



South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership



Resolution of Professional Differences

(Escalation Policy)

Updated December 2022

Review Required December 2024

Introduction

The South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership (SGCP) 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 and 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 multi-agency working and we would encourage all partner organisations to view and respond to challenges brought under this policy in a positive manner.

This policy aims to provide a clear mechanism for the resolution of professional differences in order to ensure a timely resolution that keeps focus on the needs of the child.

The policy is for use among all practitioners working both in the statutory and voluntary sector, who work with children and young people in South Gloucestershire.

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.

This procedure provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or services by avoiding professional differences that may hinder the progress of the child/family or put children at risk.

- ✓ Resolving the difficulties within and between organisations quickly and openly.
- ✓ Identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity.
- ✓ Promoting effective resolutions by considering required amendments to organisational protocols and procedures.
- ✓ Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected and improved outcomes planned for. Concerns, and any outstanding disagreements, should be resolved at the lowest possible stage, however if a child 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.
- ✓ The Strategic Safeguarding Manager at South Gloucestershire Council will ensure that all relevant agencies are informed of pertinent issues.

Timescales

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 child concerned is assured whilst discussions take place.

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.

Expected Practice

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.

Please use the [Monitoring form](#) (Appendix Three) 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.

Resolution Procedure

Stage 1- Identifying the concern – worker to worker and where necessary line manager to line manager

(Within 1 working day)

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at the lowest possible level. Any worker who feels that a decision or action is inappropriate, is not safe, or creates a significant issue, should initially attempt to resolve differences through discussion with the other practitioner(s) involved, unless the child, young person or adult is at immediate risk. This should be done within 24 hours.

The worker should evidence the nature and source of their concerns, and should keep a record of all discussions. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported.

They therefore may wish to consult with a supervisor or line manager to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem; be specific as to what the disagreement is about; and develop actions that need to be taken as a result.

Where appropriate the worker should discuss the concerns directly with the other practitioner involved.

Where the practitioners are unable to resolve differences through discussion, each party must report the disagreement to their respective manager. Contact between the relevant managers should take place within 24 hours.

The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant practitioners involved and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded in the child's file.

Stage 2 – Discussing the concern between services or agencies – Second tier manager to manager (Within 2 working days)

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at practitioner or front line management level, the matter should be referred without delay to second tier management level.

The issue will then be considered at second tier management level, with direct communication taking place at a second tier management level or with the designated professional or named professional for safeguarding within the individual agency. Every effort should be made to resolve the concerns at this level. The manager should record details of the communication and the resolution must be communicated to all parties in writing.

Stage 3 – Raising concern between line management – senior manager to senior manager (Within 3 working days)

If unresolved, the problem should be referred to an appropriate level of management (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. Ultimately a decision will need to be reached where agencies agree a way forward where the interests of the child take precedence over a professional stalemate.

At this level disagreements should continue to be recorded in the case file and supervision notes in addition to the '**Monitoring Form**' being completed by the senior manager (appendix 3).

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 Collings¹ 01454 864652 emma.collings@southglos.gov.uk

Stage 4 – Refer concern to Children’s Partnership Executive (SGCP) (Within 5 working days)

If the problem is still not resolved, the matter should be referred to the Children’s Partnership Executive. Contact for the Executive is via [Emma Collings](#)

The executive will consider whether the matter can be resolved through mediation or should be considered by SGCP 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 SGCP Resolution Panel will meet. The Panel must consist of representatives of the three agencies who are members of the Executive and will 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 organisations involved.

