

Protocol for Escalation and Resolution Conversations

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

July 2025

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Resolving disagreements is fundamental to effective working together to safeguard children. Within this area of work, it is typical for professionals to experience differences in opinion, challenge professional practice, or experience barriers with achieving effective communication. Every professional discipline and agency have a responsibility to raise concerns with the relevant professional or agency involved, and respectful challenge or multi-agency debate should be encouraged where positive impact and outcomes for children can be achieved.
- 1.2 Professional disagreement and or misunderstandings are often resolved within a constructive and timely approach, and communication is key in this process. Therefore, this protocol seeks to set out a standard of communication expectations alongside a flowchart (Appendix 1) to resolve or escalate concern.
- 1.3 When communicating disagreements, professionals should always remain respectful of each other. This should be evidenced in both direct and written lines of communication, and throughout the escalation resolution process. This may be particularly important when challenging practice or professional standards.
- 1.4 If resolution cannot be achieved, this needs to be escalated. Escalation should support a professional to achieve an outcome within a reasonable timescale. It is therefore important that the person raising the escalation is clear in what they are escalating, what they are seeking to achieve and what they feel the outcome should be. **The child's safety and wellbeing must always be the paramount consideration, and professional differences must not detract from timely and clear decision making.** Individuals should therefore exercise their judgement as to whether the timelines outlined in this protocol need to be achieved more quickly.
- 1.5 The Escalation and Resolution Protocol below shows the 4 stages of escalation that should be followed if agreement between practitioners cannot be reached, which details expected timescales for escalation. There is a simplified flowchart in Appendix 1 to support professionals in their escalation.

- 1.6 Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) should be notified of all stage 3 escalations via OSCP.group@oldham.gov.uk. The Resolution Notice in Appendix 2 should be used to formally escalate and report all escalations progressing to stage 4 and agreed outcomes. This is for monitoring purposes so that the partnership can stay alert to any emerging trends or themes. OSCP will then collate themes from this data on a quarterly basis to be presented at Strategic Safeguarding Partnership.
- 1.7 This protocol does not seek to replace statutory complaints process, but to enable and empower professional discussion and appropriate challenge.

2 Roles and Responsibilities of Professionals

Professionals providing services to children and families should work collaboratively across all agencies. Effective partnership working relies on open and honest relationships and clear communication between professionals. Professionals working directly with children and their families are expected to share information appropriately in accordance with Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements Practice Standards Framework and in line with the Escalation and Resolution Protocol to safeguard children.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a responsibility shared by all agencies. Whilst the Local Authority, is allocated a lead role in co-ordinating responses to risk, or causes, of significant harm to children, effective intervention is dependent upon inter-agency information sharing and planning, and multi-agency service responses. Therefore, professionals should ensure they are familiar with safeguarding, information sharing and routes for escalation and resolution within their own agency. Furthermore, all agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent and supported to escalate any inter-agency concerns and disagreements about a child's safety or wellbeing appropriately.

Where difficulties or disagreements arise between agencies the process of resolution should be kept as simple as possible. OSCP expects all agencies to adopt a proactive approach towards problem solving which enables professional disagreements to be resolved within front line practice at professional practitioner level, as quickly as possible.

Whilst this protocol sets out expected timescales within it, matters should be escalated when an inter-agency disagreement has arisen, in some situations it may be necessary to act sooner to protect a child or children. **The timescales indicated should not be a reason for delaying action.**

Each staff member is responsible for recording professional conversations and decision-making in line with the case recording protocols and procedures in each agency or setting. The professionals involved in the resolution process must accurately and contemporaneously record each intra and inter-agency discussion they have, approve and date the record.

3 Early Resolution - Expected Practice

Parties Involved	Process	Duration	Cumulative Duration
Practitioners	Upon disagreement in relation to the safeguarding needs of a child, in the first instance the complainant practitioner should raise the matter with the responsible practitioner within 2 working days of the disagreement or receipt of a decision. If the concern is first raised verbally, it should be confirmed in writing.	2	2
	The complainant practitioner should provide clear evidence-based reasons for their disagreement. The receiving agency must read and review the case file. They must speak to the complainant practitioner and attempt to find a mutually agreeable way forward within 3 working days. Where a resolution is reached the responsible practitioner will advise the complainant practitioner of the outcome in writing (i.e. by email) within a further 2 working days	3	5

If the practitioners are unable to find a resolution through discussion, meet within timescale, or actions have not progressed within agreed timescales, please progress to **Stage 1 of the Escalation and Resolution Protocol, on the same day.**

