



Resolution and Escalation Protocol

Document Control

Organisation	Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB)
Title	Resolution and Escalation Protocol
Author	SSCB
Owner	SSCB
Protective Marking	ILO - Unclassified

Version Control

Revision Date	Editor	Version	Description of Revision
April 2014	Raj Bector - SSCB Business Manager	1	Initial Draft
April 2014	Raj Bector - SSCB Business Manager	2	Amendments made following meeting with Interim Group Head for Safeguarding and Designated Nurse/ SCR Sub-committee Chair
January 2015	Raj Bector - SSCB Business Manager	3	Reviewed in light of producing an escalation protocol that could be adopted regionally
April 2015	Raj Bector - SSCB Business Manager	4	Amendments made to timescales following discussion with SSCB Independent Chair
May 2015	Raj Bector - SSCB Business Manager	5	Amendments made to Appendix 2 – Key Safeguarding Leads following discussion at SSCB meeting on 30 th April 2015
August 2016	Raj Bector - SSCB Business Manager	6	Appendix 2: Senior Safeguarding Leads Updated

Review date: January 2018

Contents

1	Purpose.....	4
2	The Role of Professionals and Agencies	6
3	Situations where Disagreements may Arise	8
4	Process for Resolution and Escalation.....	9
	Appendix 1	
	Process Flow-Chart	12
	Appendix 2	
	Senior Safeguarding Leads	13

1 Purpose

Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the actions, inaction or decisions of another agency do not adequately safeguard a child. The purpose of this protocol is to ensure that in such situations issues between agencies are resolved in a timely manner.

Professional disagreements will sometimes arise over another professional's decisions, actions or lack of actions in relation to a referral, an assessment or an enquiry which are considered to be unsafe. Disagreements can be healthy and foster creative ways of working with children and families. However, disagreements always require resolution.

The child's safety and wellbeing must be the paramount consideration at all times and professional differences must not detract from timely and clear decision making. All professionals working with children and families have a duty to act assertively and proactively to ensure the child's welfare is seen as a priority at all levels of professional activity.

It is also incumbent on the professionals involved to ensure that problems are resolved within the shortest timescale possible to protect the child. Individuals should therefore exercise their judgement as to whether the timelines outlined in this protocol need to be achieved more quickly.

Key Principles:

Professionals should:

1. Share key information appropriately and often
2. Seek to resolve the issue quickly and at the practice rather than the management level
3. Avoid disputes which place children at further risk by obscuring the focus on the child or which delay decision making.
4. Liaise with lead professionals in safeguarding or child protection designates in their organisation at the earliest opportunity. Clarity is expected from all agencies in respect of designated roles and responsibilities.
5. Keep the focus on the child's safety and welfare at all times.
6. Familiarise themselves with the escalation routes **within their agency** for escalation and resolution.
7. Ensure that at all stages of the process accurate actions and decisions are recorded (on the child's file) and shared with relevant personnel (including the worker who raised the initial concern). This must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

8. If the process highlights gaps in policies and procedures they must be brought to the attention of the Chair of Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB)
9. Stay proactively involved; safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
10. Use the SSCB resolution process set out at section 4.

2 The Role of Professionals and Agencies

Professionals providing services to children and families should work co-operatively across all agencies. Effective partnership working relies on open and honest relationships and clear communication between staff from different agencies.

SSCB expects members of staff working directly with children and their families to share information appropriately in line with national and local guidance, and to work to plans agreed in all relevant forums (case discussions, meetings and conferences) to safeguard children in the local area.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a responsibility shared by all agencies. Whilst the Local Authority is allocated a 'lead' role in co-ordinating responses to risk, or causes, of significant harm to children, effective intervention is dependent upon inter - agency information sharing, planning and multi-agency service responses.

Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children. The SSCB expects all agencies to adopt a proactive approach towards problem solving which enables professional disagreements to be resolved as close to front line practice as possible.

All agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent and supported to escalate appropriately any inter-agency concerns and disagreements about a child's safety or wellbeing.

The process of resolution, where difficulties or disagreements arise between agencies, should be kept as simple as possible. The aim, where possible, is to resolve difficulties quickly and without delay at a professional practitioner level.

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. Decisions and actions should be commensurate with the risks posed to the child. Whilst this protocol sets out expected timescales within which matters should be escalated where an inter-agency disagreement has arisen, in some situations it may be necessary to act sooner to protect a child or children. **The timescales indicated should not be a reason for delaying action.**

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. The designated safeguarding lead should inform the Sandwell Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0845 351 0131

Each staff member is responsible for recording professional conversations and decision-making in line with the case recording protocols and procedures

in each agency or setting. The professionals involved in the resolution process must accurately and contemporaneously record each intra- and inter-agency discussion they have, approve and date the record.