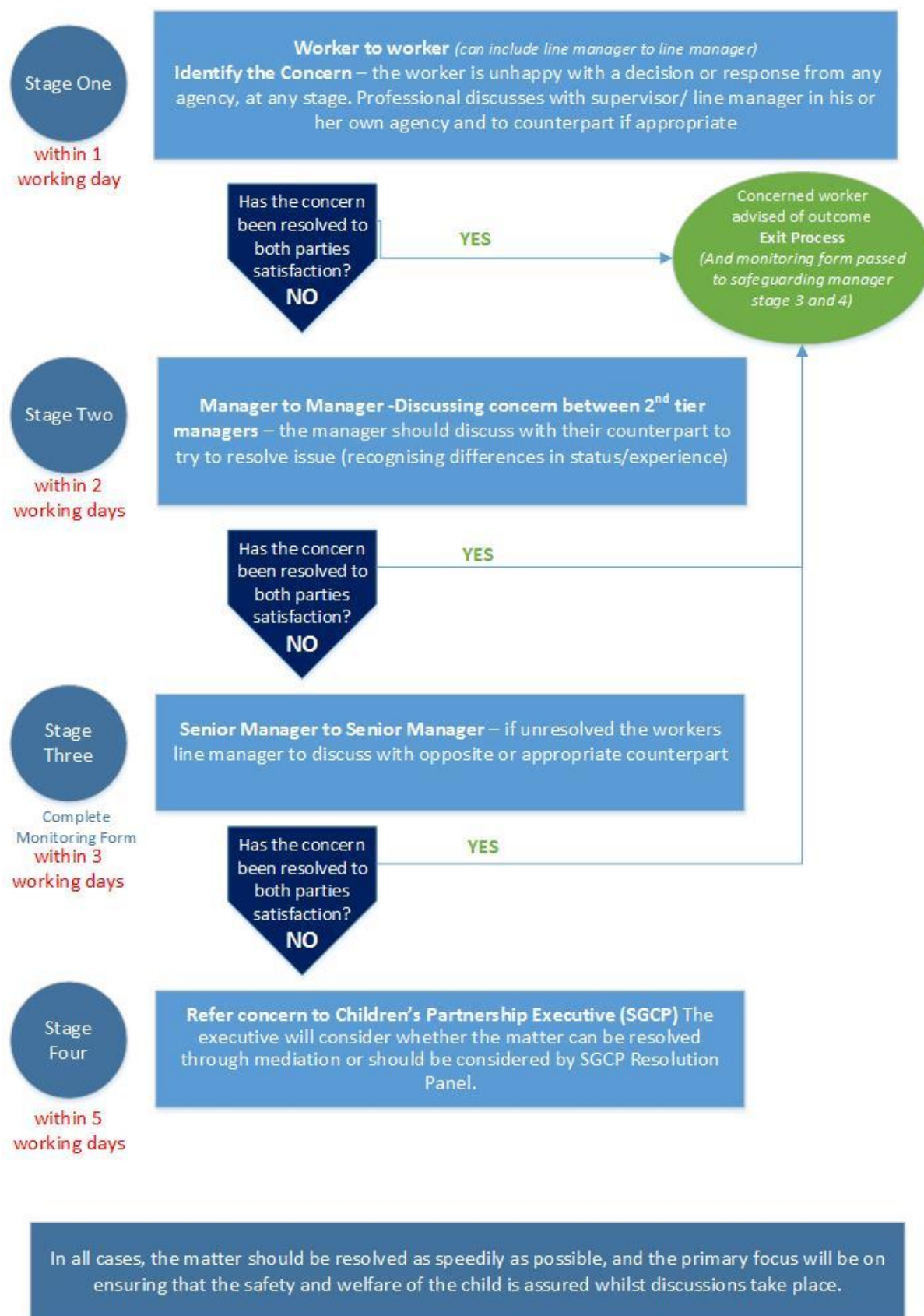
It is important that professional differences do not impact on the **child’s safety** and/or **communication** between practitioners/agencies, or their ability to work in the best interests of the child/young person.

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.**

¹ Correct as of December 2022

Appendix One – Flowchart for Resolution of Professional Differences



Appendix Two – Indicative Structure for the resolution of professional differences

| Stage | Local Authority | Schools | Health Care – Secondary Care | Health Care - Primary Care | Voluntary Sector | Police |
|----------------------------|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| One | Practitioner And Line Manager | Staff member and line manager | Practitioner and line manager | Practitioner and partners or practice manager | Practitioner and Line Manager | Staff member/ Detective Sergeant or Police Staff Decision Maker |
| Two | Line manager and Team Manager | Line manager and Head Teacher | Line manager and Child Protection Safeguarding Lead or Supervisor | Partners or practice manager | Line Manager and Safeguarding lead or more senior manager | Detective Sergeant and LSU Regional Manager /Detective Inspector/ Inspector |
| Three | Team manager and Service Manager | Head Teacher and Chair of governors/Board of directors | Child Protection Safeguarding Lead or supervisor and Safeguarding Named Professional | NHS England Clinical Governance | Senior manager and Service or Organisation Director (so for example CEO) | LSU Regional Manager /Detective Inspector / Inspector and Head of Victim Care, Safeguarding and Vulnerability/ D/Supt Crimes Against Children |
| Three B | SGCP Exec Member | | SGCP Exec Member | | | SGCP Exec Member |
| Four Executive plus | Head of Integrated Children’s Services and SGCP rep | Chair of Governors/Board of Directors and Head of Education Learning & Skills | Safeguarding Named Professional and Safeguarding Designated Doctor or Nurse | SGCP Exec Rep | Director/CEO | Head of Victim Care, Safeguarding and Vulnerability/ Chief Supt Crimes Against Children and SGCP representative |

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

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

emma.collings@southglos.gov.uk

| | |
|---|--|
| Full Name of Child | |
| Summary of reason for dispute. Include views of all agencies involved. | |
| Agreed outcomes or actions if satisfactorily resolved – includes escalation to next stage if unresolved | |
| Action Note: Copy of this form to be held on child/family 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 a copy to the SGCP for monitoring purposes. | |
| Initiating Manager Signature | |
| Name | |
| Role | |
| Organisation | |
| Receiving Manager Signature | |
| Name | |
| Role | |
| Organisation | |
| Please complete for monitoring purposes: | |
| Stage at which Resolution reached | <input type="checkbox"/> Stage 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Stage 4 |
| Number of days taken to resolve | |
| Please note how effective this policy was in resolving the issue and please make suggestions as to how the policy can be improved | |