**Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership**

Resolving Professional Differences –

Escalation Policy and

Partnership Practice Alerts

**VERSION 12.2 – January 2025**

**Due for review January 2026**

 www.medwayscp.org.uk

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Generally there is a good working relationship between agencies across Medway, but occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the actions, inaction or decisions of another agency do not adequately safeguard a child.

Disagreements are most likely to arise around:

* Levels of need/ thresholds
* Roles and responsibilities
* Progressing plans
* Communication

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. All professionals have a duty to act assertively and proactively to ensure that a child’s welfare is the paramount consideration in all professional activity.

Therefore all professionals must be able to respectfully challenge the practice of other professionals where they are concerned that this practice is placing children at risk of harm.

This policy sets out clear routes to escalate professional concerns where the actions, inactions or decisions of another agency may be getting in the way of keeping a child safe.

Where there is multi agency learning or practice to be addressed across the partnership that is not related to an induvial case the Partnership Practice Alert can be utilised.

1. **WHEN TO USE THE ESCALATION POLICY**

Where a professional disagrees with a decision or response from any agency regarding a safeguarding or welfare concern they must firstly consult with their line manager to clarify thinking and the desired outcome. Initial attempts should be made to resolve the matter professional to professional.

If the professionals are unable to resolve differences through discussion and/or meeting within a time scale, which is acceptable to both of them, their disagreement must be addressed by a more senior staff member using this formal Escalation Process.

This Escalation Process is for the use of any professional working with a Medway child, including those professionals who work outside of Medway. Professionals seeking to escalate to agencies operating outside of Medway should refer to the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Escalation policy for that area.

This Escalation Process should be used to escalate any concerns relating to the young persons secure estate in Medway.

Issues that need to be escalated include:

* Disagreements over handling of concerns reported to an agency e.g. the referral is not considered to satisfy eligibility criteria for service provision or assessment; there is a professional difference of opinion about the level of risk;
* When an agency does not agree with the decision made not to convene a child protection conference or the findings of the assessments (child and family and others) are not reflective;
* Concerns or disagreements over another professional’s decisions, actions or lack of actions in the implementation of a child protection plan, child in need plan, care plans, Education health and care plan, Early Help Assessment (EHA). This is inclusive of core groups and multi-agency meetings and any other multi-agency process;
* Disagreement over the accuracy of minutes of multi agency meetings or other records that do not accurately reflect professional discussions e.g. Child Protection Conferences minutes, Core Group meeting minutes, Professionals Meetings, EHA meetings etc.;
* Multi agency meetings not taking place within timescales or where there is persistent non-attendance by professionals;
* There has been insufficient progress made in respect of the agreed objectives of the child protection plan and no contingency action has been taken;
* Concerns around the timeliness of interventions;
* An agency or home local authority does not agree with responses to safeguard a child at Oasis Restore, or any other secure setting, which may relate to escalating behaviour, use of restraint etc.

All stages of the process should be well documented.

1. **WHEN TO USE THE PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE ALERT**

A Partnership Practice Alert supports professionals to raise concerns to the MSCP that are not case related but if left unaddressed may risk the safeguarding and welfare of children going forward.

These may include but are not limited to the following and may form a pattern of events:

* Failure of one or more agencies to follow MSCP/local policy and procedures on more than one occasion – even when no harm was caused but may indicate a review of procedures is needed.
* Consistent lack of or miscommunication between two or more agencies. This may also include lack of engagement.
* Internal single agency audits or inspections have identified issues with multi agency practice.
* A service is not providing their advertised/commissioned service or waiting lists are now too long they are impacting on the safety and wellbeing on children.

The PPA process can also be used to alert the MSCP to any risks to services provisions.

Complaints about another service that have remained unanswered by the service or have not improved relations can also be submitted via a PPA. These should not be case related. If the subject of the alert concerns a single agency, then that service should be consulted with first.

The MSCP will request the Learning Lesson group members to consider the alerts and respond on behalf of their agency. The Learning Lesson group will be responsible for the oversight of any actions as a result of the alert. The template for PPAs in in appendix three.

This process does not replace the referral process for consideration for Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Learning Lesson reviews, Case File Audits or single agency Individual Management Reviews. These are related to individual cases and continue to be considered using the MSCP Review Referral From.

This process does not replace the Escalation Process or Whistle Blowing processes.

1. **STAGES OF THE ESCALATION PROCESS**

If professionals are unable to reach agreement about the way forward in an individual case through discussions, then their disagreement must be addressed by more senior staff.

A line/ team manager must contact the equivalent line/team manager from the other agency to discuss and seek resolution in the first instance. If agreement cannot be reached at this point, then the formal escalation process can be evoked.