4 Escalation and Resolution Protocol

Stage No.	Parties Involved	Process	Duration	Cumulative Duration (working days)
1	Line/Team Managers/Safeguarding Lead	If the receiving agency practitioner and the complainant practitioner are unable to find resolution, each practitioner should raise their concerns with their respective line/team manager/safeguarding lead, who should attempt to resolve the differences within 2 working days. A summary of the discussion, outcome of the resolution or agreed actions should be confirmed in writing by the receiving agency to the complainant agency on the same day (email title – <i>Escalation & Resolution Protocol: Stage 1 Summary</i>). If the professionals are unable to find a resolution through discussion, meet within timescale or actions have not progressed within agreed timescales, please progress to stage 2, on the same day, to the relevant Senior Manager/Head of Service.	2	7
2	Service/Senior Managers	The relevant managers should meet within 2 working days to resolve the escalation. If the professionals are unable to find resolution through discussion, meet within the agreed timescale, or agreed actions have not progressed within timescales, please progress to stage 3 on the same day. A summary of the discussion, outcome of the resolution or agreed actions should be confirmed in writing by the receiving agency to the complainant agency on the same day (email title – <i>Escalation & Resolution Protocol: Stage 2 Summary</i>). Note: OSCP should be notified of all escalations progressing to Stage 3 via OSCP.group@oldham.gov.uk for the	2	9

		purpose of reviewing themes and to obtain assurance around resolution progression (<i>email title – Notification of Escalation progressing to stage 3</i>).		
3	Director/ Assistant Director	The relevant managers should meet within 2 working days to resolve the escalation. If concerns remain unresolved, director/assistant director should formally escalate the concerns through to the OSCP via the Resolution Notice (Appendix 2) on the same day. A summary of the discussion, outcome of the resolution or agreed actions should be confirmed in writing by the receiving agency to the complainant agency on the same day (<i>email title – Escalation & Resolution Protocol: Stage 3 Summary</i>).	2	11
4	Oldham Safeguarding Partnership (Virtual Panel)	Statutory partners alongside any other agencies involved should come together to discuss the concerns raised within 4 working days. The partnership should discuss the concerns and collectively decide about next steps and finding a resolution. If there was to be further disagreement on the outcome the majority vote will succeed. Outcomes of panel discussions will have oversight from Statutory Partners Delegated Safeguarding Leads to sign off the virtual panel decision. The outcome will be communicated with all involved parties.	4	15
Total – 15 Working Days				

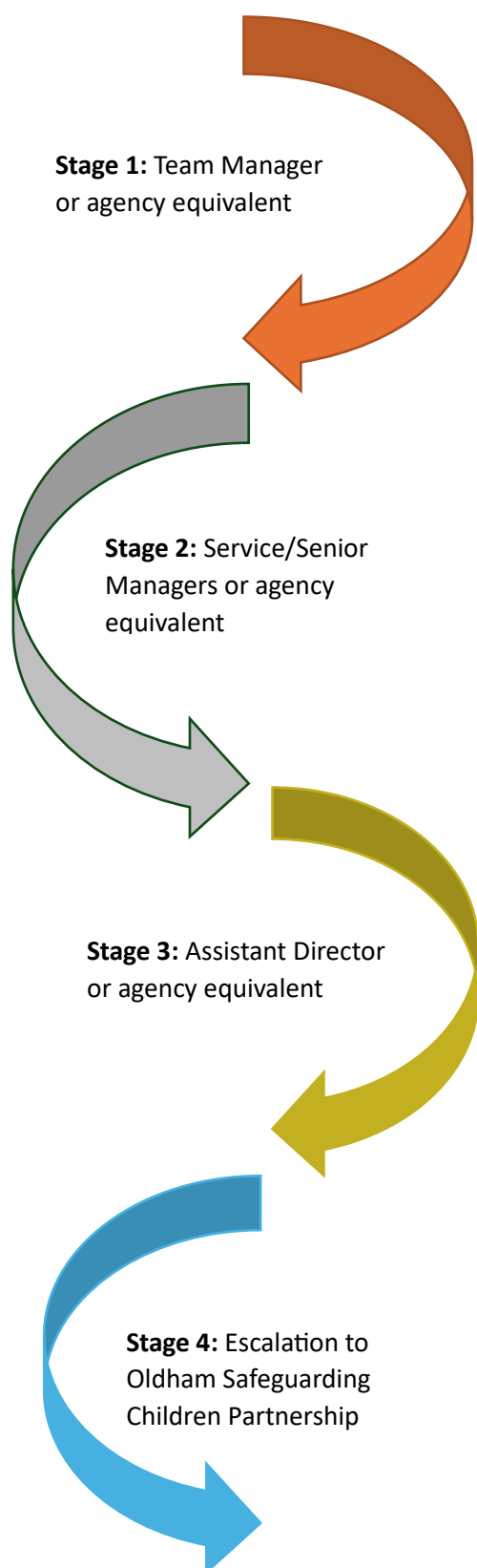
NB: If an organisation has a flat governance structure it may be the same Senior Manager or Head of Service that continues to manage the escalation.

