



## Escalation Procedure

# Resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to the safety of children

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**Review:** August 2019

History of most recent Policy Changes – **Must be completed**

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change (e.g. TU request, change in legislation etc.)
16/02/2012	3-4	Clarification of when to use monitoring form	Highlighted in Audit.
01/08/2016	All	Revised flowchart and	Annual review
23/04/2018	All	Revised wording and stages with inclusion of timeframes	Natalie Chamberlain and Becky Lewis
12/03/2020	All	Rebranding to KBSP	KBSP BU

# Escalation Procedures - Resolution of Professional Disagreements in work relating to the Safety of Children

## Purpose

Both national and local Serious Case Reviews continue to draw attention to the importance of interagency communication and encouraging both professional challenge and escalating concerns for resolution within and between organisations where disagreements remain. Further learning can be found [here](#).

This procedure provides a clear mechanism for the resolution of professional disputes in order to ensure a timely resolution whilst ensuring that the needs of the child or young person are met. The procedure is intended to augment the guidance provided by the South West Child Protection Procedures ([www.swcpp.org.uk](http://www.swcpp.org.uk)) and provides local procedures to be followed in accordance with this guidance.

## 1. General principles

- 1.1 Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children.
- 1.2 Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 It is important to:
  - avoid professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus of the child;
  - resolve difficulties (within and) between agencies quickly and openly;
  - identify problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures.
- 1.5 The safety of individual child/ren and focus on child/ren are the paramount considerations in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be escalated with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child.
- 1.6 Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies.
- 1.7 Effective working together depends on resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies; and a belief in a genuine partnership.
- 1.8 Professional disputes are reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities and airing and sharing problems in networking forums.
- 1.9 The process resolution should be as simple as possible.
- 1.10 The aim should be to resolve difficulties at practitioner/ fieldworker level between agencies.
- 1.11 Attempts at problem resolution may leave one worker/agency believing that the child/ren remain at risk of significant harm. This person/agency has responsibility for communicating such concerns.

## 2. Procedure

2.1 The following stages set out the steps that should be taken to resolve professional disagreement. All stages are likely to be involved however if a child(ren) is thought to be at risk of immediate harm, disagreements should be resolved urgently and may require quicker escalation through the stages to senior management. The timescales given are a **guide** to assist in timely communication and resolution although

it should depend on your assessment of the immediacy of the risk. Timescales should be discussed and set at all stages and issues of delay can be used as a reason to escalate concerns to the next stage if agencies are failing to respond and prioritise resolution. Should the case require longer investigation at any stage, the receiving organisation should express this clearly and set out their intended timetable for resolution in collaboration with the escalating agency.

### **Before making an escalation:**

Before escalating a concern, organisations should ensure that all possible opportunities to resolve the issue by the respective agency has been taken. This should include:

- Recognition that there is a disagreement over a significant issue, which impacts on the safety and welfare of a child;
- Identification of the problem, and clarity about the disagreement and what you aim to achieve.

These two points could involve consulting a colleague to clarify thinking, reviewing the relevant multi-agency policies and procedure or having a discussing with a safeguarding link. It is every professional's responsibility to 'problem solve' at the earliest stage.

Disagreements between professionals should be recorded in the child's case file.

### **Stage 1 –Supervisor/Team Manager formally raising the concern with the equivalent Supervisor/Team Manager in the other agency**

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem. If the disagreement is not resolved professionals should contact their supervisor/team manager within their own agency. It is then the responsibility of the supervisor/team manager to discuss the concerns with the equivalent supervisor/team manager in the other agency and take steps to resolve the issue. Disagreements or dissent at all meetings e.g. Strategy Discussions should be recorded by each respective agency.

A response must be received from the organisation who receives the escalation within a maximum timescale of **24 hours of escalation (1 working day)**.

**Please note:** If the escalating organisation does not receive a response or requires a quicker response due to child safety concerns, it is their responsibility to make all reasonable proactive contact with the organisation to ascertain the availability of the relevant Team Manager/Supervisor or make contact with an equivalent individual within the organisation.

## **Stage 2 – Raising concern between Service Manager/Named / Designated Safeguarding Representative to Service Manager/Named / Designated Safeguarding Representative in other agency**

If the problem is not resolved at stage one, the supervisor/team manager of each agency should report to their senior manager or the named/designated safeguarding representative. They will liaise with an equivalent representative in the other agency. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

Disagreements at all meetings e.g. Strategy Meetings should be recorded by each respective agency. If the escalating organisation does not receive a response or requires a quicker response due to child safety concerns, it is their responsibility to make all reasonable proactive contact with the organisation to ascertain the availability of the relevant Team Manager/Supervisor or make contact with an equivalent individual within the organisation.

A response must be received within a maximum timescale of **48 hours of escalation (2 working days)**.

**Please note:** If the escalating organisation does not receive a response or requires a quicker response due to child safety concerns, it is their responsibility to make all reasonable proactive contact with the organisation to ascertain the availability of the relevant Team Manager/Supervisor or make contact with an equivalent individual within the organisation.

## **Stage 3 – Referring concern to KCS Board Members and KCS Board Manager informed of escalation**

If the matter cannot be resolved, contact must be made with the relevant agency's Board Member. If the Board member is unknown the BSCB Business Manager (if not available the BSCB Quality Assurance Service Manager) will be able to recommend the most suitable senior representative in each agency to seek a resolution. If an organisation does not have a Board Member then the concern will be managed by the person within the organisation with strategic responsibility for safeguarding. In all cases **the KCS Business Manager must be informed that a Stage 3 escalation has been made**. A response must be received within a maximum timescale of **5 working days from receipt of escalation**.

