

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Escalation

Policy statement

- Effective safeguarding depends on transparent, honest, and collaborative relationships between agencies.
- Professional disagreements are sometimes inevitable, but must never detract from the overriding priority: the safety and welfare of the child.
- This escalation policy provides a clear, structured process for resolving professional differences where there is concern that decisions, inaction, or engagement by another professional or agency may compromise a child's welfare.
- This policy operates in conjunction with:
 - *London Child Protection Procedures, Part B1 - Professional Conflict Resolution* londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk
 - Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) procedures and safeguarding policies.
- All staff must understand their duty to challenge, escalate, record, and follow through on concerns in a timely way.

Principles & Key Commitments

1. **Paramourncy of the Child:** The child's safety and well-being is the highest priority in all escalations.
2. **Early Resolution:** Wherever possible, disagreements should be resolved at the lowest, most immediate level. Frontline professional-to-professional discussion is strongly encouraged.
3. **Timeliness:** Escalation should not be delayed. Timescales must be appropriate to the risk – always "as soon as possible," and within a week unless risk demands faster action. (This reflects London guidance.) londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk
4. **Recording & Transparency:** All discussions, decisions, and actions must be recorded contemporaneously and placed on the child's safeguarding record.
5. **Management Involvement:** As needed, escalate via line managers, designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), and senior managers.
6. **Learning Culture:** Disagreements should not be viewed purely negatively – where handled well, challenge can strengthen multiagency working and lead to better outcomes. This aligns with multi-agency escalation policies elsewhere. redbridgescp.org.uk+2hscb.org.uk+2

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7. **Escalation to Partnership Leadership:** If resolution cannot be reached through local agency management, escalation to the Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) should be used.

When Escalation Should Be Considered

Escalation may be appropriate in cases such as:

- Disagreement about thresholds (e.g., whether a case meets criteria for social care intervention) staffsscp.org.uk+2londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk+2
- Unclear roles and responsibilities between professionals or agencies teescpp.org.uk
- Disputes over action (or inaction): e.g., delays in assessment, concerns not being investigated, or a belief that risk is not being addressed.
- Difficulties progressing or implementing a child protection plan, especially when professionals feel the plan is not being followed or is ineffective. londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk
- Persistent communication breakdowns, poor coordination, or lack of clarity about who is responsible for what.
- Information-sharing issues or disagreements about the sharing or withholding of critical safeguarding information.

Escalation Process - Stages of Resolution

Here is a four-stage escalation process adapted for our setting:

Stage 1: Front-line Professional to Professional

- The staff member (or DSL) raising the concern should initiate a discussion (by phone, in person, or virtual) with the other professional as soon as possible.
- They must clearly explain: what the concern is, why they believe the decision/practice is unsafe or inappropriate, and what outcome they seek.
- They should aim to resolve within 1 working week or a shorter timescale if the child is at risk. londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk
- Document the discussion, decisions made, and agreed next steps, and place this on the child's record.

Stage 2: Manager to Manager / DSL to DSL

- If Stage 1 does not resolve the issue, escalate the concern through each agency's line management. The DSL or manager should contact their counterpart in the other agency.
- The managers should review the case, including any risk, safeguarding context, and professional rationale.

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- Managers should propose and agree a course of action, clearly defined with timescales.
- Record the conversation, decisions, and the agreed course of action. Place this on the child's file and inform the original referrer.

Stage 3: Senior Manager / Agency Safeguarding Lead

- If Stage 2 fails to reach resolution, the issue must escalate to senior-level management (e.g., Head of Service, Director, or equivalent senior safeguarding lead). teescpp.org.uk+1
- Senior managers from the involved agencies should convene (meeting or conference), review the disagreement, and agree a way forward.
- Action plan should be documented, and a "lead manager" identified to implement and monitor.
- Outcome should be communicated back to all relevant parties, including the practitioner who raised the concern.

Stage 4: Escalation to Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) / Chair

- If senior managers cannot resolve the concern, or if there continues to be a serious risk to the child, the matter should be referred to the BSCP.
- The escalation should be made via the BSCP business manager / partnership office.
- The BSCP may:
 1. Convene a Resolution Panel (or similar), chaired by an independent or senior partner, to hear representations, examine evidence, and issue recommendations. (Panels should include senior representatives from at least three different agencies.)
 2. Alternatively, the BSCP may facilitate resolution through direct liaison with agency leadership.
- The process and outcome should be formally recorded, and a summary report placed on the child's record.
- BSCP should consider whether systemic / learning reviews are needed if the disagreement reflects deeper multi-agency issues.

Recording, Monitoring & Learning

- At all stages, maintain written records of: the nature of the concern, what was said, who was involved, decisions made, and agreed actions (including timescales).
- These records must be stored on the child's safeguarding file.
- After resolution, the DSL or senior lead should:
 - Review what went well / not well in the escalation process.
 - Escalate any learning to the BSCP or local safeguarding review mechanisms.
 - Consider whether any changes to policy, procedures, or training are needed in our setting to prevent similar disputes.
- As part of quality assurance, the management team should periodically audit escalation records to ensure the process is used appropriately and effectively.

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Roles & Responsibilities

- **All Staff:** Be aware of this policy; challenge when necessary; raise concerns clearly with evidence; document everything.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Lead on managing and supporting escalation; ensure records are kept; liaise with external agencies; escalate to BSCP if needed.
- **Line Managers / Supervisors:** Support staff in raising concerns; liaise with equivalent managers in other agencies; monitor agreed actions.
- **Senior Leadership (Service Heads, Directors):** Act as escalation points; attend higher-level resolution meetings; implement and monitor resolution plans.
- **BSCP:** Provide oversight, facilitate formal resolution, learning, and system improvements.

Whistleblowing & Alternative Routes

- This policy does not replace whistleblowing procedures. If a practitioner believes there is wrongdoing, neglect, or a serious safeguarding breach in another agency, they should also follow their own organisation's whistleblowing policy.
- If staff feel unsafe raising concerns within their own agency, they may escalate directly to external managers, or request escalation via BSCP.
- Where appropriate, involve the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) / safeguarding lead in cases where the concern involves the behaviour of a professional or staff member.

Policy Review

- This policy should be reviewed annually, or earlier if:
 - There is a significant safeguarding incident.
 - The BSCP escalates learning from multi-agency reviews.
 - There are changes in relevant national or local safeguarding guidance (e.g., updates to Working Together or London Procedures).
- The management team at Ready Steady Grow Pre-School will be responsible for ensuring staff are trained in, and understand, this escalation process.