5 Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership Escalation Single Point of Contact (SPOC) List.

Service	Contact Details
GMP (Inc. Complex Safeguarding Hub)	Oldham.publicprotection@gmp.police.uk
NHS GM ICB (Oldham Locality)	gmicb-old.safeguardingoldham@nhs.net
Oldham Royal Foundation Trust (Safeguarding Team)	oldhamchildprotection@nca.nhs.uk
Pennine Care Foundation Trust (Inc. CAMHS/CMHT)	pcn-tr.safeguarding@nhs.net
Primary Care	Contact to be made to the GP practice to clarify Designated Safeguarding Lead arrangements.
Children's Social Care (Inc. MASH, CIN/CP/LAC, Leaving Care Team, IRO service, Early Help))	Child.mash@oldham.gov.uk
Adult Social Care	Adult.Mash@oldham.gov.uk
Education	Contact to be made to the school, college, nursery/pre-school to clarify Designated Safeguarding Lead arrangements.
Positive Steps, including YJS	claregriffiths@positive-steps.org.uk
Probation	Amy.Poulson@justice.gov.uk
Housing	Contact to be made to housing provider to clarify Designated Safeguarding Lead arrangements.

6 Appendix 1 – Escalation and Resolution Protocol Flowchart

Communication throughout escalation and resolution remains the key priority – ensuring that direct discussion (face to face/telephone) is the primary remit of communication, and this is an understanding by all representatives. **This protocol should be followed wherever practitioner to practitioner resolution has not been effective.** Agreed outcomes will be recorded and shared via email to ensure decision making is captured on each agency's electronic recording system.



Stage 1: Direct discussion should be held, **within 2 working days**, between the relevant team managers or agency equivalent as a first option to try to resolve any escalation. Key points confirmed in writing, including in the Subject 'Escalation and Resolution Protocol: Stage 1 Summary'.

If the professionals are unable to find a resolution through discussion, meet within timescale, or actions have not progressed within agreed timescales, please progress to **Stage 2, on the same day**.

Stage 2: The relevant managers should meet **within 2 working days** to resolve the escalation. Key points confirmed in writing, including in the Subject 'Escalation and Resolution Protocol: Stage 2 Summary'.

If the professionals are unable to find a resolution through discussion, meet within timescale, or actions have not progressed within agreed timescales, please progress to **Stage 3, on the same day**.

NB: OSCP must be notified of all escalations to Stage 3 via email.

Stage 3: The relevant managers should meet **within 2 working days** to resolve the escalation. Key points confirmed in writing, including in the Subject 'Escalation and Resolution Protocol: Stage 3 Summary'.

If the professionals are unable to find a resolution through discussion, meet within timescale, or actions have not progressed within agreed timescales, please progress to **Stage 4, on the same day**.

NB: Formal escalation to OSCP via the Resolution Notice (Appendix 2) on the same day.

Stage 4: Statutory partners alongside any other agencies involved should come together to discuss the concerns raised within **4 working days**. The partnership should discuss the concerns and collectively decide about next steps and finding a resolution.

7 Appendix 2 – Resolution Notice

Resolution Notice	
Date of Notification	
Name of Child/Young Person	
D.O.B	
Unique Identifier (NHS/PID Number)	
Name of Professional Raising Resolution and Challenge Notice	
Agency/Organisation	
Role	
Contact Details	

Resolution Stage 4 – Oldham Safeguarding Children Partnership (Virtual Panel)			
Please email Resolution Notice to: OSCP.group@oldham.gov.uk			
Summary of Discussion, previous actions agreed, progress to date and any identified barriers/challenges to finding a resolution.	Virtual panel meeting to be convened and to consider the following;(Please delete blue text) - Gather the facts about the case. - Discuss whether there is any action needed to ensure children's/Adult's safety, identify and share any learning and service improvements appropriately. - Decide what steps should be taken next.		
Summary of Outcome/Discussion			
Agreed Actions	Who is Accountable For this Action?	Agreed timeline (Please be specific)	Action Completed? (Yes/No)
<i>Please delete then right click, insert, insert row below, if further rows are required.</i>			