



## Multi- Agency Safeguarding Escalation and Resolution Protocol

<b>POLICY NAME</b>	Multi-agency escalation and resolution protocol		
<b>Document Description</b>	This document sets out expectations for multi-agency approach to professional challenge, escalation and dispute resolution		
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### Introduction

Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and frontline staff from across our statutory, voluntary and community sectors need confidence in talking with each other about decisions that have been made, discussing any concerns regarding those decisions and, where there isn’t agreement and a child, young person or adult with care and support needs remains at what is thought to be an unacceptable level of risk, escalating those concerns appropriately.

Equally important is the culture of how we work, and it is vital that frontline staff are encouraged to remain professionally curious and confident to respectfully challenge whenever practitioners (be they from the statutory, voluntary or community sector), have a concern about the action or inaction of another. Similarly, agencies/ practitioners should not be defensive if challenged. Practitioners and managers should always be prepared to review decisions and plans with an open mind and act proportionately.

Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership [‘BSCP’] and Barnet Safeguarding Adults Board [‘BSAB’] have agreed a protocol for dealing with the resolution of professional disagreements or issues of the safety of children, young people and adults with care and support needs [hereafter referred to as ‘adults at risk’]. This protocol applies to those working with children and adults in Barnet. This protocol is outlined below.

### Principles

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children and adults at risk. Partner agencies are committed to resolving disagreements in a constructive and timely fashion, always keeping in mind the child’s or adult’s safety and wellbeing as the paramount consideration.



This multi-agency protocol defines the process for resolving such differences and should be read alongside the Pan London Safeguarding Adults policy and procedures, London child protection procedures and relevant internal policies on escalating matters of concern.

Disagreements can arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

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

Practitioners should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within one working week or a timescale that protects the child and adult at risk from harm (whichever is shortest). Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage.

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate can initially consult their supervisor/manager to clarify their thinking if required. They should be able to evidence the nature and source of the concerns and should keep a record of all discussions.

## **Stages of Resolution**

### **Stage One: Discuss with the other worker**

Whenever a dispute arises, the practitioners directly involved should attempt to resolve it in the first instance. Often, differences in professional opinion can be based on lack of communication or a misunderstanding of agency policy and procedures and may be resolved quickly.

We know from national SCR and SAR analysis that often too little weight can be given to the views of informal carers, family members and workers not traditionally seen as 'safeguarding professional'. Practitioners should remain mindful that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this unsupported. Discussions should be respectful, taking into account our shared values and desire to embed parity of esteem. Particular regard should be had to the voice of the child or adult at risk and weight given to the views of anyone with a trusted relationship with the child, family or adult at risk.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, the parties should identify what the issues are and agree to move to the next step of the escalation process.

### **Stage Two: Escalate**

The practitioner's involved in the dispute should contact their manager to consider the issues raised, what outcome they would like to achieve and how differences can be resolved. Front line managers should then contact each other to try to negotiate a settlement to the dispute or if this is not possible, clarify the issues before moving on to the next step. There are different policies for how to escalate an issue within the police, health and schools, please see the following sections.

## **Police**

### First line of escalation

Escalate to the Ops Room Manager (Inspector NW400), or a Duty Inspector in charge of the uniform response shift (24/7). For a specialist unit this may be the Detective Inspector (DI) but they have less coverage. There is an On-call Duty Detective Inspector covering the North of London between 9pm – 7am. In their absence it would default to the Ops Room Manager. If the police team dealing with the case is not Barnet then the team's Duty Officer would be expected to deal with the escalation. The contact details for them will be available from the officer dealing with the case/incident.

### Second line of escalation

Between 7am and 9pm, the on duty/on call member of the Senior Leadership Team for Barnet. Their contact details will be available via the Duty Officer. Within office hours this may go to the Safeguarding Lead.

Between 9pm and 7am, the Night Duty Superintendent who will be covering all of North London. Their contact details will be available via the Duty Officer

### **Schools**

Where it is believed that the response from a school does not meet the safeguarding requirements for a child, the appropriate person to escalate to is, in the first instance, the Head Teacher.

In schools where the Head Teacher is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead, complaints should be directed to the Safeguarding Governor or Chair of Governors.

If concerns have still not been resolved the school complaints/escalation procedure should be utilised. In cases where the matter is urgent or if the school is not responding in accordance with its policy, contact either the Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) School Safeguarding Officer or the school's Learning Network Inspector.

