



St Paul's Heathside Primary School

Challenge & Escalation Policy

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What is an Escalation?

Escalation is a process of formally challenging a decision made by another professional, group or organisation. Escalation procedures ensure that all professionals have a quick and straight forward means of resolving professional differences in order to safeguard the welfare of children and young people. Escalation is not a negative action or criticism.

Occasionally situations arise when a professional feel that the actions, inactions or decisions of another professional or agency do not adequately safeguard a child. Disagreements may relate to:

- The nature and level of a child's needs;
- The nature and severity of risk to a child;
- The most appropriate way to reduce the risk to a child;
- The tasks that would lie within the roles and responsibilities of particular professionals; or
- The appropriate sharing of information.

In School Escalation:

If any member of staff is unhappy with the response they have received in relation to a safeguarding concern they have raised with the school safeguarding team, it is their responsibility to ensure they escalate their concern. All members of staff have the responsibility to escalate and refer concerns on to Children's Services when it is appropriate to do so.

All professionals have a duty to challenge the practice of other professionals if they are concerned that this is placing one or more children at risk of harm.

At every stage of the process all conversations and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, including the professional who raised the initial concern.

When the disagreement is resolved the agencies involved must agree a written statement of the outcome, including any consequent action to be taken. Each agency will place a copy of the statement on the child's record.

Procedure

Any professional who considers that a child is at immediate risk of significant harm must report their concerns to the Children Advice and Support Service (or the Emergency Duty Team) immediately. It may be appropriate to follow the procedure below as well, for example if the disagreement is between a referrer and the CASS team.

Professionals should attempt to resolve disagreements within one working week.

The professionals who disagree should discuss the issues, identify the areas of agreement and disagreement and specify the extent to which the area of disagreement is relevant to the issue of risk to the child. Where possible the disagreement should be defined with reference to the Right Help Right Time threshold descriptors.

Stage One - escalation to individual line manager

The two professionals involved in the concern should each notify their manager/supervisor who will discuss the issues with the equivalent manager/supervisor in the other agency. If the professional is self-employed they should escalate the issue to the safeguarding lead for the relevant service. Every effort should be made to resolve the disagreement at this level.

Stage Two - escalation to safeguarding lead or senior manager

If the problem is not resolved at Stage One each manager/supervisor will report to their respective named or designated safeguarding lead (Head Teacher or Chair of Governors): or service manager:

- If one of the professionals is self-employed, the safeguarding lead will deal with this stage as well as Stage Two;

- If one of the agencies is a school the Head Teacher will deal with this stage as well as Stage Two.
- If the disagreement is between two schools, or between a self-employed professional and a school, it will progress directly from Stage One to Stage Five;
- The two managers will attempt to resolve the disagreement.

Stage Three – Escalation to Second Tier Officers

If the problem is not resolved at Stage Two each manager/supervisor will report to their respective second tier officer:

- If one of the agencies is children's social care, the Assistant Director will deal with this stage (See the list of key senior officers in children's social care at Appendix 2: Key Senior Officers in the Directorate for People (children's social care and safeguarding));
- If one of the professionals is self-employed, the safeguarding lead will deal with this stage as well as Stage Two;
- If one of the agencies is a school the Head Teacher will deal with this stage as well as Stage Two.

Stage Four – Escalation to Chief Officer

If the problem is not resolved at Stage Three each manager/supervisor will report to their respective second tier officer:

- If one of the agencies is children's social care, the Executive Director for Children's Services will deal with this stage (See the list of key senior officers in children's social care at **Appendix 2: Key Senior Officers in the Directorate for People (children's social care and safeguarding)**);
- If one of the professionals is self-employed, the safeguarding lead will deal with this stage as well as Stage Three;
- If one of the agencies is a school The Head Teacher will deal with this stage as well as Stage Three.

Stage Five - Mediation by a Third-Party Agency

Whenever possible operational disagreements must be resolved by the agencies directly involved in the case. When resolution cannot be achieved at Stage Four the case should be referred to the Safeguarding Children Board, who will notify the chair of the Board. The chair will identify a Board member from an uninvolved agency to chair a meeting of senior managers with operational responsibility for the case. This meeting will provide a final opportunity to reach a decision.

The Professional Agency Escalation: Where professional disagreement occurs with agencies and the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Deputy are unhappy with the actions or decisions of another agency, they will escalate their concern in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's formal escalation policy to ensure a timely resolution. The first step of any escalation process with another agency, is to raise any concerns directly with the other professional and their line manager. St Paul's Primary School recognises that a professionals' meeting is always a positive way of resolving differences and remaining focussed on the outcomes for the child. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and school staff and agency professionals need to have confidence in talking with each other about decisions that have been made, discussing any concerns regarding those decisions and where there is not an agreement and escalating those concerns as appropriate to seek resolution. Staff need to maintain their professionalism and remember it is equally important to consider the culture of how they work; and it is vital that front-line staff are encouraged to remain professionally curious and to raise issues where they feel that their concerns for children and young people are not being addressed. Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between the school and agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children. Disagreements can arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- levels of need
- roles and responsibilities
- the need for action
- progressing plans and communication. Where professionals consider that the practice of other professionals is placing children at risk of harm, they must be assertive, act swiftly and ensure that they challenge the relevant professionals in line with the guidance. Staff should always remember:
 - The safety of individual children is the paramount consideration in any professional activity.
 - Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected

- Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage. The safety and wellbeing of individual children and young people is the paramount consideration in any effective challenge and escalation of this meeting will report back to the chair of the Safeguarding Children Board.