



West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board

Escalation Procedure

Author: West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board
Date: March 2017

Introduction

This procedure provides for the resolution of professional disagreements where an agency or professional considers that the decision made by other professionals or another agency on a safeguarding adult case is not a safe decision. There is an expectation from West Sussex Safeguarding Board (WSSAB) that challenges, whether about action or inaction must be conducted in a respectful manner. Correspondingly, professionals or agencies should not react defensively if challenged.

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

- threshold for intervention;
- differing views of actions;
- roles and responsibilities;
- the need for action;
- communication and
- whether to proceed with, or end, a Section 42 enquiry.

The safety of adults at risk is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and any unresolved areas should be addressed with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the adult.

All professionals 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 professionals with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

- avoiding professional disputes that put vulnerable adults at risk or take away focus from the adult
- resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly
- identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures
- a way for resolution at practitioner level between agencies, if necessary with the involvement of their line managers.
- a way to focus disagreements on whether a desired outcome has been achieved for an adult(s) at risk, thus keeping Making Safeguarding Personal central to the outcome

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 adults at risk.

Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the adult at risk is protected. Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage, however if an adult is thought to be at risk of immediate harm discretion should be used as to which stage is initiated.

Stage one

Any professional who feels that a decision in relation to a Safeguarding concern or a Section 42 Enquiry is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult a supervisor/manager in their own organisation.

When consulting with the supervisor/manager the individual should be encouraged to:

- clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem;
- be specific as to what the disagreement is about;
- be clear about what they aim to achieve and
- be supported to discuss the issues with the other professional involved.

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at practitioner level between agencies; 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 unsupported, however all members of staff have a duty to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users, and act promptly.

Stage two

If the problem is unresolved at stage one, the concerned worker should ask the supervisor/manager within their own agency to raise the concerns with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency.

Stage three

If the problem is unresolved 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. Heads of Service must be prepared, where necessary, to intervene.

Additional notes

It may be useful for individuals to meet together and debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

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 Safeguarding Adults Board for consideration by the Board Manager who will take forward via the relevant sub group e.g.

- Where this relates to a potential amendment to existing policy and procedures the Quality and Performance Sub-Group will give this consideration.
- Where this relates to a training need, then the Training and Development Sub-Group will give this consideration.

- Where the process highlights gaps in policies and procedures; this will also be brought to the attention of the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board.

