

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 the current statutory and local safeguarding framework, including:
 - *London Safeguarding Children Procedures, including the current professional disagreement / escalation procedures.*
 - Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) Escalation Policy for Resolving Professional Difference (June 2026) and other current BSCP procedures.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026. All staff must understand their duty to challenge, escalate, record and follow through concerns in a timely way.

Principles & Key Commitments

1. **Paramountcy 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 must not be delayed. Under the BSCP June 2026 pathway, professional differences should be resolved within 10 working days overall, or within a shorter timescale necessary to protect the child. Urgent concerns must be acted on immediately rather than waiting for a stage timescale to expire.
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:** Professional challenge should be welcomed and responded to with an open mind. Effective challenge can strengthen multi-agency working and improve outcomes for children.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

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 levels of need, thresholds, changing or increasing risk, including the outcome of a referral to the Children and Families Hub.
- Unclear roles and responsibilities between professionals or agencies, or safeguarding procedures not being followed as expected.
- 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's plan (including a Child Protection Plan), drift or delay, or disagreement about whether the plan is effective in reducing risk.
- 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

The setting follows the five-stage BSCP escalation pathway (June 2026). Resolution should be sought at the lowest possible stage, but stages must be progressed more quickly where risk or an imminent critical date requires this.

If a child is thought to be at risk of immediate harm, a referral must be made immediately to Bromley's Children and Families Hub and the setting's DSL must be informed. Escalation between professionals must never delay protective action.

At each stage, staff should be able to evidence the nature and source of their concern. Relevant information should be shared lawfully to support resolution; Freedom of Information requests should not be used between agencies to obtain case information for an escalation.

Stage 1: 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.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

- Stage 1 should normally be completed within 1 working day, or sooner where necessary to protect the child.
- Document the discussion, decisions made, and agreed next steps, and place this on the child's record.

Stage 2: Manager to Manager

- If Stage 1 does not resolve the issue, the practitioner must contact their supervisor/manager, who should discuss the concern with the equivalent manager in the other agency. For an early years setting this may include the DSL. Stage 2 should normally be completed within 2 further working days (3 working days cumulative).
- Where the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or is Looked After, the relevant Child Protection Chair or Independent Reviewing Officer must also be notified.
- 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 to Senior Manager

- If Stage 2 fails to resolve the disagreement, respective senior managers/safeguarding representatives must attempt resolution. The setting's DSL/senior manager must be involved. Stage 3 should normally be completed within 2 further working days (5 working days cumulative).
- At Stage 3, an escalation notification must be sent to the BSCP Business Manager at BSCP@bromley.gov.uk.
- 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: Director to Director / Equivalent Senior Leadership

- If disagreement remains at senior management level, it must be escalated to Director level (or equivalent) in each agency. The relevant BSCP Board representative should also be informed where appropriate. Stage 4 should normally be completed within 2 further working days (7 working days cumulative).
- The BSCP Business Manager must be notified at BSCP@bromley.gov.uk at Stage 4, even if BSCP was already notified at Stage 3.
- Stage 5: Resolution by the BSCP Chair
 1. If the matter remains unresolved after agency BSCP members have been involved, the concerned agency must refer the matter via BSCP@bromley.gov.uk for the attention of the BSCP Independent Children and Young People Commissioner / Chair.
 2. The BSCP Chair may seek to resolve the matter directly with senior managers/Directors or convene a Resolution Panel. A Resolution Panel must include

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

senior officers from three agencies on the BSCP Executive, including the agencies involved in the dispute.

- Stage 5 should normally be completed within 3 further working days (10 working days cumulative). The process and outcome must be formally recorded on the child's file and shared with relevant personnel, including the practitioner who raised the concern.
- The outcome of a Stage 5 escalation is shared with the BSCP Performance, Impact and Challenge Sub Group so that any wider partnership learning can be considered.

Recording, Monitoring & Learning

- At all stages, actions and decisions must be recorded in writing on the child's safeguarding file and shared with relevant personnel, including the practitioner who raised the initial concern. Escalation emails should clearly identify the escalation stage and the required resolution timescale.
- 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.

Roles & Responsibilities

- **All Staff:** Be aware of this policy; challenge when necessary; raise concerns clearly with evidence; document everything.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Lead and support escalation within the setting; ensure records are kept; liaise with external agencies; be involved by Stage 3 (and earlier whenever appropriate); and ensure BSCP notifications are made at Stages 3 and 4 where required.
- **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:** Receive notifications at Stages 3 and 4; facilitate Stage 5 resolution through the Chair/Independent Children and Young People Commissioner where required; and consider wider learning from Stage 5 escalations.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

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.
- Concerns about suspected wrongdoing or dangers within this setting must be raised under the setting's whistleblowing procedure. This inter-agency escalation process must not be used as a substitute for whistleblowing or for immediate child protection referrals.
- Where the concern is an allegation about an adult who works with children, staff must follow the setting's allegations/position of trust procedure and Bromley LADO arrangements rather than treating the matter solely as an inter-agency professional dispute.

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, including Working Together to Safeguard Children, London Safeguarding Children Procedures or the BSCP Escalation Policy.
- The management team at Ready Steady Grow Pre-School will be responsible for ensuring staff are trained in, and understand, this escalation process.

Current BSCP escalation contact: BSCP@bromley.gov.uk | 020 8461 7816. Staff should use the current BSCP Escalation Policy and optional escalation template available through BSCP policies and procedures.