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**Professional Challenge & Escalation**

**Policy & Procedure**

**August 2025**

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# Policy Summary

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| --- | --- |
| **Document name** | Professional Challenge and Escalation Policy & Procedure |
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| *If you require this policy or any associated documents in another format (e.g. other languages, easy-read or any other format), please email details of your requirements to:* [*ascservicedevelopment@halton.gov.uk*](mailto:ascservicedevelopment@halton.gov.uk)*.* | |

# Acknowledgements

This policy and procedure document has been developed with reference to the following documents:

**Warrington Safeguarding Adults Board Professional Challenge and Escalation Procedure**

**St Helens Safeguarding Adults Board Multi Agency Safeguarding Escalation Policy and Dispute Resolution Procedures**

**Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedure for resolution of professional disagreement relating to safeguarding and child protection**

We would like to acknowledge the use of these documents in the development of this policy.

# 1. Introduction

Halton Safeguarding Adults Board (HSAB) is committed to being a learning partnership where professionals achieve high standards and the partnership challenges poor practice. Challenge and escalation are vital to delivering improvement and improving outcomes for adults at risk.

In supporting this professional challenge and escalation policy, HSAB members are committing to work together in the spirit of openness, proportionality and mutual respect.

This document is intended to provide guidance, support and a process for escalation to a worker from an agency who may not believe that a decision has been made in relation to an adult with care and support needs that they feel is:

* Not safe
* Not in the Adult’s best interest (for those who lack capacity)

Effective working together relies on honest and open relationships between agencies. Problem solving is an integral part of co-operation and joint working to Safeguard Adults in need of care and support.

Professional curiosity and challenge should be seen as an opportunity to review decisions and the reason why they are made. If a professional does not feel the decision that has been made is right due to concerns regarding the ‘Adult’s safety and wellbeing’, they have a responsibility to voice this and should feel confident to challenge the decision. Professionals must also respect that an Adult who has the mental capacity to make their own decisions have a right to make ‘unwise decisions’.

It is anticipated that cases should only need to be escalated in exceptional circumstances, Safeguarding Enquiries that progress to full investigations will have Strategy Meetings. These meetings should ensure that all professionals involved in that investigation have the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. Any concerns in relation to the safeguarding decisions made should be addressed at the Strategy Meeting and a resolution found.

# 2. Context

Multi-Agency working is pivotal to the safeguarding of adults at risk, however there will be occasions when workers from different agencies disagree on decision making in safeguarding. Disagreements may arise in a number of areas, but are mostly likely to be around the following:

* Intervention thresholds
* Roles and responsibilities
* Requirement for action
* Communication

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure partner agencies have a quick and straightforward means of resolving any concern, in order to safeguard the welfare of an adult at risk.

Effective working together depends on resolving different professional perspectives to the satisfaction of workers and agencies, and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard adult at risk. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional cooperation and joint working to safeguard adults. Professional challenge can be positive, it demonstrates that professionals are willing to consider different perspectives and escalate matters that they do not feel will result in positive outcomes for the adult. It becomes dysfunctional only if not resolved in a constructive and timely way.

# 3. Principles to support resolution

It is important that practitioners feel empowered and supported within their agencies to challenge aspects of practice that they do not feel are in the best interests of adults at risk. When trying to resolve a difference of professional opinion or concern about practice, practitioners should work within the following principles:

* The safety and wellbeing of the adult at risk is paramount and at the centre of all professional discussions
* Ensure that the right conversations are had, with the right people, at the right time, taking place face to face where possible
* Challenges must be resolved in a timely manner
* Concerns, actions, responses and outcomes must be recorded

All staff should have the opportunity to challenge decision making to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice. This procedure provides workers with the means to raise the concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

* Focusing on the adult at risk and the risks posed by the decision making
* Providing a framework for resolution which is open and timely
* Supporting clarity and promoting resolutions to areas of challenge across multi-agency working

Whilst there may be a legitimate basis for the difference of the opinion, the welfare of the adult should be paramount.

Disagreements should also be resolved at the lowest stage possible, however, if an adult is thought to be at immediate risk discretion should be used to initiate at the most relevant stage.

# 4. Stages of Escalation

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage 1**  Day 1 – Take action within 24 hours of concern arising | Most disagreements can be resolved between professionals by having a conversation about the reasons for the difference of opinion and without having to escalate the matter further. When concerns arise, the professional must raise the issue with the other individual or their agency. The person raising their concern must be specific and clear about their concerns.  If this does not resolve the issue, they should consult a line manager or supervisor within their agency to move the escalation onto Stage 2 |
| **Stage 2**  No later than Day 3 – to be concluded by Day 9 | The manager should raise the concerns with the equivalent manager in the other agency or request the involvement of the safeguarding lead to discuss with their equivalent.  If this does not resolve the issue, they should consult with senior management for their own organisation and representatives on the Halton Safeguarding Adults Board to move the escalation onto Stage 3 |
| **Stage 3**  No later than Day 9 – to be concluded no later than day 14 | Senior Management representatives for your own organisation and the agency’s representatives on the HSAB should seek resolution to the issue. This may require a meeting with the involved parties to achieve a mutual understanding of perspective.  If this does not resolve the issue the escalation should move to Stage 4 |
| **Stage 4**  No later than Day 16 – to be concluded by Day 21 | Once all other stages have been completed, the agency representative on the HSAB should refer the issue to the HSAB Chair to recommend what action should be taken. This will be reported to the HSAB Main Board and written records will be kept |