## **Stage 4– Refer concern to Chair of KCS**

If the matter is still unresolved, consideration will be given to referring the matter to the Chair of BSCB who will consider whether the matter can be resolved through mediation or should be considered by a BSCB Resolution Panel.

Mediation will be offered as soon as possible bearing in mind the impact on the child or young person. The decision reached in mediation is final and binding on the agencies concerned.

In more complex matters a KCS Resolution Panel (KBSP Exec.) will meet. The Panel must consist of representatives of three agencies who are members of KCS, to include those agencies involved in the dispute. The Panel will receive representation from those concerned in the dispute and make a decision as to the next course of action.

The decision of the Panel is final and binding on all agencies involved.

**Receipt must be acknowledged within 48hrs (2 working days) setting out a timescale for resolution.**

## **3. Further notes**

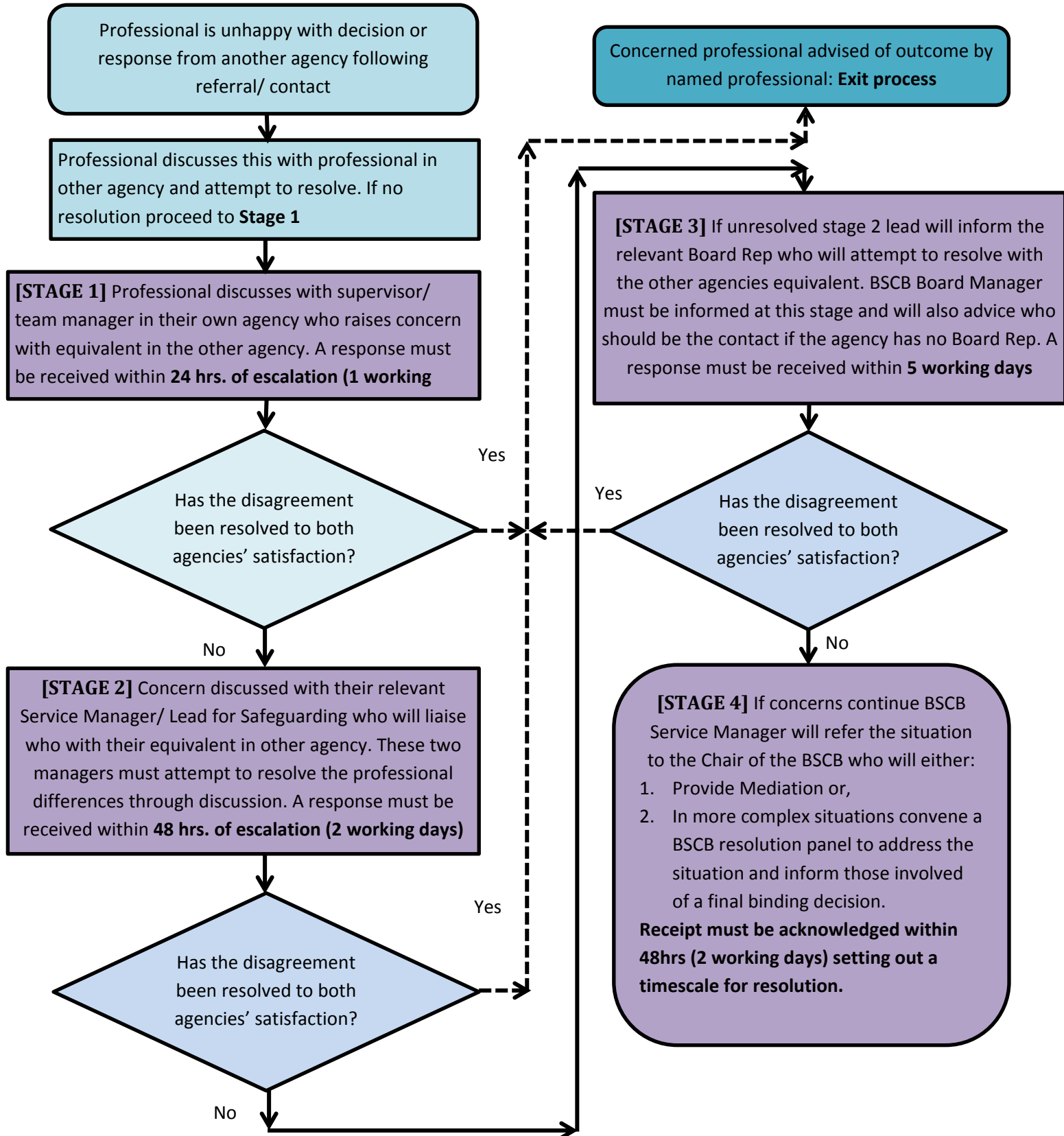
A report of dispute that have been reported and findings of Panels will be made to the KCS on an annual basis.

A clear record should be kept at all stages, by all parties. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

Once **Stage 3** is reached the monitoring form should be issued to detail the issues requiring resolution and recording the agreed outcome. When the issue is resolved, any general issues should be identified and referred to the agency's representative on the KCS for consideration by the relevant KCS subgroup to inform future learning.

It may also be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

**Flowchart: Escalation Procedure –  
For professionals with Child Protection  
or child welfare concerns**



**Notes:**  
At all stages decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel (see monitoring form to be used from **STAGE 3**).