



Escalation Policy for Newham Safeguarding Children Partnership

Approved by	NSCP
Date of approval	Oct 2020
Review Date	Oct 2021

WHY THIS POLICY IS IMPORTANT

Multi-agency working to keep a child safe is often complex. This means that from time to time the judgement of staff from different professional backgrounds may differ, causing potential conflict. Child safeguarding work can also be emotionally overwhelming and this can affect judgment and can lead to conflicts arising over relatively minor issues. Normally the professionals in conflict both want to protect a child but disagree on how best to do this. It is rare for one party to a dispute to care less than the other. This policy sets out clear routes to escalate professional concerns where there are fears that a difference of opinion may be getting in the way of keeping a child safe.

The Newham Safeguarding Children Partnership aims to be a mature, high trust partnership in which conflicts are resolved through mature conversation – see the Standard for ‘outstanding partnership working’ set out below, which we aim to live by.



*The standard for 'outstanding'
partnership working*

1. A culture of early identification and referral to partner agencies when there are concerns about children and young people;
2. Open and transparent dialogue between partner agencies even if this means exposing areas of weakness to be addressed in the agency's own systems and processes;
3. Respect means responding to the concerns of partners, even if one agency feels the concern has insufficient eligibility for a service or response. Respect means at least having a mature conversation about a child's needs and the best way forward every time;
4. Disagreements should always be handled through conversations which seek to arrive at a joint understanding. A lack of communication, confrontational positioning or aggressive e mailing are all signs of dysfunctional partnership working likely to rebound badly on vulnerable children and young people.
5. Partner agencies should have high mutual expectations of one another, based upon prioritising child safeguarding over other priorities, especially when a case is at Level 3 or 4. Outstanding partnership working means there is no weak link in the 'professional supply' chain to a child.



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Likely flashpoints

- 1) A conflict or dispute may arise at any level between any two individuals, groups or agencies within the wider Partnership. It could be operational, about an issue of policy, whether or not to carry out one type of review or another or about strategy.
- 2) Frequent examples in child safeguarding partnerships are:
 - Schools thinking social care ignore or downgrade their concerns so the issue with a child whose behaviour is challenging is left with them rather than the risk being shared;
 - Health wanting more case or practice reviews or children on child protection plans than either social care or the police;
 - The police thinking Health are slow or reluctant to share information;
 - Social care thinking the police are over-criminalising children, young people or families;
 - A conflict about information sharing, about what to share, who to share it with, what the consent process has to be and whether the information is relevant -. Remember ***in all situations that the over-riding consideration as to whether to share information should be the safety and welfare of the child. Information shared in good faith due to a valid child protection concern is nearly always justifiable, though the position is more complicated in contextual safeguarding if wider information is being shared.***

NB when partnership working is outstanding, these types of conflict rarely if ever arise because partners have evolved a shared approach to risk, thresholds and actions. Such high trust partnerships are the ideal to aim for.

PRINCIPLES TO ABIDE BY

1st principle: Desist from an aggressive reaction and enter a dialogue, if need be an extended dialogue (within the timescale for the issue to be resolved);

2nd principle: Persist in reaching a resolution. Do not detach and act unilaterally;

3rd principle: The person or agency concerned should escalate internally and for the escalation to go to the person most likely to be able to sort the issue out;

4th principle: Resolve quickly, so use of phones or e mail is important, not waiting for meetings as that process usually (but not always) causes delay;

5th principle: Conflicts of this nature also arise with children or one or more family members and the same approach to dispute resolution applies.

STAGED PROCESS FOR RESOLUTION

Resolving the difference of opinion

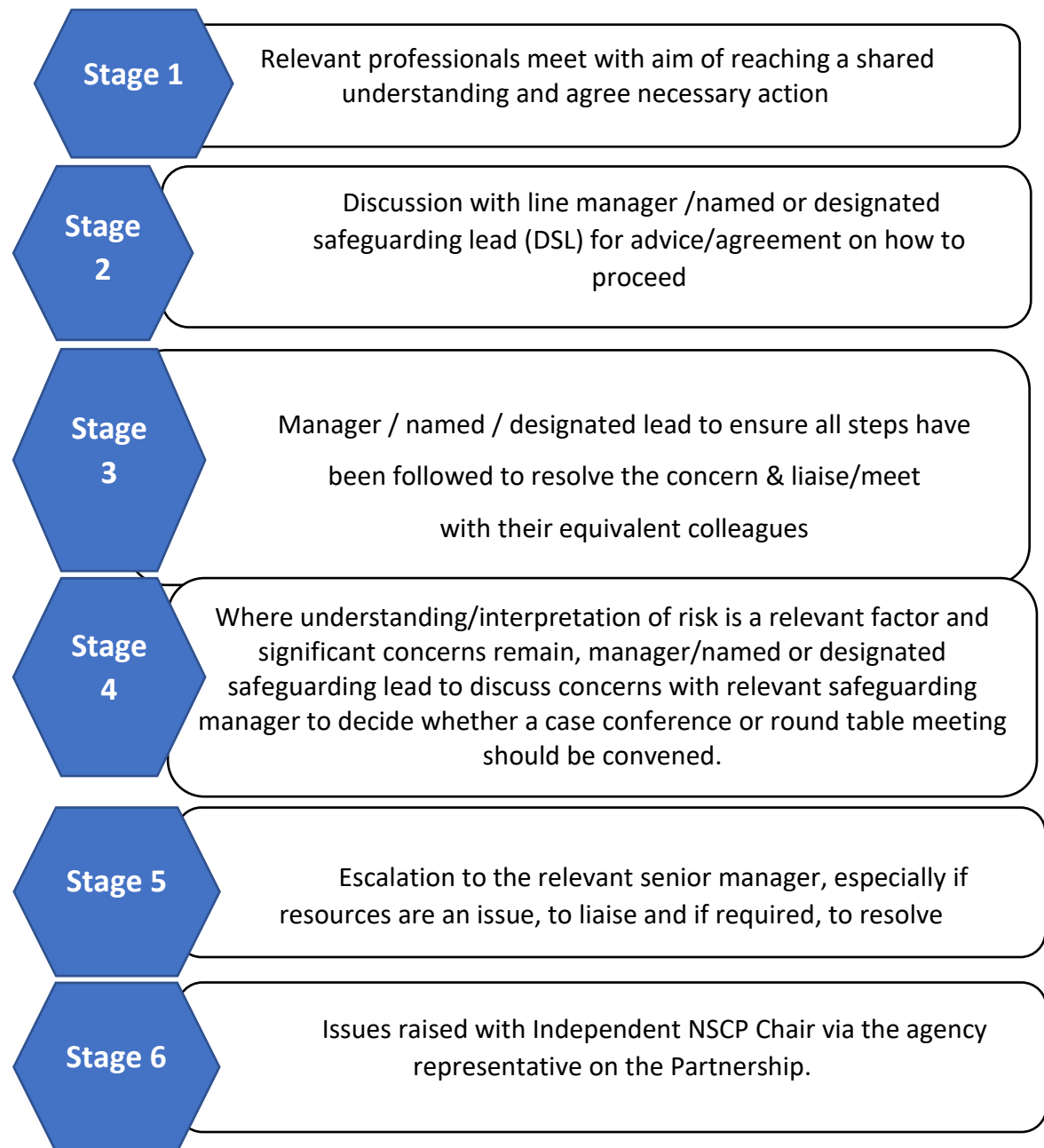
Practical measures should be taken to ensure that escalation occurs through the following stages, unless the situation is **so serious** and requires urgent action to protect a child. Children's Social Care or the Police are responsible for taking urgent action to protect a child.



