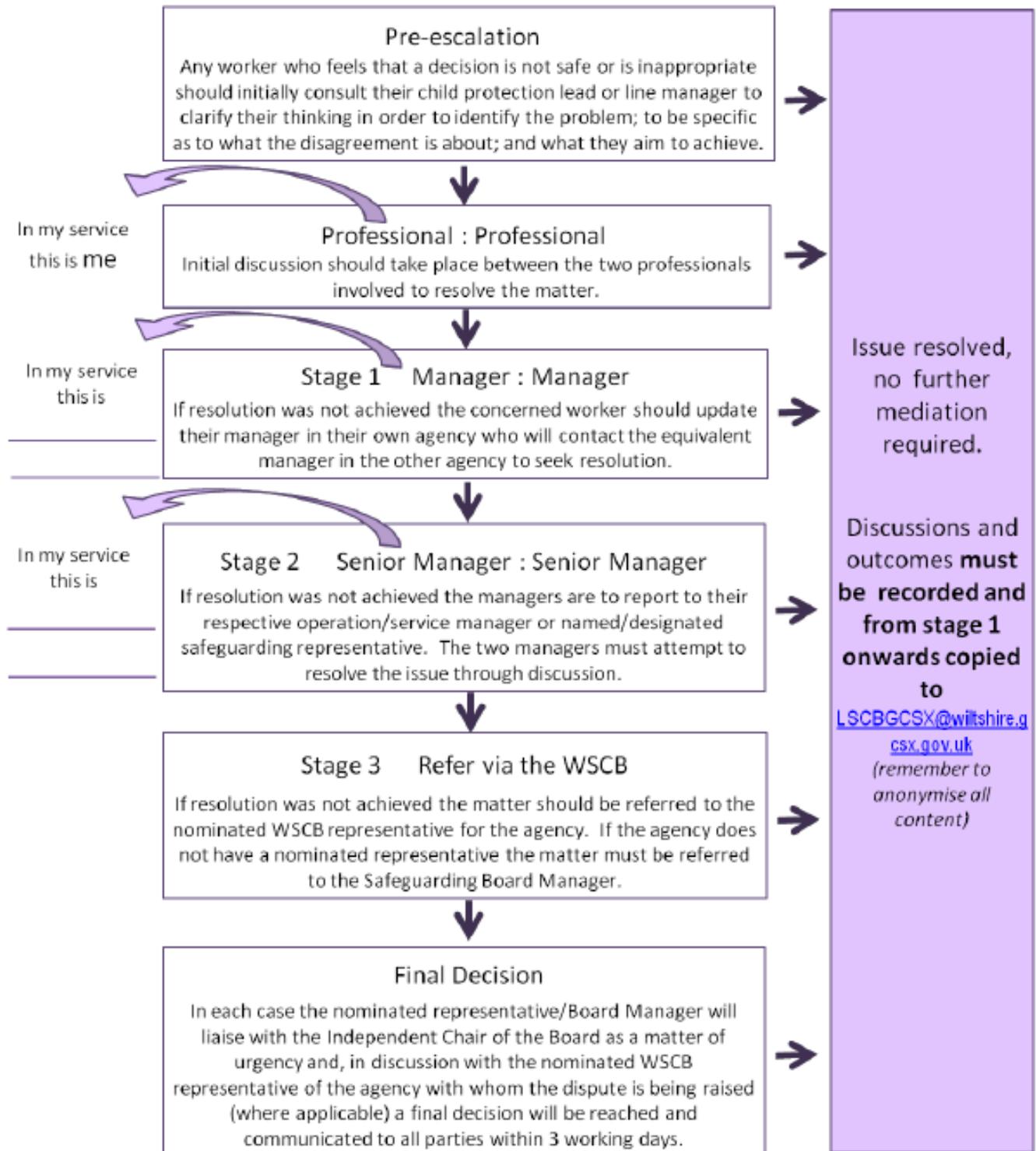
### Documenting discussions and decisions

At all stages of the process, actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued. Following resolution, it may be useful for individuals to debrief in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

At the level the matter has been resolved between parties, the WSCB 'Notification of an Escalation' form must be completed by the manager who resolved the concern and forwarded to the WSCB Business Support email address below. This notification form will enable WSCB to collate evidence of escalations and that they are being resolved at the right level and to gather information about the kind of issues that are being resolved.

## Escalation Policy for professionals with child protection or child welfare concerns

**Note:** In all cases where a professional thinks a child is at imminent risk of harm and another agency disagrees they should refer direct to their Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board nominated person named overleaf after consulting quickly with their named Safeguarding Lead or line manager (where the safeguarding lead is not available) within their agency. The escalation prior to referral to the WSCB should be no longer than **5 working days**



*NB/ These email addresses must not be used for sending personally identifiable information*  
Secure email: [LSCBGCSX@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:LSCBGCSX@wiltshire.gov.uk) Tel: 0122 718093



When resolution is reached, one of the managers who resolved the concern must complete this WSCB 'Notification of an Escalation' form and send it to WSCB Business Support (email address below). Remember to anonymise the client.

Date	Escalation Stage	Name and agency of professionals involved	Issue/Concern	Record of discussions	Outcome	Date referred to WSCB (if necessary)

Email to WSCB Business Support: [LSCBGCSX@wiltshire.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:LSCBGCSX@wiltshire.gcsx.gov.uk). 01225 718093

**NB/ Please ensure that all personal identifiable information is sent by secure means.**