### **Adult Services**

The following stages of resolution and escalation should be followed for adults at risk referred to, or open to Barnet Adult Social Care Services.

#### Initial resolution

- Open cases: by contacting the allocated social worker or lead professional
- New referrals: by contacting the MASH social worker
- Out of hours: by contacting the Emergency Duty Team (5pm-9am Monday to Friday, weekends and Bank Holidays).

#### First line of escalation

- Open cases: by contacting the lead professional's team manager
- New referrals: by contacting the MASH team manager on 020 8359 5638
- Out of hours: by contacting the Head of Service on duty (5pm-9am Monday to Friday, weekends and Bank Holidays).

#### Second line of escalation

- Open cases: by contacting the service area Head of Service
- New referrals: by contacting the MASH Head of Service on 0208 359 2252

### Third line of escalation

- Open cases or new referrals: by contacting the relevant Operational Director and notifying the BSAB Board Manager.

## **Family Services**

For children accessing early help services, professionals should raise concerns at Team Around the Child meetings or other multi-agency planning meetings. For children subject to Child in Need, Child Protection or Child in Care Plans, concerns can be shared at the child's multi-agency review meetings or via the Independent Reviewing Officer or Conference Reviewing Officer. Professionals should always consider the impact of professional disagreements on families attending meetings.

The following stages of resolution and escalation should be followed for children referred to, or open to Barnet Family Services.

### Initial resolution

- Open cases: by contacting the allocated social worker or lead professional
- New referrals: by contacting the MASH social worker
- Out of hours: by contacting the Emergency Duty Team (5pm-9am Monday to Friday, weekends and Bank Holidays).

### First line of escalation

- Open cases: by contacting the allocated social worker or lead professional's team manager
- New referrals: by contacting the MASH team manager.
- Out of hours: by contacting the Head of Service on duty (5pm-9am Monday to Friday, weekends and Bank Holidays).

### Second line of escalation

- Open cases: by contacting the service area Head of Service.
- New referrals: by contacting the MASH Head of Service.

### Third line of escalation

- Open cases or new referrals: by contacting the relevant Family Services Operational Director.

## **Barnet Health**

Where it is believed that the response from a health agency does not meet the safeguarding requirements for a child, the appropriate person to escalate to in the first instance is the Head of Safeguarding for the provider organisation concerned and the Designated Nurse and Doctor at NHS North Central London CCG.

If an acute safeguarding situation occurs out of hours which requires an immediate health assessment, the duty paediatric team at the hospital local to the child should be contacted. For Barnet Hospital, the duty paediatric team can be contacted through the hospital switchboard on 0208 216 4600.

## **Stage Three: Resolution by senior leaders**

If after following the above stages the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily, escalate to the Director of Children's Services, Director of Adult Social Care, the Borough Commander or the Chief Operating Officer for the CCG. At this final stage, a decision should be made that settles any dispute and ensures that there is a clear way forward for the case and that this solution ensures a continued high level of partnership working in Barnet that safeguards and promotes the welfare of adults and children.

Parties must also notify the Safeguarding Children Partnership via [BSCP@Barnet.gov.uk](mailto:BSCP@Barnet.gov.uk) or the BSAB via [BSAB@Barnet.gov.uk](mailto:BSAB@Barnet.gov.uk).

Where issues in dispute raise matters relevant to the strategic management of safeguarding responsibilities in Barnet the BSAB Chair, in line with s7 of the BSAB constitution, may convene a meeting with the Director of Adult Social Care and relevant parties to review the issues. The meeting will consider the issues raised and look at earlier efforts to resolve differences. When deciding on the solution, the meeting will take into account the impact of their decision on future partnership working and service delivery. The meeting may also agree changes to policies, working practices and the operation of joint protocols in consultation with all board partners.

There is a requirement for a record of any escalation to be placed on the child's or adult at risk's case records.

### **Review and monitoring of this protocol**

This protocol should be reviewed annually.

Any data in relation to the use of the protocol should be shared quarterly to the Quality and Performance Subcommittee of the BSAB and the Safeguarding Children Partnership Leadership Forum to provide oversight of emerging themes around its use. This will enable BSAB and BSCP to prioritise any actions needed to keep children and adults at risk safe.

Where issues are raised with partners from other authorities, including other local authorities, please follow the procedures as identified by their area. If you are unable to resolve the issue the BSAB and Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership can be approached to liaise with the relevant senior leaders in the other authority.