GSCP ESCALATION POLICY

2021

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that the child is safeguarded. The child's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout. This policy identifies a non-exhaustive list of potential areas of disagreement, guidance on preventing disputes and procedures to be followed when disputes cannot be resolved through discussion and negotiation between professionals at front line level

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Contents

Document Revision Table

Revision	Date	Comment
1.1	13th May 2021	Revisions to reflect change to I.S. Functions and include Resolution Group arrangements.
1.2	25th May 2021	Resolution Group Approval
1.2	23rd June 2021	Approved by Management Group
1.3	6th July 2021	GSCP Executive Approval

Escalation Policy

Introduction

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that the child is safeguarded. The child's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout.

This policy identifies a non-exhaustive list of potential areas of disagreement, guidance on resolving disputes and procedures to be followed when disputes cannot be resolved through discussion and negotiation between professionals at front line level. Some organisations use the term Conflict Resolution Policy.

Potential Areas of Disagreement

This is not an exhaustive list and other scenarios may warrant escalation

- A referral not considered to meet the threshold for assessment by Children's social care;
- Children's social care conclude that further information should be sought by the referrer before a referral is progressed;
- There is disagreement as to whether the child protection procedures should be invoked see above;
- Children's social care and the Police place different interpretations on the need for significant agency response in relation to a child protection enquiry see above;
- There is a disagreement over the sharing of information and/or provision or services;
- There is disagreement over the outcome of any assessment and whether the appropriate action plan is in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

Timescales

All disputes should be resolved in a timely way so that the welfare of the child remains paramount. In some situations, it may be required to instigate all of the stages within a short period of time or to escalate the process so that the safety of the child is not compromised.

Stage One: Preventing Disputes

Most disagreements can be resolved through discussion and negotiation. The professionals involved should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within one working day, but if they are unable to do so, their disagreement must be reported by them to their line managers or equivalent with respect to most day-to-day issues, the relevant line managers will be able to resolve the disagreement. This contact should take place within twenty-four hours. The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. It may be helpful to consider the involvement of the designated or named professional at this stage in preference to use of line management.

Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant managers involved and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded on the child's file.

Note: Ongoing communication is key to ensuring disputes are resolved in a timely manner – disputes should not be escalated without communication between relevant parties

Stage Two: Informal Dispute Procedure

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at front line management level, the matter should be referred without delay to second tier management level.

The issue will then be considered at second tier management level and/or include Team Around the Family, with direct communication taking place with the designated professional or named professional for safeguarding within the individual agency or at a second-tier management level.

If the area of conflict relates to whether a case meets the threshold for a referral or service from Children's social care, then the Service Manager MASH will also be involved in this discussion.

Stage Three: Formal Dispute Procedure

If following Stage Two of process the disagreement remains unresolved, the matter will be referred to an appropriate Head of Service within Specialist Children's Services, who will consider the matter in dialogue their equivalent level of management within the agency progressing the escalation.

The purpose of escalating the dispute to this level is to establish a position where differing professional opinions have been considered and efforts made to explore whether the dispute has arisen through lack of clarity or understanding in the professional dialogue. Ultimately a decision will need to be reached where agencies agree a way forward in which the interests of the child take precedence over any professional stalemate.

Stage Four: Where Disagreements Remain

In all cases where in the unlikely event it has not been possible to resolve differences and/or where there may be lessons to be learned for future practice, consideration should be given to making a referral to the GSCP Resolution Group.

GSCP Resolution Group Membership

- Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding & Care, Child Services
- Designated Safeguarding Lead, Clinical Commissioning Group
- Detective Chief Inspector, PPB, Constabulary
- Assistant Director for Integrated Children and Families Commissioning
- GSCP Business Manager

In the unlikely event that the Resolution Group cannot resolve the escalation the Resolution Group will refer the matter to the Chair of the GSCP Executive for consideration

At any stage of the process, any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the second tier (Stage 2) management staff involved and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded on the child's file.