



South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board



Resolution of Professional Differences (Escalation Policy)

Updated: September 2023
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Acknowledgements

This guidance draws on material, with thanks, from the South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership

Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
Purpose of the procedure	3
Aims of the procedure	3
Timescales	4
Additional notes	4
Conclusion of procedure	6

Appendices:

1. Flowchart: Guidance for the Resolution of Professional Differences	7
2. Indicative structure for escalating the resolution of professional differences in a variety of agencies	8
3. Monitoring Form – a tool to record decisions and to monitor the Resolution of Professional Differences Policy	9

Introduction

The South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (SGSAB) believes that continual feedback is an important part of self-improvement and raising standards. Listening and responding to concerns and complaints enables us to adjust and improve services and systems. Providing a formal but clear way for concerns to be expressed and taken seriously is one way in which we can demonstrate our respect for our partners and stakeholders. Challenge is a key part of effective and healthy inter-agency working cultures and partner organisations should therefore view and respond to challenges brought under this procedures in a positive manner.

Purpose of procedure

To provide a clear framework for the resolution of professional differences in order to ensure a timely resolution that ensures that the needs of the adult are met. The local procedure is intended to align with the process for escalation adopted by the South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership.

The procedure is not intended to operate as a complaints process, but is a means of resolving differences between organisations where there may be misunderstandings about issues such as roles and responsibilities or use of terminology, and to enable all partners to obtain assurance about safeguarding decision-making.

There will be times when different organisations or even workers within the same organisation will have a different view about a safeguarding decision. This may be because there is a lack of understanding about other worker's roles/remits or resources. This procedure is intended to support practitioners to challenge decisions in a respectful way and enable professionals to work together to support people who are at risk of, or experiencing, abuse.

Aims of procedure

1. It is designed to support the development of a shared understanding of safeguarding criteria within South Gloucestershire, and is supported by the multi-agency training delivered by the SGSAB.
2. It is for use among all staff working both in the statutory and voluntary sector, who work with adults with care and support needs.
3. All workers should feel able to challenge decision-making and to see this as their right and responsibility, in order to promote the best multi-agency practices, including safeguarding concerns.
4. This procedure provides practitioners with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or services by:
 - a) Avoiding professional differences that may hinder the progress of the adult, their care, or put an adult at risk.
 - b) Resolving the difficulties and managing expectations within and between organisations quickly and openly.
 - c) Identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity.
 - d) Promoting effective resolutions by considering required amendments to organisational protocols and procedures.
5. Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the adult is protected and improved outcomes planned for. Concerns, and any outstanding

disagreements, should be resolved at the lowest possible stage, however if an adult is thought to be at risk of immediate harm discretion should be used as to which stage is initiated, and outstanding disagreements should be taken to a higher stage of the procedure quickly.

- 6. The Strategic Safeguarding Service Manager South Gloucestershire will ensure that all relevant agencies are informed of any issues they consider to be pertinent.

Timescales

From the outset of a concern being considered by any worker it should take no longer than **5 working days** for it to be either **resolved or if not resolved, escalated** to stage 4. Timescales should be agreed if it is not possible to adhere to this timeframe.

Concerns should always be resolved quickly, and this will be determined by the complexity of the issues. In all cases, the matter will be resolved as speedily as possible, and the primary focus will be on ensuring that the safety and welfare of the adult concerned is assured whilst discussions take place.

Additional notes

- At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern.
- 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.
- At all times the voice of the person who is the subject of the safeguarding concern should be heard, and their views and wishes taken into account.
- Please use the “Monitoring form” (Appendix 3) at stages 3 and 4.
- It may be useful for a reflective debrief to be facilitated following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.
- In order to find out who the appropriate manager or representative is of another service, please ask the practitioner, line manager or senior manager involved for who the next person would be and obtain contact details from them directly. ALL agencies **MUST** share this information with colleagues.

Procedure		
Stage One Within 1 working day	Identifying the Concern – worker to worker	Any worker who feels that a decision or action is inappropriate, is not safe, or creates a significant issue, should initially consult with a supervisor or line manager to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem; to be specific as to what the disagreement is about; and develop actions that need to be taken as a result. They should evidence the nature and source of their concerns, and should keep a record of all discussions in their case and supervision notes. Where appropriate the worker should discuss the concerns directly with the other practitioner involved. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported.
Stage Two Within 2	Discussing the concern between	Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at the lowest possible level . This should normally be

