

Cumbria Safeguarding Adults Board Escalation Guidance

January 2021



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1. Introduction

Effective working together depends on an open and honest approach to relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation in a multi-agency approach to safeguard adults.

Occasionally situations arise when staff within one agency feel that the actions, inaction or decisions of another agency do not adequately safeguard an adult at risk of abuse or neglect. Such situations have been highlighted in several Safeguarding Adult Reviews. This multi-agency guidance defines the process for resolving such professional differences and should be read alongside **Cumbria's Safeguarding Adults Policy** and relevant internal organisational policies on escalating matters in dispute.

Disagreements can arise in several areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- Levels of need
- The need for action
- Roles and responsibilities
- The progress of plans and communication

Where professionals consider that the practice of other professionals is placing an adult at risk of harm, they must be assertive, act swiftly and ensure that they challenge the relevant professionals in line with this guidance.

- The safety of the individual adult is the paramount consideration in any professional activity
- Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the adult is protected
- As a guide, professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion ideally within one working week or a timescale that protects the adult from harm (whichever is shortest)
- Disagreements should always be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

If an adult is thought to be at immediate harm, the designated safeguarding lead in your agency should be informed immediately.

Any member of staff who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult their immediate supervisor / manager to clarify their thinking, if required. Those concerned should be able to evidence the nature and source of the concerns and must keep a record of all discussions.

Individuals may wish to refer to this guidance for their organisation to clarify the approach required.

Concerns relating to decisions, suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work within an agency, should be raised in line with each agencies' policy for dealing with such matters, including but not limited to those setting out the arrangements for 'whistleblowing' or Position of Trust.

2. The 4 Stages of Resolution

Stage One: Discuss with the other Professional/Practitioner

Those individuals who are unable to reach an agreement should have a discussion to resolve the problem. This discussion must take place as soon as possible and could be a telephone conversation or a virtual 'face to face' meeting. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this if they are not supported by their respective agency.

Stage Two: Escalate to Line Manager

If the problem is not resolved, the worker should contact their immediate Line Manager who they report to. This Manager should have a discussion with the equivalent Line Manager in the other agency.

If the case involves an adult who is already subject to an adult safeguarding plan, prior to any dispute, then this should be brought to the attention of the safeguarding lead with responsibility for that plan.

Stage Three: Escalate to your Service or Senior Managers

If the problem cannot be resolved at Stage Two above, then the Line Manager should report the situation to their respective manager who may be a Service Lead, Senior Manager or to a Named Designated Lead for Safeguarding. It is then for these Managers to attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

If the disagreement cannot be resolved at this stage, then the expectation is that escalation should continue through the appropriate tiers of management within each agency until the matter is resolved.

The respective agency members of Cumbria Safeguarding Adults Board (CSAB) should be engaged in seeking resolution before the case is ultimately raised with the Independent Chair of CSAB.

Stage Four: Resolution by the Cumbria Safeguarding Adults Board

If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences between the agencies concerned (and after the CSAB agency members have been involved), the matter should then as a very last resort be referred by the agency concerned to the Independent Chair of CSAB, via the CSAB Business Unit. The Chair may then either seek to resolve the issue directly with the relevant senior managers or convene a Resolution Panel.

The agency raising the dispute must e-mail the details through to the CSAB Business Unit who will raise the matter with the chair at csab@cumbria.gov.uk

Any Resolution Panel must be composed of Senior Officers from three agencies who are members of the CSAB. The Senior Officers should, as far as practicable, include the agencies engaged in the escalation process.

The Panel will receive representations from those involved in the dispute and will collectively resolve the professional differences concerned, by the application of relevant legislation, policy and best practice. The welfare of the individual and their views will be the primary concern, in line with the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal.

3. Additional notes

At all stages of the process, actions and decisions must be recorded in writing within the adult's records and shared with relevant personnel, which should include the worker who raised the initial concern.

If any agency involved in the escalation process does not have direct representation then this should be referred to the CSAB Business Unit, who will arrange proxy representation on the resolution panel.

4. Acknowledgments

Thanks and acknowledgment to Merseyside Safeguarding Adult Board.

5. Escalation Flowchart

