

Richmond and Kingston LSCB Resolution and Escalation Protocol

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Richmond upon Thames and Kingston Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) expect members of staff working directly with children and their families to share information appropriately in line with national and local guidance, and to work to plans agreed in all relevant forums to safeguard children in the local area.
- 1.2 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a responsibility shared by all agencies. Whilst the Local Authority is allocated a 'lead' role in co-ordinating responses to risk, or causes, of significant harm to children, effective intervention is dependent upon inter agency planning and multi-agency service responses.
- 1.3 It is the view of the LSCB that constructive challenge amongst colleagues within agencies and between agencies provides a healthy approach to planning to keep children safe. However, sometimes when informal means do not resolve issues a protocol is needed to escalate concerns, while keeping the focus of concern on the child and their needs.
- 1.4 The process of resolution, where difficulties or disagreements arise between agencies, should be kept as simple as possible. The aim, where possible, is to resolve difficulties quickly and without delay at a professional practitioner level. The expectation in line with Section 11 of the pan London Child Protection Procedures (version 5)¹, is **one working week**, or more quickly, in order to assure a child's safety.
- 1.5 Where members of staff from any agency feel concerns regarding a child are not being addressed satisfactorily, it is expected that the escalation process will be used until an appropriate conclusion is reached. Where concerns and disagreement remain, and cannot be resolved in the interests of the child's safety, then these matters should be escalated using the process outlined at section 5 of this protocol.
- 1.6 People's perceptions of their own status and experience may affect their confidence to pursue this course of action and should seek support from the nominated or designated safeguarding lead within that agency.
- 1.7 Each staff member is responsible for recording professional conversations and decision-making in line with internal agency or service setting case recording protocols and procedures. The professionals involved in the resolution process must accurately and contemporaneously record each intra- and inter-agency discussion they have, approve and date the record and place a copy on the child's file² together with any other written communications and information which is appropriate and relevant to the process.

¹ <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/>

² Where service records on children are recorded and retained.

Richmond and Kingston LSCB Resolution and Escalation Protocol

2. Key Principles of this Process

- **Share key information** appropriately and **often**
- Seek to **resolve** the issue **quickly** and at the practice rather than the management level
- **Avoid** disputes which place children at **further risk by obscuring the focus on the child** or which delay decision making.
- **Liaise with lead professionals in safeguarding** or child protection **designates** in your organisation **at the earliest opportunity**. Clarity is expected from all agencies in respect of designated roles and responsibilities.
- **Familiarise yourself with** the **escalation routes** within your agency for escalation and resolution.
- **Ensure accurate and contemporary recording** on the child's file of key decisions and conversations in relation to the resolution process.
- **Stay proactively involved**; safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- **Use the LSCB resolution process** set out here at section 5.

3. Communication and Sharing Information to Enhance Decision-Making

- 3.1 Sharing and evaluating information on an inter-agency basis is required by statutory guidance to gain an accurate picture of concerns about children and their families.³ Colleagues in all LSCB agencies are available for consultation to assist staff in this context. All staff must be clear about the nature of their concerns, including the available evidence to support their view. This should be done prior to sharing information with other agencies.
- 3.2 Professionals making referrals for children to the [Single Point of Access \(SPA\)](#) should be aware that this will involve them in working with colleagues from both Education and Early Intervention and Specialist Children's Services to identify the appropriate response to concerns, and in identifying which service or agency is best placed to achieve positive outcomes for the child. Local and national evidence shows that effective intervention occurs where agencies co-ordinate their responses.

³ See page 25 of Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government 2013 and local procedures held here:
http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/council_government_and_democracy/council/partnerships/integrated_working/information_sharing-children_and_young_people.htm

Richmond and Kingston LSCB Resolution and Escalation Protocol

- 3.3 Staff in all agencies should anticipate their continued involvement expect to continue to be involved in a co-ordinated response to safeguarding the welfare of children, and not that their concern has been passed on for another service or agency to deal with. All professionals are expected to follow upon on the outcome of the referral they have made as a matter of good practice.
- 3.4 If there is a failure to adhere to agreed plans already in place then this must be addressed by all agencies involved with the child and the family (multi-agency agreement).
- 4. Areas and situations where disagreement may arise**
- 4.1 Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around the application of thresholds for access to services, around roles and responsibilities, the need for decisions, action or greater efforts to communicate.
- 4.2 Some examples of the above may include the following:
- Where one professional disagrees with the action or decision making of another, such as case closure or no further involvement with a child and his/her family. The most likely scenario is a No Further Action (NFA) decision made by a qualified senior member of staff within the SPA.
 - Where one worker or agency considers that another worker or agency has not completed an agreed action and the reason why the action has not been undertaken is unclear.
 - Where one worker or agency considers that the plan for the child is inappropriate and that a child's needs are not being met fully by the current plan. This could include a disagreement concerning continued involvement by other agencies for example.
 - Where a member of staff or an agency considers that the child's safeguarding needs are better met by either a multi-agency professionals' meeting or a multi-agency Child Protection Plan and have requested that such a meeting or an initial Child Protection Conference is held and this request has been refused.
- 4.3 The most critical of the above is probably where an agency feels that an initial Child Protection Conference should be called in order to plan to safeguard a child. In this instance, the six steps to resolve the issue set out at section 5 should be followed. This process reflects the process set out at Section 11 of the London Child Protection Procedures version 5⁴.

