

Inter-Agency Dispute Resolution & Escalation Procedure

**Solihull
Safeguarding
Adults Board**
Protecting Adults Together



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For the management of individual safeguarding adults' cases where professional disagreement arises.

1. Principles

1.1 Multi-agency working is the bedrock of effective adult safeguarding. Partner agencies have their own roles to play in the safeguarding process as set out in the Care Act (2014), Care Act Statutory Guidance and in the [West Midlands Multi-agency policy and procedures for the protection of adults with care and support needs](#).

[West Midlands Regional Safeguarding Information Hub](#)

1.2 It is important that all partner agencies are accountable for delivering their part of the safeguarding process to the highest possible standard.

1.3 There will be occasions where staff from one partner agency may have concerns about the way in which staff from another partner agency is/are delivering their part of the safeguarding process. Solihull Safeguarding Adults Boards expects that practitioners will challenge each other and raise concerns directly and immediately when they disagree with each other and that they retain a focus on the wellbeing of the adult.

1.4 Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around thresholds, roles and responsibilities, the need for action, and communication.

1.5 Examples include:

- A poorly framed or constructed safeguarding concern
- Disagreement about a decision not to make Section 42 enquiries about the concern
- Disagreement about who should carry out the Section 42 enquiry
- A failure to refer a concern in a timely way
- A failure to share all the relevant information
- A failure to undertake agreed actions within a set timescale

1.6 Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) is committed to the principle that appropriate challenge and escalation is an essential part of being a learning partnership, achieving high standards and challenging poor practice. Appropriate and timely challenge and escalation are vital to delivering continuous improvement and obtaining good outcomes for adults with care and support needs.

1.7 The principle of the dispute resolution procedure is that concerns relation to individual cases should be taken up promptly and openly through the appropriate agency line management structures and resolved at the lowest possible level. Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies.

1.8 At no point should disputes place adults at greater risk, obscure the focus on the adult, or delay decision making.

2. Procedure

- 2.1 The first responsibility to raise a concern about the judgement or action of another practitioner and seek resolution rests with the staff member who first identifies the potential issue. Only where that fails to resolve the matter should an issue be escalated.
- 2.2 Where an issue of professional dispute arises, initial attempts should be made to resolve the problem by the people who disagree, unless the adult is at immediate risk.
- 2.3 If unresolved, the matter should be referred to the worker's own line manager or Safeguarding Adult Lead, who will discuss with their opposite number in the other agency. The aim should be to find a resolution within 5 working days. If an agency is unsure about another agency's management structure or who an agency's safeguarding lead is – the Safeguarding Adults Board Business Team should be consulted via ssab@solihull.gov.uk.
- 2.4 If the problem remains unresolved, the line manager will refer 'up the line' culminating with Director/Assistant Directors/Heads of Service in consultation with the organisations' Safeguarding Leads. (See Appendix 1 flow chart).
- 2.5 If the matter is still unresolved, consideration will be given to referring the matter to the Chair of the SSAB Policies and Procedures Sub-Committee to offer mediation.
- 2.6 If there is conflict of interest with the chair of the SSAB Policies and Procedures Sub-Committee the matter should be raised through the SSAB Business Team to the SSAB Independent Chair, who will be asked to mediate.
- 2.7 A clear record should be kept at all stages, by all parties. This must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued. All records should be retained on the adults' case file and agency database.
- 2.8 At each stage it is important that the person who originally raised the concern is given feedback on what action has been taken in response. It is the responsibility of the person to whom the issue is referred to ensure that clear and timely feedback is provided.
- 2.9 When the issue is resolved, any general issues should be identified and referred to the agency's representative on the SSAB Policy and Procedures Sub-Committee to inform future learning and possible changes to existing policies and procedures.
- 2.10 It may also be useful for individuals to receive a debrief to promote continuing good working relationships and identify possible training needs.

