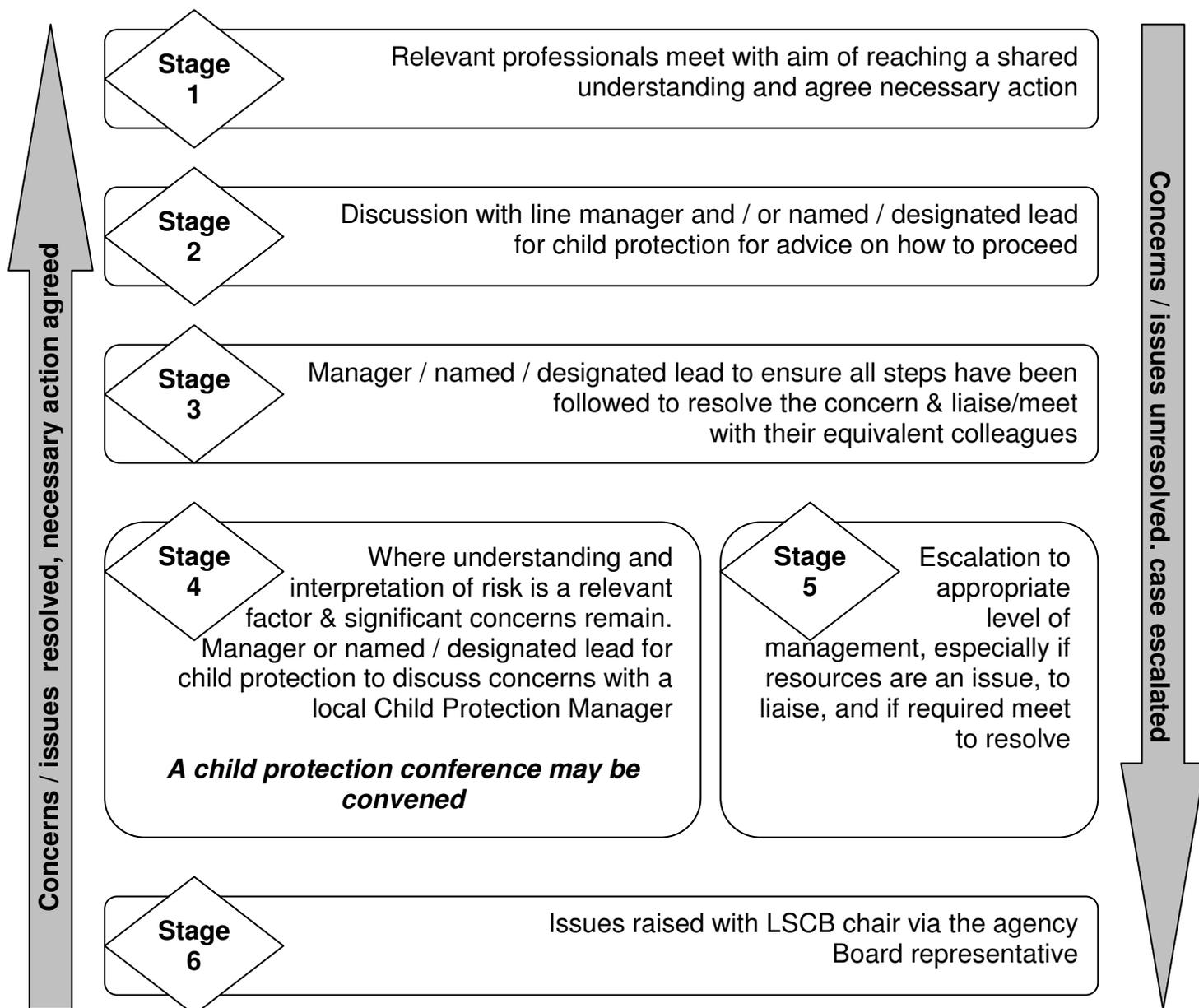


DERBY AND DERBYSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARDS ESCALATION POLICY AND PROCESS

Principle of resolving difference of professional opinion

It is every professional's responsibility to 'problem solve'. Communication is extremely important and is the key to resolving professional misunderstandings or disagreements. The aim must be to resolve a difference of opinion at the earliest possible stage, as swiftly as possible, always keeping in mind that the child or young person's safety and welfare is paramount.