Where the disagreement involves actions in relation to an individual child, a record of the intra - and inter - agency discussion and any other written communication should be placed on the child's record.

3 Situations where Disagreement may Arise

With the introduction of the MASH as the front-door to Children's Social Care and the publication of the multi-agency threshold document, the number of professional disagreements between agencies should reduce.

However, occasions may arise where one professional disagrees with the actions of another professional and therefore in such cases Sandwell's Resolution and Escalation protocol should be followed. Some examples include the following (although the list is not exhaustive):

- Where one professional disagrees with the action of another in relation to 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 for a child is inappropriate and that a child's needs are not being best met.
- A disagreement as to whether a particular agency needs to be involved in the safeguarding process.
- 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
- There is disagreement over the sharing of information and/or provision of services

4 Process for Resolution and Escalation

Professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within **10 working days** or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is shortest).

Stage No.	Parties involved	Process	Duration	Cumulative Duration
1.	Practitioners	Upon disagreement in relation to the safeguarding needs of a child, in the first instance the professional from the other agency should raise the matter with the relevant practitioner verbally or in writing within 2 working days of the disagreement or receipt of a decision.	2 days	2 days
		The professional should provide clear evidence - based reasons for their disagreement. The receiving agency must read and review the particular case file. They must speak to the complainant practitioner and attempt to find a mutually agreeable way forward within 3 working days . Where a resolution is reached the responsible worker will advise the agency of the outcome in writing (i.e. email) within a further 2 working days	3 days	5 days
2.	Line/ Team Managers	If the receiving agency practitioner and the complainant practitioner are unable to resolve the disagreement following	2 days	7 days

Resolution and Escalation Protocol

		<p>exploration of the facts, each practitioner should raise their concerns with their respective line/team manager or named lead for safeguarding, who should attempt to resolve the differences within 2 working days. If agreement is reached, the receiving agency will write to the complainant agency confirming the outcome within a further 2 working days.</p> <p>Note: If one of the professionals is self-employed, the safeguarding lead will deal with this stage (as well as stage 3). If one of the agencies is a school, the Head Teacher/Principal will deal with this stage (as well as stage 3).</p>		
3a.	Service/Senior Managers	<p>If agreement cannot be reached following discussions between the line/ team managers the issue must be referred within 24 hours to the relevant service/senior manager (i.e. Children’s Social Care Senior Manager for the locality, Detective Inspector / or other designated professional). The relevant managers should meet within 2 working days to resolve the issue.</p> <p>Note: The Group Head of Safeguarding and SSCB Business Manager should both be copied into disagreements that have escalated to this level.</p>	3 days	10 days
3b.	Director/ Assistant	Where resolution is still not agreed after Stage 3a, the	4 days	14 days