working days	services or agencies – manager to manager	between the people who disagree; (unless the adult is at immediate risk) a record of all discussions should be kept in case and supervision notes. If the matter is still unresolved the practitioner’s line manager should talk directly to the counterpart line manager in the other service and make every effort to resolve the concerns. Records still need to be kept and resolution communicated to all parties in writing.
Stage Three Within 3 working days	Raising concern between line management – senior manager to senior manager	If unresolved, the problem should be referred to an appropriate level of management (i.e. stage 3 or stage 4 manager - see appendix one and two) within the organisation, who will discuss with the opposite or appropriate manager in the other organisation. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion. At this level disagreements should continue to be recorded in the case file and supervision notes in addition to the ' Monitoring Form ' (appendix 3) being completed by the senior manager. Disagreements at all meetings should be recorded by each respective organisation, and after the issue has been resolved the monitoring form must be sent both internally to the stage 4 representative of your own agency and also to the Strategic Safeguarding Service Manager, South Gloucestershire Council, who will ensure that it is distributed to all relevant agencies as required. This is currently Emma Collings* 01454 864652 emma.collings@southglos.gov.uk
Stage Four Within 5 working days	Refer concern to safeguarding board representative (SGSAB)	If the problem is still not resolved, the matter should be referred to the agency's nominated SGSAB representative. They should discuss with their colleagues at SGSAB Board level, convening a meeting where necessary. If the matter is still unresolved , contact must be made immediately with the Strategic Safeguarding Service Manager, South Gloucestershire Council, and they must also be sent a copy of the monitoring form. Emma Collings* 01454 864652 emma.collings@southglos.gov.uk Consideration will be given to referring the matter to the Chair of SGSAB, who will consider whether the matter can be resolved through mediation or should be considered by SGSAB Resolution Panel. Mediation will be offered as soon as possible bearing in mind the impact on the adult concerned. The decision reached in mediation is final and binding on the agencies concerned. In more complex matters a SGSAB Resolution Panel (<i>SGSAB Sub Group Chairs, Independent Chair, Vice Chair and Strategic Safeguarding Service Manager, Board Manager</i>) will meet. The Panel must consist of representatives of three agencies who are members of

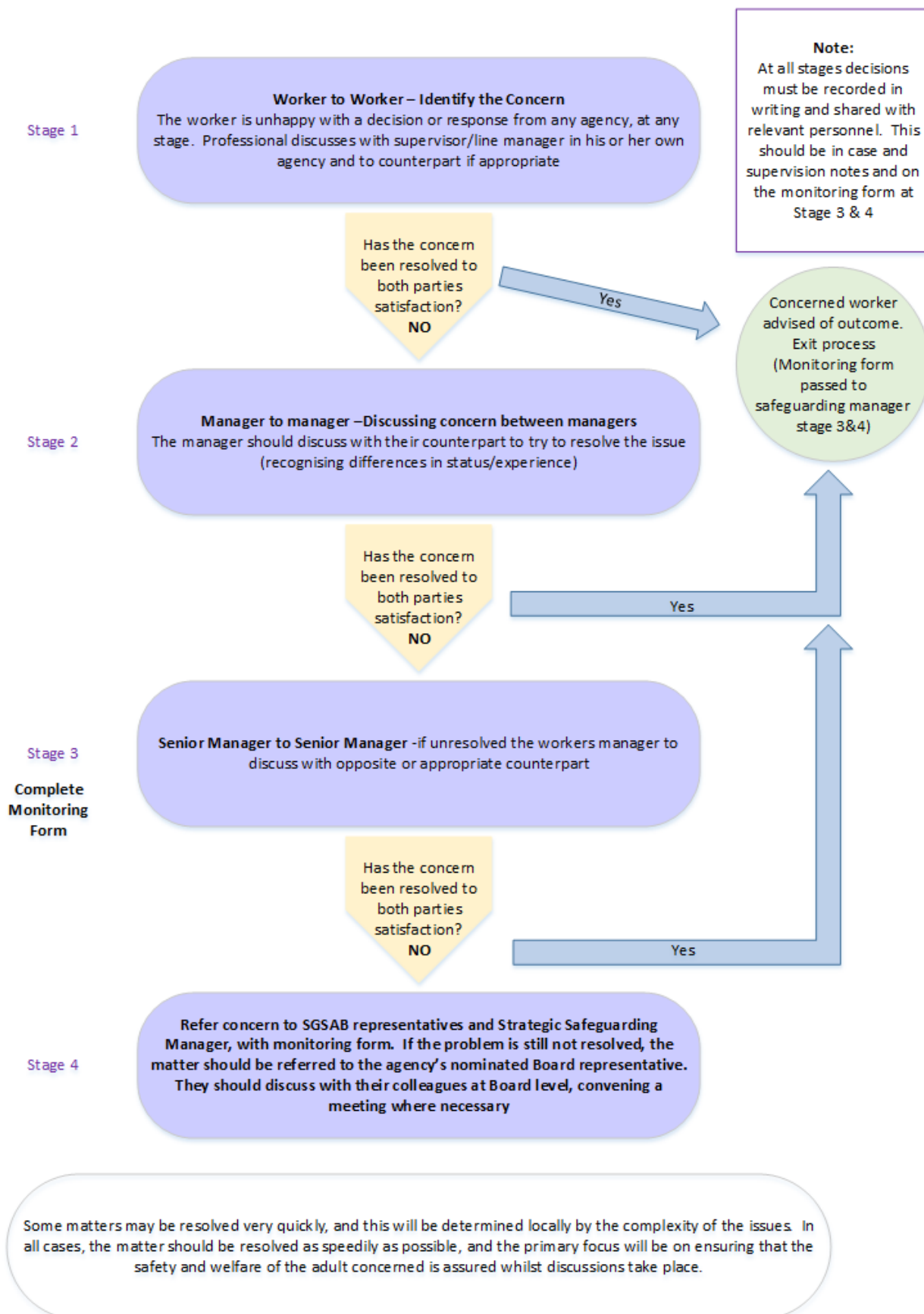
		<p>SGSAB to include those agencies involved in the dispute. The Panel will receive representation from those concerned in the dispute and make a decision as to the next course of action.</p> <p><i>The decision of the Panel is final and binding on all organisations involved.</i></p>
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Key: * name of person in post correct September 2023