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These stages are not fixed and should be operated flexibly. They do not need to be followed sequentially in every situation. You can go straight to the final stage or miss out a few stages. The staged process is a guideline not a requirement.

STAGED RESOLUTION PROCESS





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Stage 1: Relevant professionals meet and discuss with the aim of reaching a shared understanding and agree necessary action. This meeting should be held as soon as possible, to ensure the issues are resolved without delay. Generally, concerns should be discussed either by phone, e mail or in a meeting within maximum 3 working days from the day the concern was raised.

Stage 2: If agreement cannot be reached and someone still has concerns that a child remains at risk of significant harm or that a policy decision or strategy is seriously unsound, they should discuss this with their manager and / or named / designated safeguarding lead for child protection (DSL). This should happen at the earliest opportunity, preferably on the same day as the Stage 1 discussion or meeting and generally no longer than one working day later.

Stage 3: Escalation of concerns

- The manager / named / designated lead for child safeguarding should make sure that the professional raising the concern has cooperated with other professionals to ensure all the steps have been followed to resolve the concern;
- A clear record should be kept at all stages, by all parties, once Stage 2 is reached;
- It is essential that where concerns are raised that both or all parties seek to identify the evidence base for the matter under scrutiny – the correct decision will nearly always be the one with the strongest evidence-base or rationale;
- The manager or named / designated lead for child safeguarding should liaise with the equivalent colleague in the other agency or agencies involved to resolve outstanding concerns.

This should happen within the same timescale as Stage 2.

Stage 4: In cases where significant concerns remain, especially if understanding and interpretation of risk is the relevant factor, the manager or named / designated lead for child protection should contact the Child Protection Manager (in their local area) to discuss the concerns, and decide whether a Child Protection Conference or equivalent round table meeting should be convened.

Stage 5: If the matter remains unresolved and especially if resources are a relevant factor, this should be escalated to an appropriate level of management within each agency to liaise and if necessary, to meet. This timescale should be a further 3 days maximum.

Stage 6: Where there is no resolution, having exhausted all other possibilities, the manager / named / designated lead for child protection should raise the matter with the Independent Chair of the Newham Child Safeguarding Partnership. This should be done via the agency representative for the Partnership. The Chair will determine



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how long she needs to respond, bearing in mind lessons from the previous stages and write to those involved with an estimated timescale.

At each stage professionals must ensure that appropriate records are made in the child's or family's case records. This should include the action taken to escalate the concern, any agreed actions arising from this as well as timescales.

The NSCP business manager will maintain a tracker of the escalations and will incorporate an annual analysis of the incidents subject to this Escalation Policy within the NSCP annual report.



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**NSCP Escalation Referral Form
(Copy to be kept on service user file)**

Name of child/young person:	
DOB:	
Address:	
Name, Role and Agency of person completing this form	
Name, Roles and Agency of others involved	
Brief details of the professional disagreement:	

Outline of Steps taken and who was involved from Stages 1-5 in line with NSCP Escalation Policy		
Stage 1 Meeting Date		
Stage 3 Meeting Date		
Stage 5 Meeting Date		
If any of the above Stage Meeting dates have not taken place please outline the reasons why:		
What is the learning for your agencies from this case?		
Is there learning for the wider safeguarding partnership?		
A requirement for staff training	Yes	No
Development of a new NSCP Protocol / Procedure	Yes	No
Further discussion at a particular NSCP Sub Group	Yes	No
Other		



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Contact details for advice on the completion of this form and where the completed form should be submitted to (either using secure email or by password protecting the document):

Natalie Newton - Tel: 0203 3737471

NSCP Business Manager natalie.newton@newham.gov.uk