

Child Protection Co-ordinators

Dispute Resolution Process Practice Guide

The Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) has a duty to monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to ensuring children are safe and that child protection plans address risks identified. Dispute resolution is an integral part of the CPC role. Informal and formal resolution form part of the same continuum of resolution.

The child should remain central to the dispute resolution process.

Ideally resolution processes are there to resolve any problems at the lowest level and as quickly as possible. Through the process the CPC should be able to demonstrate that they have the child at the focus of their intervention and should be able to evidence their approach to resolving the issue.

CPCs should, where possible, work in collaboration with a child's social worker to ensure that each child they review achieves, over the period of being subject to plan, the best possible outcomes which are safe.

CPCs, like all the other professionals involved with a child, want the best for children they review. There are however occasions when concerns arise regarding a child being at risk or child protection plans not being implemented either wholly or in part.

When there is an issue regarding the quality of the work or practice, or where the child's needs are not being met, or child protection plans are not being implemented, the CPC should attempt to resolve the issue directly with the child's social worker and, if necessary, their team manager. Where the CPC cannot resolve the issue, within a reasonable time period, then the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) should be started.

CPCs should exercise their discretion and judgement when considering the level at which they are disputing and whether they are attempting to resolve this as part of the informal or formal process.

Before starting the DRP, the CPC should ensure that he or she has exhausted all the informal channels of communication, such as speaking directly with the social worker to resolve the issue in dispute. The CPC may also want to discuss the issue with the team manager of the CPC Service as a way of seeking a second opinion on the issue in dispute.

Whatever the CPC decides he or she should always bear in mind the need to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child, as well as the necessity to avoid delay and drift. The CPC should always therefore make a prompt decision on whether it is in a child's best interests to start the DRP.

The DRP is based on 3 stage alert process in LCS, known as CPC dispute resolution – see guidance below. The focus of the process should be to seek resolution that is appropriate to the needs of the child.

All information is recorded on the child's file and therefore CPCs need to be considerate of language that is used as part of the challenge and resolution process.

When a social worker has concerns regarding an CPCs practice or professional behaviour, this should be discussed with their team manager. Any concerns or issues identified need to be shared with the CPC team manager and a resolution agreed. Any outstanding issues of disagreement need to be raised by a service manager. This process is not to be recorded on the child's file.

This process is to standardise the communication when Child Protection Coordinators (CPC) are concerned about case management issues, progress with the child protection plan or an escalation of risk.

It is always expected that the least formal approach will be taken but the process indicates the steps that can be taken if progress is not made and / or if the right conversations are not happening. If the concerns indicate that the child/ children are at immediate risk of significant harm the appropriate action needs to take place and each stage need not be followed in sequence.

Pre-conference Preparation

The work that happens before the meeting is vital to ensuring that the meeting is restorative and the family are in the very best position to fully participate. The following issues will be considered by the chair. Feedback will be given through the QA form which will be completed after every initial review and 9-month review.

Appropriate invite list / childcare arrangements in place / referral for advocate for the child or adult as required / interpreter arranged / report prepared in advance and shared with the family and CPC

Expectation that the social work team manager (TM) will ensure that the statutory tasks will have been undertaken prior to the Initial Conference or Review Conference.

On the Social Worker (SW) review report for the conference the TM should indicate that the Core Groups and Statutory Visits have been completed or if they could not be (e.g. parental non engagement) that the reasons are briefly recorded.

Lack of progress of the plan or escalation of risk

When the CPC identifies issues/concerns, the CPC and the SW responsible for managing the Child Protection Plan should have a phone conversation and reach some agreement about the issues / concerns and any actions that are needed to address these.

CPCs will record this on LCS as “**CP Dispute Resolution Stage 1**” – the Dispute Resolution will be sent to the SW and TM.

There is an expectation that the TM will respond to this Dispute Resolution within 5 working days to acknowledge the issues/concerns identified and confirm that actions agreed have been completed.

Request for meeting

If this does not resolve the concerns (or if communication has not happened), these should be briefly outlined in an email to the Children’s Service Manager (CSM), with a copy to the SW and TM requesting a meeting. The meeting should be chaired by the CPC Team Manager.

CPC should record this on LCS as “**CP Dispute Resolution Stage 2**”.

The meeting should be attended by the CPC, CSM, and the Children’s Team Manager



Notify Head of Service

If no resolution has been achieved from the meeting undertaken in “**CP Dispute Resolution 2**”, these should be briefly outlined in an email to the Locality Head of Service (HoS), with a copy to the CSM, SW and TM requesting a meeting. The meeting should be chaired by the Safeguarding and Reviewing Service Manager.

CPC should record this on LCS as “**CP Dispute Resolution Stage 3**”.

There is an expectation that the HoS will confirm the date of the meeting via the “**CP Dispute Resolution Stage 3**” process within 5 working days.

The meeting should be attended by the IRO, CSM, and locality HoS.

A summary of the meeting will be recorded by the Safeguarding and Reviewing Manager on LCS in “**CP Dispute Resolution Stage 3**”.

Deputy Director Discussion

If the meeting with the Head of Service does not resolve issues, the HoS for Safeguarding and Reviewing should be advised for this to be discussed with the Deputy Director.

Referral to the Bradford Safeguarding Children Partnership

See BSCP procedure for Resolving Multi Agency Professional Disagreements and Escalation.

In the unlikely event that professional issues remain unresolved and / or discussions raise significant policy issues, the matter must be referred to the BSCP who will determine a course of action including reporting to the BSCP chair. This will need to be discussed with HoS for Safeguarding and Reviewing and AD.