



Leeds
Safeguarding
Children Board

Concerns Resolution Process

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Concerns Resolution Process

Introduction

When working with practitioners from other agencies there will at times be differences of opinion with regards to how to respond to an identified concern about a child, young person or family. Disagreements can be a sign of developing thinking, and the value of exchanging ideas from different perspectives should not be under-estimated. However, disagreements may disadvantage the child or family involved if they are not resolved constructively and in a timely manner.

Throughout our work the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is the primary concern, and professional disputes must not obstruct this. If you feel that a practitioner or an agency is not acting in the best interests of the child, young person or family, you have a responsibility to respectfully challenge the practitioner or agency.

In order to support that challenge a clear process needs to be in place to ensure that all professionals involved in multi-agency work understand the steps they should take when these concerns arise. This process should however, be measured in its approach to allow professionals the opportunity to openly discuss with other professionals, their concerns. However some disagreements may need to be escalated up to first line managers (and beyond if appropriate) who should address any concerns.

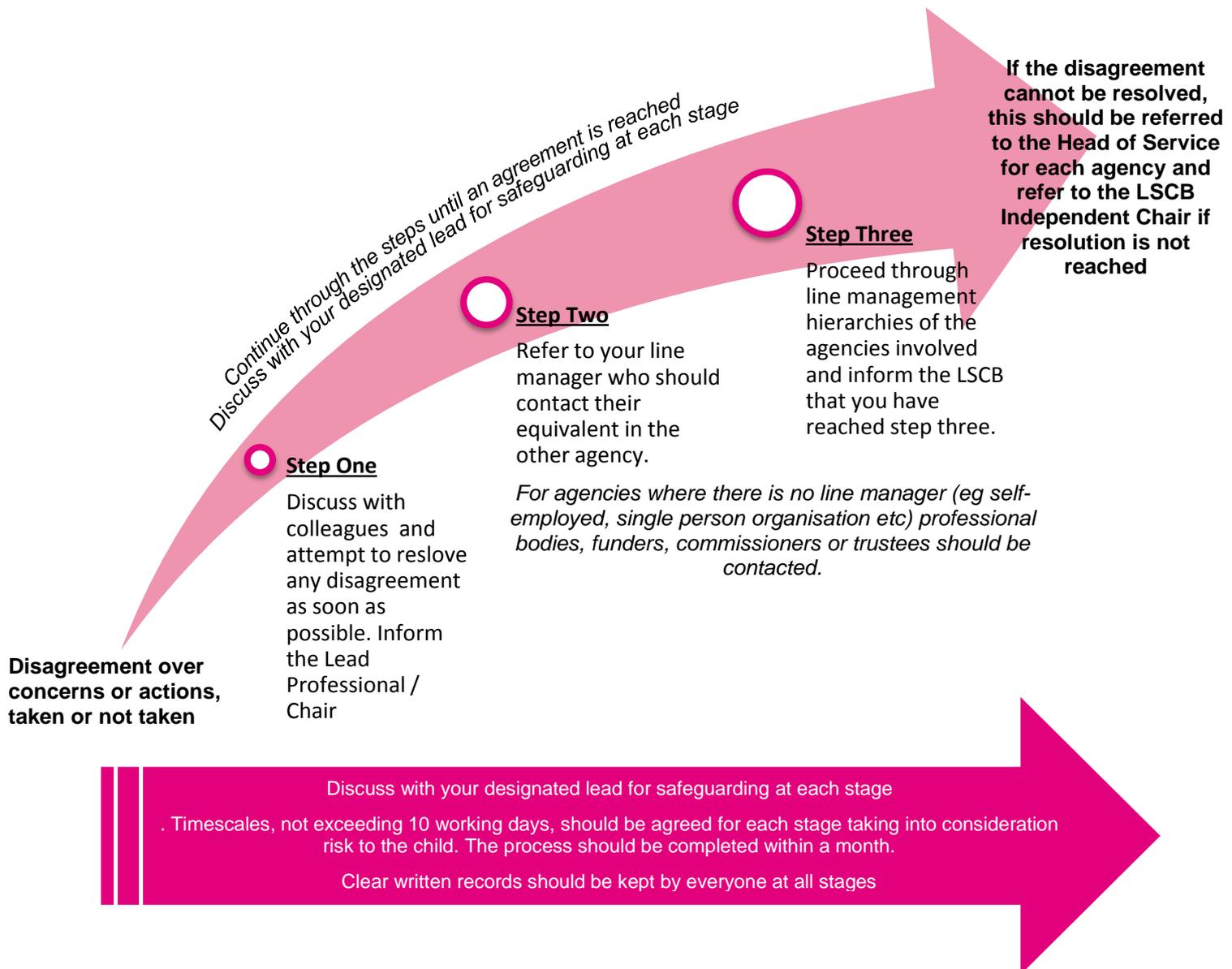
Principles of concerns resolution

When trying to resolve disagreements practitioners should work within the following principles:

- The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is paramount, and should they be considered to be at significant risk Duty and Advice should be contacted.
- Keeping the child, young person and their family at the centre of all professional discussions
- Ensuring that the right conversations are had with the right people at the right time, taking place face to face where possible.
- To resolve disagreement using a restorative approach which includes appropriate challenge
- Disagreements must be resolved in a timely manner
- Concerns, actions, responses and outcomes must be recorded.

Resolving concerns

When disagreements arise, the following steps should be undertaken:



1. Immediately discuss with colleagues and designated lead for safeguarding to clarify thinking and practice and attempt to resolve any disagreements before initiating the full process. Inform the Lead Professional / IRO / Chair of multi-agency meeting for information and monitoring.