Resolution and Escalation Protocol

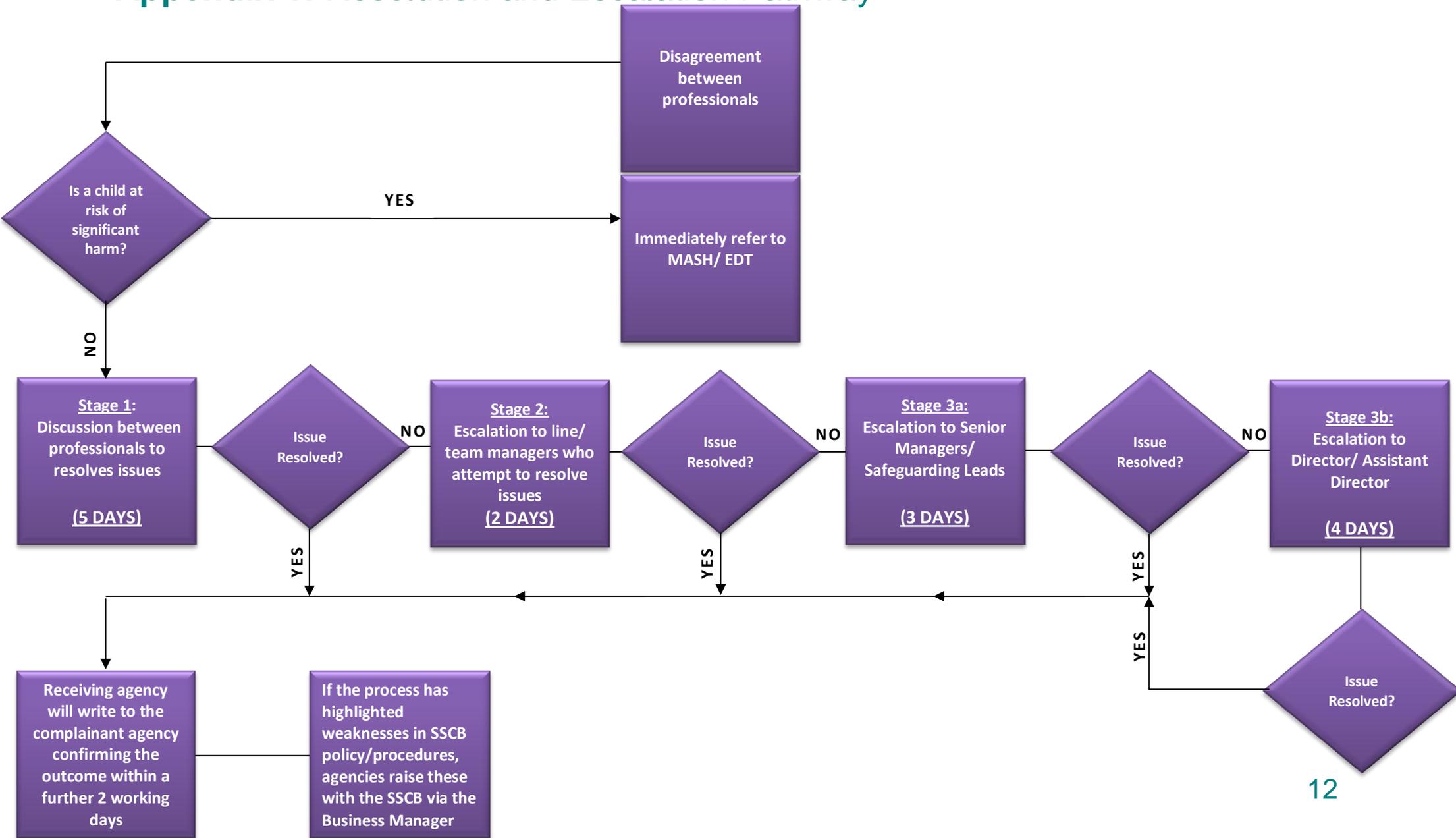
	Directors	<p>service/senior manager will raise the disagreement within a further 2 working days at Director/Assistant Director level within their own agency (who will be expected to be an SSCB Board Member). The Director/Assistant Director will then write to the Director/Assistant Director of the agency that is the subject of the complaint and meet within a further 2 working days to achieve a final resolution.</p> <p>Exceptional Circumstances</p> <p>Whilst it is a firm SSCB expectation that professional disagreements must be resolved within the 3 stage process set out above. In exceptional circumstances, where the matter remains unresolved, there is provision for it to be considered by the SSCB independent chair¹.</p>		
--	------------------	--	--	--

Following use of Resolution and Escalation Process:

It may be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

¹ In exceptional circumstances only, where the matter remains unresolved and the concerns of the complaining agency persist, the Director of this agency should write immediately and within no more than **2 working days**, to the SSCB Chair, via the SSCB Business Manager. The SSCB Chair will seek written representation initially, and may request a meeting with those involved at all levels of service delivery to seek their views and solutions to the concerns raised. The SSCB Chair will make a final and binding decision on the most appropriate way to proceed and this will be communicated to all involved within **5 working days** of the issue being brought to his/her attention. Alternatively, the SSCB Chair will identify a Board member from an uninvolved agency to chair a meeting of the most senior managers with operational responsibility for the case. This meeting will review the issues at hand and provide a final opportunity for the involved agencies to ensure that there is a full understanding of the issues before the decision is finalised. The chair of this meeting will report back to the SSCB Independent Chair.

Appendix 1: Resolution and Escalation Pathway



Appendix 2: Senior Safeguarding Leads

Agency	Role	Contact Details
Sandwell Children's Social Care	Group Head for Safeguarding	Carol Singleton carol_singleton@sandwell.gov.uk 0121 569 2698
Sandwell MBC (Education)	MASH Education Officer	Lisa Harvey Lisa_harvey@sandwell.gov.uk 0121 569 8144
Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group	Designated Nurse/ Safeguarding Children/ Head of Service	Eileen Welch eileen.welch@nhs.net 0121 612 2018
Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust	Chief Nurse	Colin Ovington c.ovington@nhs.net 0121 507 3417
Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust	Strategic Lead for Safeguarding Children and Adults	Tabetha Darmon tabetha.darmon@bcpft.nhs.uk
West Midlands Police	Detective Chief Inspector	Sally Holmes s.holmes@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk 101 ext 811 3231 / 07770444299
Probation	Regional Manager - Black Country Region (Community Rehabilitation Company)	Jas Pejatta Jas.Pejatta@rrp.gse.gov.uk 01902 576 012
	Head of Dudley and Sandwell National Probation Service Cluster	Viv Townsend Viv.Townsend@probation.gsi.gov.uk 0121 358 9358/ 01384 461461
Cafcass	Head of Service	Julie Kelly Julie.Kelly@CAFCASS.GSI.GOV.UK 07920711365