

## PROTOCOL FOR RESOLVING PROFESSIONAL DISAGREEMENT

It is very clear through our safeguarding arrangements that partnership working is essential to keeping children and their families safe. It is only natural, however, that professionals will not always agree – professional difference can, in fact, be healthy and drive improved practice.

Our ethos within NCASP is to create an environment where professionals feel able to challenge each other in an open and transparent manner, where they feel the best outcomes for children and families are not being achieved.

In the spirit of keeping children and young people at the heart of everything we do, any concerns should be raised and acted upon immediately, so that the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and families is not compromised.

It is the responsibility of each organisation to have its own conflict resolution process for its own staff, including a whistle-blowing policy, and so this procedure does not cover professional disagreement within single agencies.

**The process of resolution should be kept as simple as possible.**

The aim (where possible) is to resolve difficulties quickly and without delay at a professional/practitioner level and there is an expectation that professionals at the heart of any disagreement will explore all avenues to resolve matters between themselves.

Where they are unable to achieve a resolution in a timely manner, professionals should be supported by senior managers and/or the designated safeguarding lead within their organisation. It is important to stress the need for prompt action so delays for children, young people and families are not experienced.

We recognise that in some circumstances, professionals may not be able to resolve disagreements and so a protocol for dealing with these situations is required. In these instances, the matter should be referred to NCASP where it will be brought to the attention of the statutory safeguarding partners to facilitate a resolution.

**If the matter concerns one or more of those strategic safeguarding partners and cannot be resolved, the Independent Scrutineer will facilitate the resolution.**

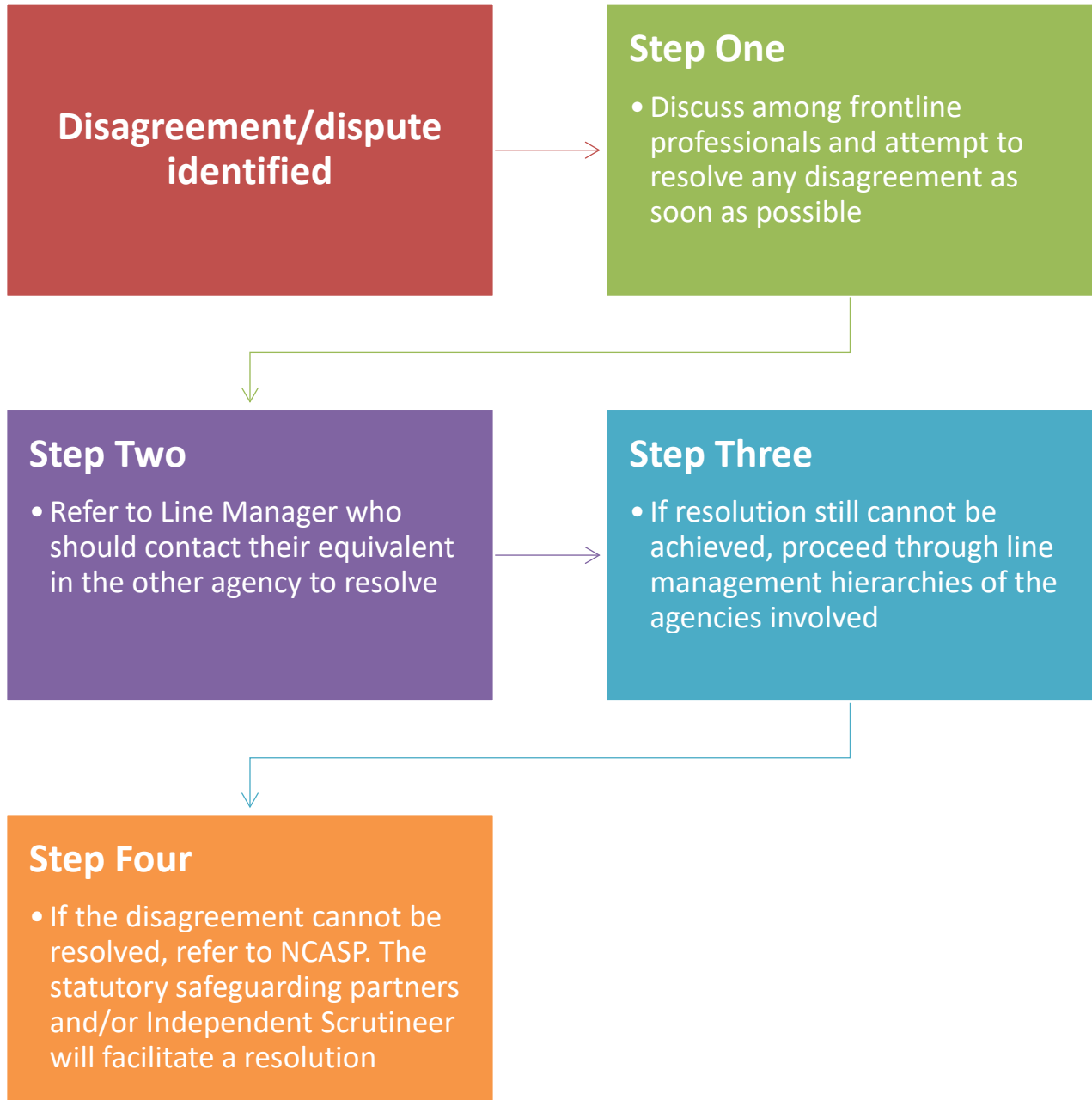
If still unresolved and appropriate, the matter can then be referred to the relevant inspectorate: Ofsted, CQC or HMICFRS.

