

Issue Resolution Policy – September 2022 – September 2024



Issue Resolution Policy

INTRODUCTION

The North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSSCP) believe that continual feedback is an important part of self-improvement and raising standards.

Listening and responding to differing viewpoints and perspective enables us to reflect, adjust and improve services and systems. Providing a pathway for these views to be expressed and taken seriously is one way in which we can demonstrate our respect for each other's views.

In an effective and healthy inter-agency working culture, respectful challenge is a key feature and therefore is welcomed.

This policy is for all agencies across the partnership to facilitate agency to agency resolution, both statutory and third sector. We are committed to being transparent and to undertake issue resolution respectfully recognizing that having differing views is not about proving who is right or wrong but seeking to resolve issues in the best interest of the child or young person.

PURPOSE OF PROCEDURE

To provide a clear pathway for the resolution of professional differences, facilitating a timely resolution ensuring that the needs of the child or young person being discussed are met and their safety and wellbeing is promoted throughout. The local procedure is intended to augment the guidance provided by the Southwest Child Protection Procedures (www.swcpp.org.uk) and provides a local process to be followed.

AIMS OF PROCEDURE

1. To support the development of a shared understanding concerning the level of need children and young people have, ensuring we offer the right service at the right time, and is supported by the multi-agency training delivered by the NSSCP.
2. To promote the best multi-agency practices, all practitioners should be able to question decision-making. This is both their right and responsibility.
3. To provide practitioners with the means to raise questions they have about decisions made by other professionals or services by:
 - Resolving issues and professional differences that may hinder the progress for the child or young person quickly and openly.

- Overcoming problematic areas, in working together, where there is a lack of clarity.
 - Promoting effective resolutions by considering required amendments to organisational protocols and procedures.
4. To resolve differences within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child or young person's current safety is understood and promoted.

TIMESCALES

It is in the child's best interests that timely decisions are made, therefore differences of opinions should always be resolved quickly. This will of course be determined by the complexity of the issues and the perceived risk a child is experiencing.

The primary focus throughout will be to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of the child/young person is central at all times.

It is the responsibility of each agency to ensure decisions regarding children, where appropriate, are shared or sought. The best people to raise and resolve issues are those who work directly to support the child and their family.

From the outset resolving issues by any practitioner should take no longer than **5 working days** for it to be either **resolved or, if not resolved, progressed as per this policy**.

5 working days do not reflect shift patterns or imminent annual leave, for the purposes of this policy we consider a working day to be Monday through to Friday (excluding bank holidays). If annual leave or end of shift is imminent it is the practitioner or Manager's professional responsibility to ensure this is handed over to an appropriate colleague.

ISSUES

There is not an exhaustive list of issues that fit within this policy area, that is down to individual practitioners and managers to determine and raise. However, some typical issues that could be raised via this policy are:

- Decisions made by another agency that another agency feels is not in the child's best interests such as offering an alternative or no service.
- The length of time waiting for a service is potentially going to take and the impact of the wait being adverse upon the child/family.
- The impact of a reduced service on wider aspects of the child's life such as family or placement breakdown.
- Children receiving a service that maybe doesn't reflect the perceived level of need.

What is crucial throughout this is the impact on the child and the evidence that supports this.

RECORDING

At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, including the practitioner who raised the issue and their line manager. This must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome from the conversations and how any outstanding issues will be followed up, with agreed timescales.

For stage 1 issues, the practitioners raising the issue will need to record in writing the discussions and resolution and via email share this with involved agencies. Each agency is responsible for uploading /filing this onto the child's record (electronic or paper)

For stages 2, 3 and 4 a recording tool is attached as appendix 1. The agency raising the issue remains responsible for the recording throughout the process until resolution. It may be useful for a reflective debrief to be facilitated following discussion to promote continuing good working relationships, it is not within the remit of this policy to detail or comment what this needs to look like.

