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Haringey  
Safeguarding  
Adults Board

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# Escalation Protocol

January 2016

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# Inter-agency Escalation Protocol

## Resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to the safeguarding of adults in Haringey

### Introduction

Learning from reviews has highlighted the need for staff across all agencies to have a clear understanding about their responsibility for professional challenge and to know how to escalate concerns about decisions made where there are concerns about safeguarding.

Multi-agency working is the bedrock of good safeguarding work. Partner agencies have their own roles to play in the safeguarding process as set out in the agreed multi-agency policies and procedures. It is important that partner agencies are accountable for delivering their part of the safeguarding adults process to a high standard.

This protocol aims to support positive resolution of professional difference between agencies working to safeguard vulnerable adults in Haringey. Whilst there is generally a good working relationship between agencies and professional difference can be a driving force in developing practice, occasionally disagreements may arise which requires timely resolution so as not to delay decision making.

This guidance is intended to complement the [London Multi-agency Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures](#) Section 4.3.9 Dispute Resolution and Escalation.

It is aimed at colleagues across all services and agencies across the borough working to safeguard adults and any children they may come into contact with. It relates specifically to inter agency disagreement and does not cover disagreement within single agencies which should be addressed by agencies' own escalation policies.

**Please note that this Protocol does not apply to cases where there may be concerns about the behaviour or conduct of another professional that may impact on a vulnerable adult's or a child's safety and well-being. In such cases, reference should be made to the agency's own Whistle-blowing Policy.**

- Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the vulnerable adult or child is protected.
- Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage.
- If a vulnerable adult or any child is thought to be at risk of immediate harm, appropriate action should be taken to safeguard and discretion should be used as to which stage of the process is initiated, consult with your line manager or safeguarding lead wherever possible.
- **If the disagreement is between you and your manager then you should consider using your agency's whistle-blowing process.**

### Areas of possible dissent

Disagreements can arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around thresholds, roles and responsibilities, the need for action and communication. Some examples may include:

- The referral does not meet the eligibility criteria for assessment by LB Haringey Adult Services
- Where one professional disagrees with another around a particular course of action, such as closing involvement.
- 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 **the person's** needs are not being best met by the current plan.

## Key Principles

- The Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) is committed to the principle that appropriate challenge and escalation is an essential part of being a learning partnership, achieving high standards and challenging poor practice
- Safety is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and staff should be mindful of the risks in considering escalation and resolve difficulties quickly and openly
- Professional disagreement is reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities and networking fora which enable problems to be shared and resolved through collaboration
- Concerns relating to individual cases should be taken up through the appropriate partner agency line management structure. If the concern cannot be resolved within the appropriate partner agency management structure it will be taken into the
- The best way of resolving difference is through discussion and where possible a face to face meeting between those concerned which will enable clear identification of the specific areas of difference and the desired outcomes for the child. E mail communication, whilst important, can be open to misinterpretation or make for a stilted exchange of views
- Disagreement should be resolved at the lowest possible stage between the people who disagree but any worker who feels that a decision is unsafe should consult their manager or designated safeguarding lead. It should be acknowledged that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported
- Appropriate challenge and escalation are vital to delivering continuous improvement and getting good outcomes for vulnerable adults.

## Agreed Escalation Procedure

### Stage one

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult a supervisor/manager (in the agency concerned or in their own organisation, if the latter is the same as stage 3)

When consulting with the supervisor/manager they should:

1. Clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem
2. Be specific as to what the disagreement is about;
3. Be clear about what they aim to achieve.

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

### Stage two

If the problem is not resolved at stage one, the concerned worker should contact their supervisor/manager within their own agency who should raise the concerns with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency.

### Stage three

If the problem is not resolved at stage two the supervisor/manager reports to their respective operations manager or named /designated safeguarding representative. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

### Stage four

If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences within the agencies concerned a Safeguarding Adults Board Resolution Panel will be convened by the Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board. The panel must consist of representatives from three agencies (including the agencies concerned in the professional differences). The panel will receive representations from those concerned and make a decision as to the next course of action, resolving the professional differences concerned. The decision of the panel is binding on all agencies concerned. The panel will produce a brief report of the issues and decisions made, which is submitted to the Safeguarding Adults Board on an annual basis.

## **Complex High Risk Cases**

In a small number of cases, there may be significant areas of disagreement between adult services, police and health which may lead to polarised views. This can make it difficult to come to a common agreement and if acute health services are involved there is an added time pressure. In such cases, it is suggested that **multi-agency oversight of the case involving senior staff is undertaken early on by convening a 'short notice response' round table discussion. This group would then propose actions to be communicated directly to the front line staff involved for including in case files and any further disagreement would be considered.**

## **The Process highlights wider learning points or gaps in policies and procedures**

Any general issues should be identified and referred to the **agency's representative on the HSAB** for consideration by the Quality Assurance sub-group to inform future learning and possible changes to existing policies and procedures. Where this relates to a training need, then the Prevention and Training, Sub-Group will give this consideration. If the process highlights gaps in policies and procedures this will be brought to the attention of the Independent Chair

