



North Yorkshire

Safeguarding Children Partnership

**Professional Resolutions**

**Practice Guidance**

# Professional Resolutions Practice Guidance

<b>Title</b>	Professional Resolutions Practice Guidance
<b>Version</b>	1.2
<b>Date</b>	11/11/2019
<b>Edited</b>	NYSCP Policy & Development Officer

<b>Update and Approval Process</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Group/Person</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
0.1	NYSCB Business Manager	06/05/2015	Approved
0.1	NYSCB Executive	13/05/2015	Approved
1.0	NYSCB Board	22/06/2015	Baseline version for information
1.1	NYSCB Policy and Development Officer	15/03/2018	Reviewed and updated
1.2	NYSCP Business Unit	11/11/2019	Updated following NYSCP launch

<b>Issue Date</b>	11/11/2019
<b>Review Date</b>	11/11/2021
<b>Reviewing Officer</b>	NYSCP Policy and Development Officer

# North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

## Professional Resolutions Practice Guidance

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this practice guidance is to ensure that where issues between agencies arise involving the safety and welfare of children or young people, matters can be resolved in a timely manner.
- 1.2. Professional disagreements will sometimes arise over another professionals' decisions, actions or lack of actions in relation to a referral, an assessment or an enquiry which are considered to be unsafe
- 1.3. The child's safety and welfare must be of paramount consideration. Professional differences must not inhibit timely and clear decision making. All professionals working with children and families have a duty to:
  - act assertively and
  - proactively to ensure the child's safety and welfare is seen as a priority at all levels of professional activity.
- 1.4. Professionals involved must also ensure that problems are resolved within the shortest timescale possible to protect the child. Individuals should therefore exercise their judgement as to whether the timelines outlined in this practice guidance needs to be achieved more quickly.

### 2. Key Principles

#### 2.1. Professionals should:

- Share information appropriately when required
- Seek to resolve an issue quickly at a practice level rather than at a management level
- Avoid disputes that place children at further risk by obscuring the focus on the child or delaying decision making
- Liaise with lead safeguarding professionals or child protection designates in their organisation at the earliest opportunity
- Keep the focus on the child's safety and welfare at all times
- Ensure they are familiar with the escalation routes within their agency for escalation and resolution
- Ensure accurate and contemporary recording on the child's file of key decisions and reasons for the decision
- Stay proactively involved; safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- Use the NYSCP resolution process set out in Section 5 "*Process for Professional Resolutions*"

### 3. Roles of professionals and agencies

- 3.1. Professionals providing services to children and families should work together across all agencies. Professionals working directly with children and their families should share information appropriately in line with national and local guidance.
- 3.2. Although the Local Authority is allocated a 'lead' role in co-ordinating responses, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and effective intervention is dependent upon inter-agency information sharing, planning and multi-agency service responses.
- 3.3. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working. All agencies must adopt a proactive approach towards problem solving which enables professional disagreements to be resolved as quickly as possible and in most cases by practitioners.
- 3.4. Professionals' actions should always be based on a robust assessment of the risk of harm to the child(ren) and the impact of the given situation on the child's wellbeing. The timescales identified within this document are practice guidance and refer to the maximum timescales agencies should follow. In some cases it may be necessary for action to be taken sooner to protect a child or young person. Timescales should not be a reason for delaying action.
- 3.5. If a child is thought to be at immediate risk of harm the designated safeguarding lead within the agency identifying the concern should be informed immediately. It is vital that if the child is felt to be at immediate risk, the police and Children's Social Care must be contacted.

#### **4. Professional Disagreements**

- 4.1. Disagreements are most likely to arise around thresholds, roles and responsibilities, the need for action and communication. Some examples may include:
  - Where one professional disagrees with the action of another around a particular course of action, such as closing involvement with a child or family.
  - Where one worker or agency considers that another worker or agency has not completed an agreed action for no acceptable or understood reason.
  - Where one agency considers that the plan is inappropriate and that a child's needs are not being best met by the current plan.
  - This could include a disagreement that a particular agency does not feel it needs to be involved, but another does.
  - Where a member of staff or an agency considers that the child's safeguarding needs are better met by a Child Protection Plan and have requested that a Child Protection Conference be called and feel that this has been refused.
  - Where a range of professionals have concerns about an agency's response to safeguarding concerns

4.2. This is not an exhaustive list and disagreements may arise in a number of areas.

## 5. Process for Professional Resolutions

5.1. The NYSCP Professional Resolutions process is set within seven stages. The table below identifies the actions at each stage of the process, who is responsible at each stage and timescales for completing actions.

Stage	Action	Owner	Timescale
1	A professional from an agency involved with the child is unhappy with a decision or response or inaction from any agency and this has been discussed between the agencies concerned	Professional from referring agency	Seek to resolve within 24 to 96 hrs.
2	The professional discusses the decision with their Line Manager.	Professional from the concerned agency and Line Manager	Immediate once discussion has taken place
3	The Line Manager in the agency raising the concern liaises with the named or Designated Safeguarding Lead within the agency who will then discuss the concern or response with the line manager of the decision maker in the receiving agency.	Line Manager in agency raising a concern. Named or Designated Safeguarding Lead Line Manager of Decision Maker in Receiving Agency	Within a maximum of 10 working days from the date of referral or the disputed decision or action or in a timescale which keeps the child safe, whichever is the sooner.
4	If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is unable to resolve the matter with the Line Manager of the receiving agency, then the matter should be escalated to the next most senior person in the line management hierarchy (for both agencies concerned).	Designated Safeguarding Lead of Referring Agency	The timescale for resolution should still be within 10 working days.
5	Designated Safeguarding Lead of the concerned agency makes a referral directly to the Chair of the LSCB via the LSCB Business Manager	Designated Safeguarding Lead of Referring Agency	Within one working day.
6	A multi-agency panel convened	NYSCB Business Unit Manager	Within 3 working days of the issue being raised with the LSCB Chair (no longer than 13 working days from the point of disagreement being raised)
7	The panel will consider all information gathered in the course of the dispute and make	Escalation Panel	Within Meeting (no longer than 13 working days from the point of

	recommendations about how the matter can be resolved.		disagreement being raised) and take no more than 48 hours.
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