

Protocol for Escalation and Resolution Conversations

**For resolving professional challenges when
working with children and young people.**

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2 Introduction

2.1 When working with children and families across professional disciplines and agencies, there will be at times differences in opinion, concerns about professional practice, or issues in difficulty in communication. This procedure seeks to set out a standard of communication expectations alongside a pathway to resolve or escalate concern.

2.1.1 Please note, if at any point you feel a practitioner or agency is not clearly acting in an evidence-based way that is in the best interests of the child and family, you have a responsibility to respectfully communicate this and raise with the relevant practitioner or agency. If resolution can not be achieved, this needs to be escalated in a timely manner.

2.1.2 This procedure does not seek to replace statutory complaints process, but to enable and empower professional discussion and appropriate challenge.

3 Key Principles of Effective Communication

3.1 The following key principles should direct communication and be embedded within all working with children and families:

- The child's safety and welfare is paramount;
- Promoting positive communication and relationships between multi-agency partners;
- Seeking to avoid any drift or delay for families with acute needs;
- Timely response and expectations on transition;
- Communicating well is everyone's responsibility.
- Clear line of accountability to seek effective and timely resolution.

3.1.1 This communication protocol aims to contribute towards effective information sharing, supporting transition protocols and managing complex risk in an effective manner. This protocol also underpins regional agreement to work within the principles of the North West regional transfer protocols.

3.2 Key expectations to enable effective resolution conversations:

3.2.1 Telephone or direct face to face discussion should always be the primary initial format of communication between professionals. This should be initially focussed on communication between team members with case management responsibility or direct involvement; to ensure clarity of current involvement and detail of concerns.

3.2.2 Telephone conversation should be followed up through brief confirmation email of discussion held to ensure clarity and consistency of recorded expectations.

3.2.3 Notification and communication of any concerns regarding a child who is believed to be at increasing risk should be held within 24 hours to avoid any drift of delay. Where there is potential imminent risk to a child, discussion should be held within 1 hour.

3.2.4 Should dispute over communicated concerns or transition be found, the below dispute resolution should be commenced.

3.2.5 Consent from the child or family prior to information sharing should be explicitly gathered wherever possible and reasonable to do so, except where the immediate safeguarding of a child overrides this requirement.

3.2.6 Communication should promote confidence and engage in open dialogue at every stage. Information should be made available swiftly and detailing clarity, ensuring the information is both factually correct and timely.

3.2.7 Agencies are expected to monitor dispute and escalation themes and provide regular updates to Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership to allow recurrent themes to be addressed.

3.2.8 Multi-agency reflective sessions can be considered for cases in which progress is slow and drift is evident. The purpose of multi-agency reflective sessions is to provide an opportunity for a core group of professionals to reflect on a case they are working with and provide the opportunity for increased collaboration and support. Multi-agency reflective sessions are NOT intended to replace individual's supervision.

4 Dispute Resolution Pathway

4.1.1 Communication throughout any dispute remains key priority – ensuring that direct discussion is the primary remit of communication and this is an understanding by all representatives. This pathway should be followed wherever practitioner to practitioner resolution has not been effective:

4.1.2 For clarity, agreed outcomes will be recorded and shared via email to ensure decision making captured on each agency’s electronic recording system.

