

Escalation / Professional Challenge 7 Minute Briefing

1. Background

Learning from local and [national reviews](#) tells us that although partner agencies may disagree about the level of risk that a case presents, differing views are often not explored or challenged and [escalation procedures](#) are not always followed. Research shows that agencies can feel unable to challenge decisions, particularly where one agency is seen as the “expert”. Staff may not be aware of escalation procedures or know what to do about their concerns.

2. Resolving Disagreements

Disagreements can happen over whether a referral is accepted at the “front door”. A fully completed referral which makes reference to previous [Early Help Assessments](#) and which includes clear details of what the concerns are will help to avoid disagreement. Other disagreements can include whether a child should be on a Child Protection plan, or over the provision of services or sharing of information. It can help professionals to reach agreement if you can provide clear and specific evidence as to why you are worried, and about the impact the situation is having on the child.

3. Effective Challenge and Escalation

All partner agencies are equally responsible for the welfare of a child, and the safety and wellbeing of the child should be kept at the forefront. For this reason, timely respectful [trauma responsive](#) challenge should be seen as a positive and is to be encouraged and accepted from all agencies. A disagreement can often be swiftly resolved by honest and open discussions between practitioners.

4. Specific Processes

If a disagreement or difference of opinion can't be swiftly resolved at practitioner level, advice should be sought from the Safeguarding Lead in your organisation. The [GM Resolving Professional Differences/Escalation Policy](#) outlines the next steps and how to escalate through each tier of line management so that discussions take place between peers.

5. When agreement can't be reached

In the unlikely event that timely agreement can't be reached through respectful [trauma responsive](#) discussions and evidence based challenge between management peers, the dispute can be escalated to the highest level of management within each organisation. SSCP should be kept informed at this stage by submitting an [outcome resolution notice](#).

6. Formal Escalation

Disagreements must be resolved swiftly with no cost to the child's wellbeing or safety. Only when all avenues have been exhausted should the formal escalation procedure be used.

The SSCP [Effective Challenge and Escalation Procedure](#) outlines the formal escalation process. If disagreements cannot be resolved at the highest level of management, the matter will be referred to the SSCP Independent Chair for resolution.

7. De-brief and monitoring

The SSCP will monitor themes arising from escalations and address any systemic issues via the relevant SSCP subgroups. It is good practice for any professionals involved in a disagreement to meet once the dispute is resolved, in the interest of joint learning and maintaining good inter-agency working relationships.

The SSCP will continue to promote a culture of trauma responsive respectful challenge and to support professionals to persevere and escalate their concerns.

Additional Information

Visit: <https://safeguardingchildren.salford.gov.uk/>

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