Conclusion of procedure

- It is important that professional differences do not impact on the **adult's safety** and/or **communication** between practitioners / agencies, or their ability to work in the best interests of the adult.
- We must promote a **“blame free” culture** that allows us to learn from our mistakes and so improve our services and their delivery.
- Use of the process for the resolution of professional differences should be seen as a **positive opportunity to learn**.
- When the issue is resolved, any general **safeguarding issues** should be identified and referred to the agency's representative on the Safeguarding Adults Board for consideration by the Board.
- Practitioners should consider making a referral to the Creative Solutions Board in cases which have become 'stuck'. For more information contact creative.solutions@southglos.gov.uk

Appendix 1 Flowchart: Guidance for Resolution of Professional Differences



Appendix 2: Indicative structure for escalating the resolution of professional differences in a variety of agencies

The chart below indicates the structure for Children, Adults & Health (CAH) under the Local Authority, and other agencies and organisations that have contributed to the development of this policy. Other agencies or organisations can also be added as appropriate.

Stage	Local Authority	Care Providers	Health Care professionals Secondary care including Community & Mental Health Services	Health Care professionals Primary care	Voluntary Sector	Police
1	Practitioner and line manager	Practitioner and line manager	Practitioner and line manager	Practitioner and partners or practice manager	Practitioner and line manager	Staff member /Police Officer and Detective Sergeant
2	Line manager and team manager	Line manager and safeguarding lead or more senior manager	Line manager and Safeguarding Lead or supervisor	Partners or practice manager	Line Manager and safeguarding lead or more senior manager	Detective Sergeant and SCU Manager /Detective Chief Inspector/Detective Inspector
3	Team manager, and service manager	Registered manager and Service or Organisation Director (so for example CEO)	Adult Safeguarding Lead or supervisor and Safeguarding Named Professional	NHS England Clinical Governance	Senior manager and Service or Organisation Director (so for example CEO)	SCU Manager /Detective Chief Inspector/Detective Inspector and Head of Victim Care, Safeguarding and Vulnerability
4	Director of Adult Services and SGSAB rep	Care providers representative on SGSAB	Safeguarding Named Professional SGSAB rep	SGSAB rep	Voluntary Organisation representative on SGSAB	Head of Victim Care, Safeguarding and Vulnerability/ and SGSAB representative

Please NOTE that each member organisation of the Safeguarding Adults Board will have their own internal route for escalating the resolution of professional differences through these stages internally and these procedures may also need to be followed.

Appendix 3: Monitoring Form - a tool to record decisions and to monitor the Resolution of Professional Differences policy



(Please return to The Strategic Safeguarding Service Manager, South Gloucestershire Council.

Emma Collings* 01454 864652 emma.collings@southglos.gov.uk)

Experience and outcomes of safeguarding adult reviews tells us how devastating professional disagreements can be, when concerns are raised but not addressed or when services are requested but not provided. Without an effective means to address concerns issues escalate, relationships between partner agencies deteriorate, problems drag on for weeks, months and years and, in the worse cases, people do not receive adequate services and are left exposed to harm.

This tool is a means to enable your service to record the agreed outcome of the use of the professional differences policy, and to aid SGSAB to monitor its use.

This form to be used at stage three and stage four of the resolution of professional differences policy to be stored on file and submitted to the Strategic Safeguarding Service Manager SGC

Service User name:	
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Summary of reason for dispute – include views of all agencies concerned.	
Agreed outcomes or actions if satisfactorily resolved – includes escalation to next stage if unresolved	

Action Note:

Copy of this form to be held on service user file in all agencies involved in resolution of professional difference, if escalating to next stage use as basis of report to manager at next stage, send copy to your approved resolution audit manager or the SGSAB for monitoring purposes.

Signature of initiating manager	Name:	
	Designation:	
	Agency:	
	Date:	
Signature of receiving manager	Name:	
	Designation:	
	Agency:	
	Date:	

Please complete for monitoring purposes

Stage at which Resolution achieved 3 4	Time taken to reach resolution- (number of days)	Please note how effective this policy was in resolving the issue and please make suggestions as to how the policy can be improved:
Additional Notes		