2. If following this clarification the disagreement remains discuss with your designated lead for safeguarding and immediately refer this to your line manager, for them to discuss with the line manager of the other practitioner. *For agencies where there is no line manager (eg self-employed, single person organisation etc) professional bodies, funders, commissioners or trustees should be contacted.* They should do this within an agreed timescale with the practitioner raising the concern, and a timescale for response from the other line manager (or professional body / funder / commissioners / trustees) should also be agreed. Where possible this should not

exceed 10 working days between stages and one month for the process to be completed.

3. If agreement cannot be reached following discussions between first line managers the issue must be referred without delay through the line management structure to the equivalent of Head of Service, again with agreed timescales for responses. The LSCB must also be notified for information only.
4. If professional disagreements remain unresolved, the matter must be referred to the head of service for each agency involved, and then the LSCB Independent chair should the matter remain unresolved.

Appropriate timescales for passing on, and responding to, concerns should be agreed for each stage. These should take into consideration any potential risk to the child and need for provision of services.

Clear written records should be kept by everyone at all stages, which must include written confirmation between the parties about agreed resolutions and the proposed follow-up of any outstanding issues. Feedback should be given at every stage to the practitioner who raised the original concern.

If throughout the process the disagreement cannot be resolved, and you feel that a child is still suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, you are responsible for communicating your concerns to your immediate line manager and / or your organisation's designated lead for child protection.

In the unlikely event that the steps outlined above do not resolve the issue, and / or the discussions raise significant policy issues and / or a number of similar concerns or disagreements have been recorded, the matter should be referred to the chair of Leeds Safeguarding Children Board.

The NSPCC have launched a Whistleblowing Helpline for professionals (further details can be found on the NSPCC Website). This is not intended to replace existing processes to resolve disputes or the local LADO arrangements. Practitioners should still continue to use their agencies procedures in conjunction with this document.

Contacts

<i>Duty & Advice</i>	0113 3760336
<i>LSCB</i>	leeds@leeds.gov.uk
<i>LSCB Independent Chair</i>	leeds@leeds.gov.uk
NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline	<u>0800 028 0285</u>

Further guidance on resolving concerns within Multi-Agency Safeguarding Meetings is being developed and will be available on the LSCB Website