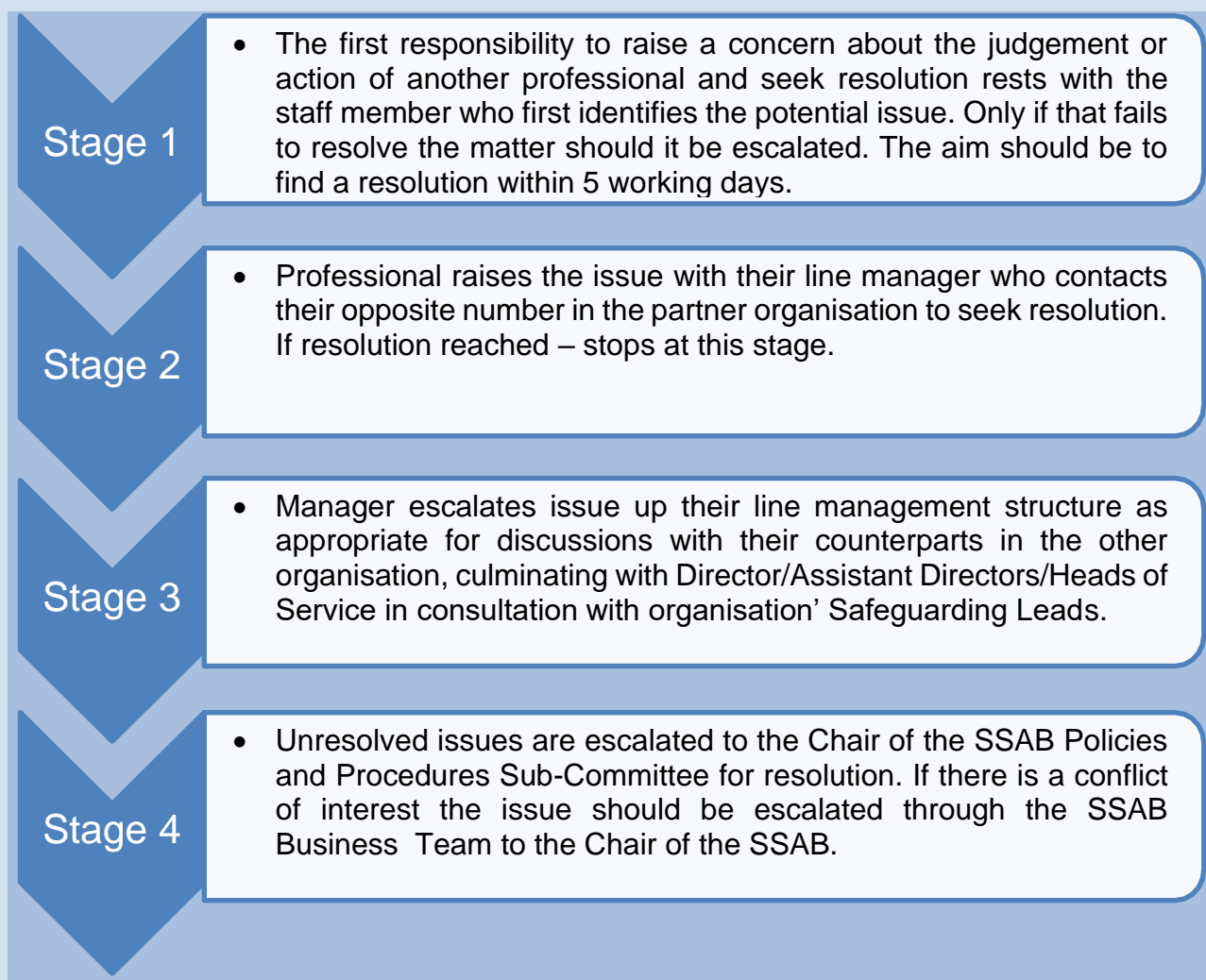
Please note – this policy does not apply to cases where there may be concerns about the behaviour or conduct of another professional that may impact on an adult’s safety and wellbeing. In such cases, reference should be made to the [West Midlands Position of Trust Framework](#).

Appendix 1

Dispute Resolution and Escalation Procedure Flow Chart

Key principle: It is every professional’s responsibility to problem solve. The aim must be to resolve concerns at the earliest stage and lowest level and to ensure the adult concerned is safeguarded whilst the dispute is resolved.

If a professional is unhappy with a decision or response from any organisation arising out of an adult safeguarding procedure:



When the issue is resolved, any general issues should be identified and referred to the SSAB Policies and Procedures Sub-Committee to inform future learning and possible changes to existing policies and procedures.



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