Fears that difference of opinion may be getting in the way of keeping a child safe



1. Introduction

Multi-agency working to keep children safe is often complex and means that from time to time the judgement of staff from different professional backgrounds may differ, causing potential conflict. This policy sets out clear routes to escalate professional concerns where there are fears that difference of opinion may be getting in the way of keeping a child safe.

2. Factors to Consider

Often there are factors that affect professionals and how they gather and analyse information about the circumstances of a child, and the level of professional anxiety they experience. Are these factors affecting professional judgement and would it help to clarify any of them:

- Exercise of discretion and judgement; is this being done with limited information and / or liaison with other agencies? **Remember in all situations the over-riding consideration as to whether to share information should be the safety and welfare of the child.**
- Strong emotional issues are likely to be raised; how is this impacting upon judgement?
- Managing power and authority issues between individual staff, agencies and with the family; what impact is this having? Do issues relating to professional status, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexuality have a bearing on the case?
- Are the disputes within the professional group mirroring disputes and conflict within the family?
- Are organisational issues e.g. structural changes, access to support or resources, affecting judgements?

3. Resolving the difference of opinion

“Effective problem solving occurs when both the problem and its solution are owned by all parties involved” (Morrison 2002)

Practical measures should be taken to ensure that escalation occurs through the following stages, unless the situation is **so serious** and requires urgent action to protect a child. Children's social care or the police are responsible for taking urgent action to protect a child.

Stage 1: Relevant professionals meet and discuss the following with the aim of reaching a shared understanding and agree necessary action. There may be a number of different points of view about a case.

Do all parties clearly understand why there is a difference of opinion?

- Do the different people involved understand what they are?
- What information are the views based on?
- Does everyone have access to the same information?

What are the specific areas of difference of opinion?

- Is this clear?

Can more information clarify this for either party?

- What is known or not known about the child or family?
- What additional information is needed? How could this be gathered?

- What facts or evidence exist? Has it come from more than one source?
- What are the conclusions and analysis? Do they draw on theory and research?

Analysis and reaching a judgement

- What is life like for this child and how serious are the concerns?
- Has additional information helped to clarify the opinions of the people involved?
- Is a multi agency meeting needed to bring together historical and current information from different agencies to decide how to proceed?
- Can a judgement be agreed, or does a significant difference of opinion remain?

Have we done enough to safeguard this child?

- Is there agreement about the actions that now need to be taken, by who, timescales and when these will be reviewed?

Stage 2: If agreement cannot be reached and someone still has concerns that a child remains at risk of significant harm, they must discuss this with their manager and / or named / designated lead for child protection.

Stage 3: Escalation of concerns

- The manager / named / designated lead for child protection should make sure that the professional raising the concern has cooperated with other professionals to ensure all the steps have been followed to resolve the concern.
- A clear record should be kept at all stages, by all parties.
- It is essential that where concerns are raised these are evidenced and that factual matters are clear.
- The manager or named / designated lead for child protection should liaise with the equivalent colleague in the other agency involved to resolve outstanding concerns. They may require a face to face meeting and may involve more than one agency.

Stage 4: In cases where significant concerns remain, especially if understanding and interpretation of risk is the relevant factor, the manager or named / designated lead for child protection should contact the Child Protection Manager (in their local area) to discuss the concerns, and decide whether a Child Protection Conference should be convened.

Stage 5: If the matter remains unresolved and especially if resources are a relevant factor, this should be escalated to an appropriate level of management within each agency to liaise and if necessary meet.

Stage 6: Where there is no resolution, having exhausted all other possibilities, the manager / named / designated lead for child protection should raise the matter with the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Board. This should be done via the agency representative for the Board.

Version Control

Policy to be read in conjunction with the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Procedures (NB : this document replaces the Derby City Escalation Policy, 2010)

Version	Author/s	Signed off by	Date	Review Date
1.	Multi Agency Task & Finish Group	DSCB Policy and Procedures Group	9 th October 2013	November 2014