



Dispute Resolution Policy

Resolving differences of opinion between practitioners

July 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Dispute Resolution Policy is issued by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) in line with the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023. Forming part of the CHSCP's written safeguarding arrangements, safeguarding partners and relevant agencies must act in accordance with this policy.
- 1.2 It should be used in situations where practitioners within one agency believe that the actions, inaction or decisions of another agency do not adequately safeguard a child. It covers isolated issues or incidents as well as intractable recurring ones. It should be read alongside the London Child Protection Procedures and relevant internal policies on escalating matters of concern.
- 1.3 Disputes can arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to involve differences of opinion about:
- **Levels of need.**
 - **Roles and responsibilities.**
 - **The need for action and what form this action takes.**
 - **Progressing plans and communication.**
- 1.4 Practitioners might be concerned that decisions or actions are insufficient to provide the necessary help and protection for a child. Alternatively, they might be seen as disproportionate or failing to reflect the principles of an active-anti racist approach to practice.
- 1.5 Whatever the source of the concern, where it is believed that the practice of others is placing children at risk or damaging to their welfare, practitioners must be assertive, act swiftly and ensure that they challenge others in line with this policy. The following aspects underpin its application.
- The **safety and welfare of individual children is the paramount consideration** for all practitioners.
 - Resolution should be sought within the **shortest possible timescale**. As a guide, practitioners should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within one working week or in a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is shortest).
 - Disputes should be **resolved at the lowest possible stage**.

- 1.6 If a child is thought to be at immediate harm, the Designated Safeguarding Lead in your agency should be informed immediately.
- 1.7 If the decisions / actions of another practitioner (whether relating to their employment, voluntary activity or personal life) meet any one of the criteria justifying the involvement of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the LADO should be contacted in line with [local guidance](#). Where required, LADO arrangements will take precedence over this policy.
- 1.8 In all circumstances, practitioners should consult their supervisor/manager to clarify their thinking. They should be able to evidence the nature and source of their concerns and should keep a record of all discussions. If in place, practitioners may wish to refer to the Escalation Policy for their organisation to clarify the approach required.
- 1.9 Other concerns relating to decisions, suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work within an agency, should be raised in line with each agencies' policies for dealing with such matters, including but not limited to *whistleblowing* and conduct/disciplinary processes.

2. Stages of Dispute Resolution

2.1 Stage One: Discuss with the other practitioner

- 2.2 The practitioners who disagree have a discussion to resolve the problem. This discussion must take place as soon as possible and could be a telephone conversation or a face-to-face meeting. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some practitioners to pursue this unsupported.

2.3 Stage Two: Escalate to line manager

- 2.4 If the problem is not resolved, the practitioner should contact their supervisor/manager within their own agency who should have a discussion with the equivalent supervisor/ manager in the other agency.
- 2.5 The line managers involved should consider whether it would be helpful to convene a professionals' meeting, to obtain the views of other agencies as

relevant. Any professionals' meeting will need to adhere to the CHSCP guidance on professionals meetings available [HERE](#).

- 2.6 If the case involves a child supported by a Child Protection Plan or a Looked After Child, the Child Protection Chair and/or Independent Reviewing Officer must also be notified.

2.7 Stage Three: Escalate to senior managers

- 2.8 If the problem is not resolved at Stage Two, the supervisor/ manager reports to their respective managers. These two managers must attempt to resolve the differences of opinion through discussion.

- 2.9 Again, a professionals' meeting should be considered if deemed appropriate by the involved managers.

- 2.10 If there remains disagreement, the expectation is that escalation continues through the appropriate tiers of management in each organisation until the matter is resolved.

- 2.11 The respective [agency Board members](#) of the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) should be engaged in seeking resolution before the matter is raised with the CHSCP Independent Child Safeguarding Commissioner.

2.12 Stage Four: Resolution by the Independent Safeguarding Children Commissioner

- 2.13 If it has not been possible to resolve the differences within the agencies concerned (and after the agency CHSCP Board members have been involved), the matter should be referred to the CHSCP Independent Safeguarding Children Commissioner (ISCC). The ISCC may seek to either resolve the issue directly with the relevant senior managers, or convene a Resolution Panel.

- 2.14 The agency raising the dispute should e-mail the details through to chscp@hackney.gov.uk setting out the actions taken to date and the rationale for the involvement of the ISCC.

- 2.15 The Resolution Panel should consist of senior officers from safeguarding partner

agencies (local authority, police and ICB) and the agencies concerned in the professional dispute (if different).

2.16 The Panel will receive representations from those involved and will collectively resolve the professional differences concerned.

2.17 Stage Five: Escalation to the Secretary of State and/or relevant inspection bodies.

2.18 If the issue remains unresolved, the next stage of escalation is to the Secretary of State and may include relevant inspection bodies.

3. Recording

3.1 At all stages of the process, actions and decisions must be recorded in writing on the child's file and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern.

4. Dispute Resolution Flowchart