PROCEDURE

Stage 1- Initial Issue Resolution – practitioner to practitioner (Within 1 working day)

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem peer to peer. Any practitioner who feels that a decision or action is inappropriate, is not safe, or creates a significant issue, should initially attempt to resolve differences through discussion with the other practitioner(s) involved, unless the child, young person or adult is at immediate risk.

This should be done within one working day. They should evidence the difference of opinion in writing via an email, including the resolution and rationale. This record must be shared and agreed by all parties involved. A record must be kept on the child/young person's file.

If the practitioner feels the child or young person is at risk of immediate harm, they must raise this with their line manager immediately and consider what they can do to offer immediate support whilst other services are contacted for support or advice. It cannot be assumed other agencies will share your views and will therefore respond. This remains the ongoing responsibility of the practitioner in the absence of an alternative working safety plan.

When this occurs, it is essential that the practitioners exchange both line manager and senior manager details to ensure there is no delay later in the process.

Stage 2 – Discussing the issue resolution between services or agencies – Line Manager – Line Manager (Within 2 working days use Appendix 1 Recording form)

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at practitioner level the matter should be referred without delay to their line managers.

The issue will then be considered at line management level, or with the designated professional or named professional for safeguarding within the individual agency.

Every effort should be made to resolve the concerns at this level. Records still need to be kept and resolution communicated to all parties in writing and kept on the child/young person's file. Appendix 1 needs to be used to evidence the process. The person responsible for recording is the agency raising the issue.

If the issue is not resolved stage three will need to commence, the line manager will need to share the recording form with their senior manager.

**Stage 3 – Discussing the issue resolution between services or agencies – senior manager to senior manager
(Within 3 working days using Appendix 1 Recording form)**

The matter should be referred to **an appropriate level of management** within the organisation, who will discuss with peers from the other agencies.

At this level conversations must continue to be recorded on the **Recording Form** (appendix 2) that started at stage 2.

An agreed written record must be shared amongst this group for their respective recording purposes. A copy of this must also be sent to the NSSCP Business Manager and your own agency Head of Safeguarding.

If the issue is not resolved stage four will need to commence.

**Stage 4 – Referring unresolved issues to the safeguarding partnership exec representative
(Within 5 working days)**

The matter should be referred to the nominated NSSCP exec representative, via the Business Manager upon receipt of the monitoring form no later than day 4 of the process.

The nominated representative will determine whether the matter can be resolved through mediation or should be considered by a purposefully convened panel.

If a panel is required, it will be made up of a minimum of the three statutory members and any other relevant partners.

The Panel will receive representation from those involved and decide the next course of action.

The decision at stage 4 is final and binding for all organisations involved.

Recording Form – Issue Resolution

This form is to be used at stage 2, 3 and 4 of the issue resolution policy, it needs to be stored on the child/young person’s record for each agency and submitted to the Business Manager upon resolution.

The completion of this form is the responsibility of the agency raising the issue resolution.

Child’s Name		Date stage 2 started	
Child’s Date of Birth			

Names of those involved Copy these boxes as necessary	Name:	
	Designation:	
	Agency:	
	Date and Stage:	
	Name:	
	Designation:	
	Agency:	
	Date and Stage:	

Summary of the issue at stage 2, include views of all agencies concerned and impact on child.	
Agreed outcomes or actions, with timescales (Actual date not ASAP)	
If this requires progressing to stage 3, please explain what remains unresolved.	
Summary of the issues discussed at stage 3, include views of all agencies concerned and impact on child.	

Agreed outcomes or actions, with timescales (Actual date not ASAP)	
If this requires referral to stage 4, please explain what remains unresolved.	
Summary of the issues discussed at stage 4, include views of all agencies concerned and impact on child.	
Agreed outcomes or actions, with timescales (Actual date not ASAP)	

Please complete for monitoring purposes		
Stage at which resolved. (Delete) 2 3 4	Time taken to resolve (Delete) 2,3,4,5 days	Please note how helpful or unhelpful, this policy was in supporting the resolution and add ideas for development below.
Additional Notes:		

FLOWCHART

