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**Escalation Policy**

Resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to the safety of children

**Introduction**

Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the decision made by a worker from another agency on a child protection or child in need case is not a safe decision. Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

* Levels of Need
* Roles and responsibilities
* The need for action
* Communication

The safety of individual children is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be addressed with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child.

All workers should feel able to challenge decision-making and to see this as their right and responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice. This policy provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

a) avoiding professional disputes that put children at risk or obscure the focus on the child

b) resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly

c) identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of healthy challenge, professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children. Professionals should utilise existing processes within their own agencies when seeking advice regarding concerns about children and young people. Professionals should seek advice in the first instance from their designated/nominated safeguarding or child protection lead in order to differentiate between a safeguarding and service decision.

**Timescales**

Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the child is protected. Somedisagreements regarding safeguarding decisions will require speedy resolution. In all cases where a professionalthinks a child is at imminent risk of harm and another agency disagrees they should refer direct to their Safeguarding Children Board nominated person, after consulting quickly with their named Child Protection Officer for all othercases. Efforts should be made by all involved to resolve the dispute in a timely way. The primary focus must alwaysbe on ensuring that the safety and welfare of the child concerned is assured whilst discussions take place.As a guide the timescales for escalation through the stages set out below should be no longer than 5 working days,where the child is not felt to be at imminent risk of harm.

**Stages of the policy**

**Pre-escalation**

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe should initially consult their safeguarding lead or line manager to clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem; to be specific as to what the disagreement is about; and what they aim to achieve. They should also be able to evidence the nature and source of their concerns and should keep a record of all discussions. 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 option unsupported.

**Stage One Manager:**

If the problem is not resolved between the professionals as above, the concerned worker should contact their manager within their own agency who should raise the concerns with the equivalent manager in the other agency to seek resolution.

**Stage Two Senior Manager:**

If the problem is not resolved at stage one, the managers will report to their respective senior service manager (sometimes referred to as a tier 3 manager) or their organisations’ named safeguarding lead. The two senior managers or Child Protection Officers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

**Stage Three Refer via the West Berkshire LSCB**

If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences at stage two, the matter should be referred to the nominated West Berkshire LSCB representative for the agency as set out overleaf. If the agency does not have a nominated representative the matter must be referred to the Safeguarding Board Manager. In each case the nominated representative/Board Manager will liaise with the Independent Chair of the Board as a matter of urgency and, in discussion with the nominated West Berkshire LSCB representative of the agency with whom the dispute is being raised (where applicable) a final decision will be reached and communicated to all parties within 3 working days.

**Documenting discussions and decisions**

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. Following resolution, it may be useful for individuals to debrief in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

**This policy was adopted by: Innov8 Sportz CIC in September 2016 To be reviewed: September 2017 Signed:**