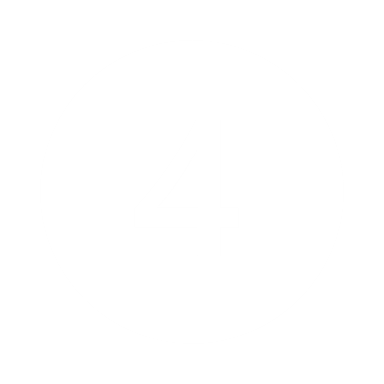
## Additional Notes

All stages of the professional challenge and escalation should be recorded and shared with the relevant personnel, including the person raising the concerns.

Staff involved must be given opportunities to debrief during the process to promote continuous good working and to identify opportunities and guidance to avoid similar disagreements in the future.

Where policy issues are identified as a result of a dispute, these must be raised via the relevant representative to the HSAB Independent Scrutineer.

**Stage 4** (no later than Day 16, to be concluded by Day 21)

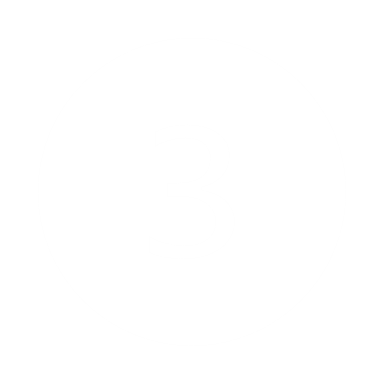
 The agency representative on the HSAB should refer the issue to the HSAB HSAB Chair to recommend what action should be

taken.

This will be reported to the HSAB Main Board and written records will

be kept.

**Stage 3** (no later than Day 9, to be concluded no later than day 14)

 Senior Management representatives and the agencies representatives

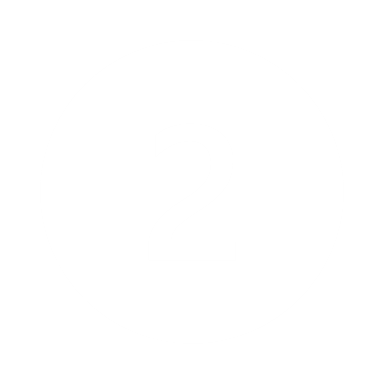
HSAB should seek resolution to the issue. This may require a meeting

with the involved parties. They must record this step within their own

m case records.

If an agreement cannot be achieved, the issue should be brought to the

HSAB Chairand the escalation

will move to **Stage 4**

**Stage 2** (no later than Day 3, to be concluded by Day 9)

The manager should raise the concerns with the equivalent manager in

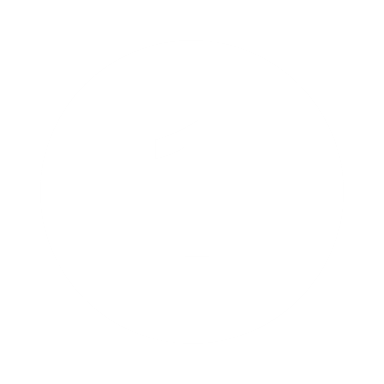
the other agency or request the involvement of the safeguarding lead

to discuss with their equivalent. They must record this step within their

case recording.

If the resolution cannot be achieved, the professionals must notify their

senior manager and the escalation will move to **Stage 3**

**Stage 1** (Day 1 – take action within 24 hours of concern arising)

When concerns arise, the professional must raise the issue with the

other individual or their agency. The person raising their concern must

be clear about their concerns. They must record this step within their

own case records.

If a resolution cannot be reached, professionals must escalate the

issue to their line manager or the named/designated safeguarding lead

in their organisation. This is when the escalation moves to **Stage 2**

**Most disagreements can be resolved between professionals by having a conversation about the reasons for the difference of opinion without having to escalate the matter further.**

# Appendix A

**Form for submitting professional challenge cases for escalation and resolution to the Local Safeguarding Adults Board**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Adult:** |  |
| **Date of Birth:** |  |
| **Address:** |  |
| **Name of Manager who escalated concern at Step 1, Role and Agency:** |  |
| **Name of Manager who escalated concern at Step 2, Role and Agency:** |  |
| **Date that Step 2 was concluded** |  |
| **Name of Board Members, Roles and Agencies Involved:** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Brief details about the inter-agency disagreement:** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What was the methodology used to resolve the disagreement?** | |  |
| **Please submit this referral to:** | [**HSAB@halton.gov.uk**](mailto:HSAB@halton.gov.uk) | |