## PRINCIPLES OF CONCERNS, DISAGREEMENTS AND DISSENT RESOLUTION

When resolving disagreements professionals should work within the following principles:

- 
- Keep the child or young person and their family at the centre of all professional discussions
  - The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is the paramount consideration in any disagreement
  - Ensure the right conversations are had with the right people at the right time, taking place face to face where possible
  - The thresholds document should always be used to identify the level of need
  - All agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are supported and know how to appropriately escalate concerns and disagreements about a child or young person's wellbeing
  - Disagreements within and between agencies must be resolved quickly and openly
  - At every point all staff involved should ensure discussions and outcomes are recorded in their agency's records and in the child's file.

## PROCESS FOR RESOLVING DISPUTES



- Discussion to take place with designated lead for safeguarding at each stage.
- Timescales, not exceeding 5 working days, should be agreed for each stage taking into consideration risk to the child.
- The process should be completed within a month.
- Clear written records should be kept by everyone at all stages

## When a disagreement/dispute arises, practitioners/professionals should follow this process:

### Step 1

Differences of opinion or judgement should be addressed quickly among frontline practitioners to attempt to achieve a shared understanding and agree a local resolution.

### Step 2

If Step 1 does not resolve the issue, line managers and designated lead for safeguarding should be consulted.

The line manager should review the concern to ensure it is justified. The line manager should then discuss with the line manager of the other practitioner in an attempt to reach a resolution.

They should do this within an agreed timescale with the practitioner raising the concern, and a timescale for response from the other line manager should also be agreed. Where possible this should not exceed 5 working days between stages and one month for the process to be completed.

### Step 3

If a mutually agreeable resolution still cannot be reached, the issue must be referred without delay through the line management structure again with agreed timescales for responses. This may involve a resolution meeting in order that any learning points are recorded.

### Step 4

If professional disagreements remain unresolved, the matter must be referred to the Head of Service for each agency involved and escalated to the NCASP.

This will be brought to the attention of the statutory safeguarding partners who will consider the intervention required based on the circumstances of the case.

A proforma is provided at Appendix 1 to record actions taken and outcomes; this will support NCASP to agree the level of intervention required.

- Appropriate timescales for passing on, and responding to, concerns should be agreed for each stage. These should not exceed 5 working days and should take into consideration any potential risk to the child and need for provision of services.
- Clear written records should be kept by everyone at all stages, which must include written confirmation between the parties about agreed resolutions and the proposed follow up of any outstanding issues.
- If throughout the process the disagreement cannot be resolved, and professionals feel that a child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering significant harm, those concerns should be communicated to their line manager and/or their organisation's designated lead for safeguarding immediately.

<b>Name and designation of Referrer:</b>	
<b>Contact Details of Referrer:</b>	
<b>Date information passed to NCASP Business Manager:</b>	

<b>Reason for implementing the Professional Disagreement Protocol (to be completed by the referrer):</b>

<b>Stage 1 - Resolution by professional/practitioner</b>
<b>Actions Taken</b>
<b>Outcome/Impact</b>

<b>Stage 2 – Resolution by Line Manager</b>
<b>Action taken</b>
<b>Outcome/Impact</b>
<b>What is the learning from this action and how will it be shared?</b>

<b>Stage 3 – Resolution by Senior Manager (or equivalent)</b>
<b>Action Taken</b>

**Outcome/Impact**

**What learning is identified?**

**Date completed:**

**Signed:**