⁴ <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/>

Richmond and Kingston LSCB Resolution and Escalation Protocol

- 5. Process for Professional Resolution and Escalation of Concerns**
- 5.1 The process for resolution and escalation is a **six step process** and the flowchart explaining this is set out at page 6. It is expected that matters will normally be resolved *before* Step Four is initiated.
- 5.2 **Step One:** where a referrer from a service or agency disagrees with a professional decision made they should seek to resolve the issue with the decision maker (i.e., the senior and qualified member of staff who made the decision). In respect of any agency receiving and responding to referrals concerning a child's safety, health and wellbeing, the following steps must be taken. Step One should be completed to everyone's satisfaction within **24 to 48 hours (maximum of 2 working days)**. If the issue cannot be resolved at this stage, the referrer, or professional seeking a specific action, should seek guidance from their line management.
- 5.3 **Step Two:** the referrer's or professional's line manager should liaise with the Agency Safeguarding Lead from within the referring agency. If the line manager and the safeguarding lead are one and the same person, then move to Step Three. If not, an intermediate step should be taken to ensure that the referrer's line manager and the Agency Safeguarding Lead have liaised and discussed the information to be shared and tasks to be done before moving to Step Three. This would include consideration of a professionals' meeting.
- 5.4 At **Step Three**, the Agency Safeguarding Lead should liaise with the line manager of the referrer and the receiving agency decision maker. At times, the agency decision maker and the manager will be one and the same person. Attempts should be made at Step Three to resolve the issue to everyone's satisfaction **within at maximum five working days from the date of the referral or the disputed decision or action**.
- 5.5 If matters cannot be resolved at this step then, move to **Step Four**. 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 senior person in the agency's line management. The timescale for resolution should still be within 5 working days.
- 5.6 At **Step 5** the matter will be referred directly to the Chair of the LSCB via the Quality Assurance Subgroup Chair. A multi-agency panel will be convened **within 3 working days** of the issue being raised with the LSCB Chair.⁵ Therefore, the process should not take any longer than 8 working days from the point that the dispute was raised. The panel is comprised of the senior members of the SCR Subgroup.⁶ The panel will consider all information gathered in the course of the dispute and will seek to resolve the issue. The Panel will send its recommendation to the LSCB Chair,

⁵ In the absence of the LSCB Chair, this duty will be undertaken by the Deputy Chair of the LSCB.

⁶ Within its Terms of Reference, the SCR Subgroup has the remit to consider cases escalated to senior managers for its consideration and resolution. The SCR Subgroup is multi-agency and must be quorate (at least three agencies represented) in order to convene.

Richmond and Kingston LSCB Resolution and Escalation Protocol

- 5.7 **Step Six:** the LSCB Chair will review the decision and either approve, amend or reject it. The SCR Subgroup will convey the Chair's decision to all involved. If the Chair rejects the decision, it will return to the SCR Subgroup for review. The LSCB Chair must outline his/her reasons for rejection clearly and cogently. This stage must take no more than 48 hours. **This then takes the time limit for Steps One to Six to a total of 10 working days.**
- 5.8 It is anticipated that issues will be resolved to everyone's satisfaction at Steps One to Three. Professionals, Managers and Safeguarding Leads are obliged to evidence to the QASG Chair and the Chair of the SCR Subgroup that they have done all that they can to resolve the issue and have adhered to process outlined before the matter will be taken forward by the multi-agency Panel **(Step 5).**
- **Disputes in respect of initiating and/or implementing a child protection plan**
- 5.9 At Section 11 of the London Child Protection Procedures (version 5)⁷ is a professional and conflict resolution process which the LSCB has endorsed.
- 5.10 Within the above process, it is stated that, where the conflict or disagreement affects the safety and wellbeing of a child, professionals are urged to resolve the issue at a professional network meeting within **one working week** or to the point of ensuring the child's safety, whichever is the sooner. In essence, the procedures urge professionals to work cooperatively to contribute towards decision making to ensure a child stays safe.
- 5.11 At 18.5.6 it states that most day-to-day inter-agency differences of opinion will require the local authority's children's social care team manager to liaise with their equivalent in the relevant agencies, e.g:
- A police detective sergeant;
 - A named or designated health professional;
 - Designated teacher.
- 5.12 In line with the LSCB's six step process, line managers should seek advice from their agency's nominated / designated safeguarding lead. The process set out at 18.5.12 (pp 496-497) of the London Child Protection Procedures⁸ reflects the six steps to resolution set out above and at Appendix 1 of this protocol. It is therefore recommended by the LSCB that agencies seeking to resolve issues pertaining to child protection planning follow the LSCB six step process.

⁷ <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/>

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Richmond and Kingston LSCB Resolution and Escalation Protocol

Appendix 1: Six Step Resolution and Escalation Process

