



# **Multi-Agency Protocol for resolving and escalating professional differences of opinion regarding safeguarding decisions (Escalation)**

Date approved by BCSSP	June 2018
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Detail of review amendments	Replaces previous single Board Escalation Policies from 2015 and 2016 March 2019 with change to email address July 2020 change to BCSSP from LSAB/LSCB

## Introduction

Occasionally situations arise when practitioners/workers in one agency feel that the decision or quality of work undertaken by a worker from another agency to safeguarding a child or adult does not meet the requirements of the B&NES Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership.

Professional disagreements or differences of practitioner opinion can enable useful discussion and debate, and the value of exchanging ideas from different perspectives should not be under-estimated. However, any disagreements / differences of opinion need to be resolved in a timely and constructive manner.

This protocol provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other practitioners/workers or agencies or to raise concerns about the quality of work undertaken.

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. Problem-resolution is an integral part of worker/professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children and adults with care and support needs.

Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescales possible to ensure the Child or Young Person/Adult at risk is protected. Professional disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage. However, when Children and Young People/Adults with care and support needs are thought to be at risk of immediate harm, everyone must take action to escalate to an appropriate level so that the required action is taken within 24 hours.

**If the disagreement is between you and your manager, and cannot be resolved, then you should consider using your agency's whistle-blowing process.**

### Principles of concerns resolution

When trying to resolve disagreements practitioners should work within the following principles:

- The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person/adult are paramount and, should they be considered to be at significant risk, safeguarding procedures should be followed.
- Keeping the child, young person/adult with care and support needs and their family or carer at the centre of all professional discussions.
- Professional differences and disagreements should be viewed positively - as improvements to outcomes for children and young people/ adults with care and support needs can often take place through learning.
- Disagreements must be resolved in a timely and professional manner.

- Concerns, actions, responses and outcomes must be documented clearly and shared with all parties.
- All practitioners should respect the views of others whatever their levels of experience
- Working together effectively depends upon an open approach and honest relationships between agencies with the confidence to intervene and challenge positively.

## **Resolving Concerns**

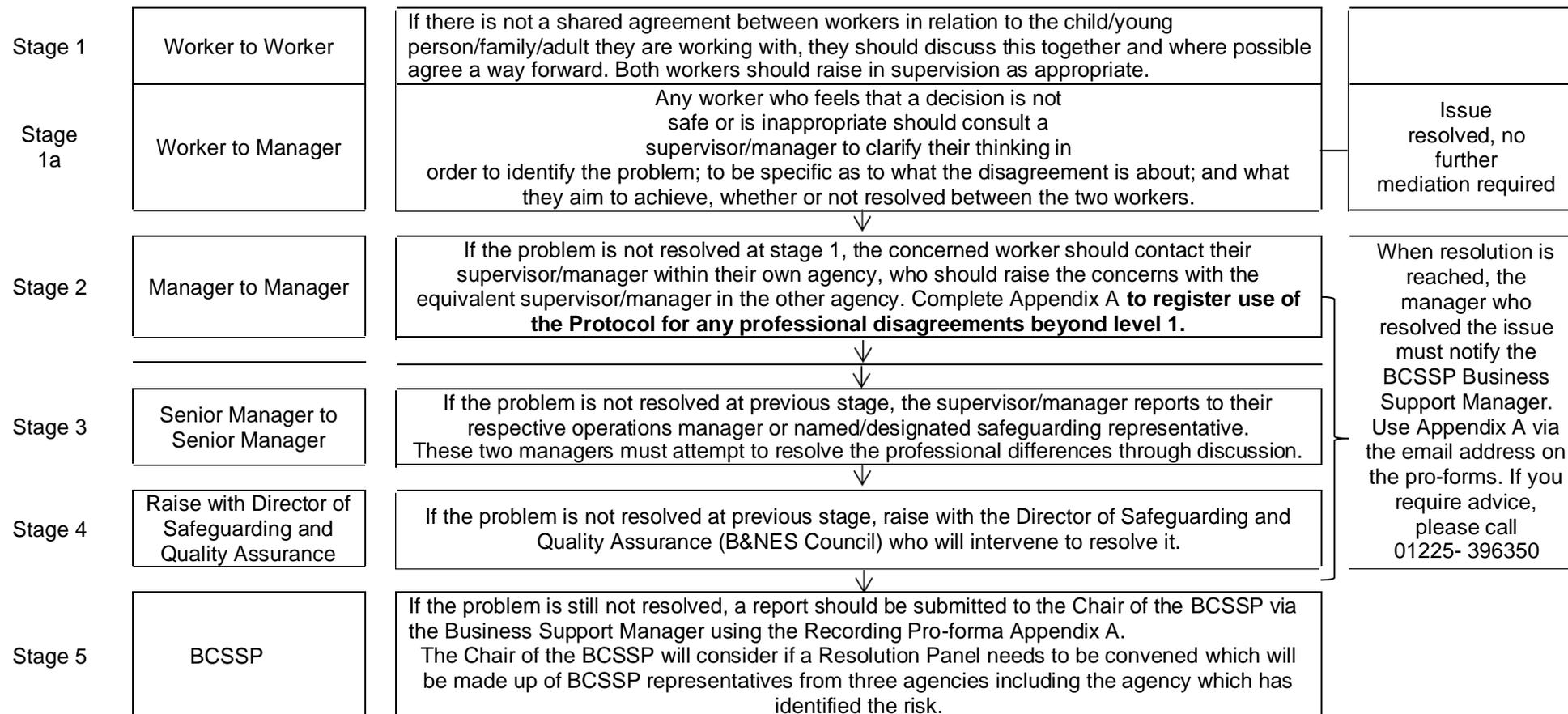
Refer to the flowchart on the next page.

- Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at the lowest possible level. This would normally be between the people who disagree. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this without support.
- If unresolved, the problem should be referred to the relevant manager.
- In stages 2-4, when the resolution is reached, Appendix A should be completed and sent securely to the BCSSP Business Manager via email.
- If, at the end of stage 4 a resolution is not achieved, then a report, written by the Service Manager, and attached to appendix A, should be sent, via the BCSSP Business Manager, to the Chair of the BCSSP.
- If the BCSSP convenes a Resolution Panel at Stage 5, the Panel must consist of BCSSP representatives from three agencies. This Panel should include the agencies concerned in the professional differences and make a decision as to the next course of action, resolving the professional differences raised. The Chair of the Panel, who will be the Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance for B&NES Council or someone acting on their behalf, will be responsible for the Panel's final decision.

## Stages of the Protocol

The procedure is set out in the flowchart below. It is important that as a practitioner/worker you are involved at each stage of the process, as you will be able to provide the detail around the issues and know the case well enough to ensure a proper discussion takes place. Each agency must ensure that staff are aware of who they should contact in the first instance.

If you consider a Child or Young Person/Adult with care and support needs to be at risk of immediate harm, everyone must take action to escalate to an appropriate level so that the required action is taken on the same day



## **Timescales**

Appropriate timescales for raising, and responding to, concerns, should be agreed for each stage. These should take into consideration any potential risks to children and young people/ adults with care and support needs and the need for provision of services.

## **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.

It may be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.



**Attempts to resolve issue**

Dates:

Outcome:

**Unresolved Dispute and Referral to BCSSP Chair**

**Date of Referral:**

**Chair's Decision to Convene a Resolution Panel: Yes or No**

**Outcome and Date of BCSSP Resolution Panel**