**Stage 1 –** **Escalate to Service Manager**

If those who manage the professionals in dispute are unable to resolve the issues then more senior staff will need to address the issue. This stage of the escalation requires a response within 5 working days.

This may be a senior health visitor/ nurse/ GP; children’s social care service manager who should speak with their equivalent in the other service.

For Kent Police, if the escalation concerns the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) please escalate to the MASH/CRU Detective Inspector. Matters not relating to MASH should go to the Operational Child Protection Detective Inspector. If in doubt as to who the person in the role is, please contact the Kent Police control room or the Central Referral Unit (CRU) and ask for the contact details for the rank you need.

Please note that stage one of the escalation process may include more than one line of management in seeking to resolves the issue.

If the young person is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the Children Protection Conference Chair should also be informed. If the child is in care then the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should also be informed.

Conversations between professionals, telephone calls and emails should be recorded on the child’s file as evidence of the challenge and any resolution met.

If agreement cannot be reached following discussion between the above managers the escalation moves to stage 2.

Please email a copy of the escalation and any response to mscp@medway.gov.uk for recording purposes. This can be in email form.

**Stage 2 –** **Escalate to Designated Safeguarding Leads/ Head of Service**

If the problem is not resolved at stage 1, the professional with their line manager must escalate to their Service manager or Designated Safeguarding lead to liaise with their equivalent. Those senior managers must attempt to resolve the differences through discussion.

This may be a Children’s Social Care Head of Service;; designated teacher; named GP or other designated professional.

For Kent Police, if the escalation concerns the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) please escalate to the Strategic Detective Chief Inspector responsible for CRU/MASH. Matters not relating to MASH should go to the Operational Child Protection Detective Chief Inspector.

If the young person is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the Children Protection Conference Chair should also be informed. If the child is in care then the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should also be informed.

A response is required within 5 working days. Please email a copy of the escalation and any response to mscp@medway.gov.uk for recording purposes. This can be in email form.

**Stage 3 – Escalate to Assistant/ Deputy Directors**

If the problem is not resolved at stage 2, the Service Manager/ Designated Safeguarding Leads must escalate to the agency Assistant Director/ Deputy Director/ Headteacher/ Governor or equivalent.

Both stages 1 and 2 must be utilised before going to stage 3.

A copy of the Stage 3 Escalation Alert Form should be completed and sent to the Assistant Director/ Deputy Director/ Headteacher/ Detective Superintendent Head of Safeguarding or equivalent. A response is required within 5 working days. A copy of the Stage 3 Escalation Form (below) should also be sent to the MSCP at mscp@medway.gov.uk for recording purposes.

If the young person is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the Children Protection Conference Chair should also be informed. If the child is in care, then the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should also be informed.

If agreement cannot be reached following discussion between the above Assistant/ Deputy Directors, it will go to stage 4.

**Stage 4 –** **Involving the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership**

In the unlikely event of the escalation not being resolved by stage 3 then the escalation must be sent to the MSCP using the Escalation Form with details of all responses received and the remaining concerns. The escalation will be raised with the MSCP Executive and overseen by the MSCP Independent scrutineer.

For further support and advice as to what stage of escalation you are operating under, please contact mscp@medway.gov.uk

**APPENDIX ONE – ESCALATION FORM**

**Stage 3 Escalation Form**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date of stage 3 alert:** |  |
| **From:** |  |
| **Service:** |  |
| **To:** |  |
| **Service:** |  |
| **Name of Child (if applicable):** |  |
| **DOB (if applicable):** |  |
| **Practitioner:** |  |
| **Service:** |  |
| **Line Manager:** |  |
| **Stage One – Service Manager** |
| **Date escalation raised:** |  |
| **Name of manager (s):** |  |
| **Date response received:** |  |
| **Stage Two – Designated Safeguarding Lead / Head of Service** |
| **Date escalation raised:** |  |
| **Name of DSL/Head of Service:** |  |
| **Date response received:** |  |
| **Stage Three – Assistant Director / Headteacher/ equivalent** |
| **Summary of concern(s) remaining from Stage 2:** |  |
| **Requested action:** |  |
| **Name of Assistant Director/ Headteacher/ equivalent:** |  |
| **Response:** |  |
| **Resolution of alert:** |  |
| **Date of response:** |  |
| **Form sent to MSCP****mscp@medway.gov.uk** |  |
| **Date sent:** |  |
| If not resolved complete this form with all responses and resolutions received and detail the remaining concerns before sending the form to mscp@medway.gov.uk  |
| **Stage four -MSCP** |
| **Summary of concern(s) remaining from Stage 3:** |  |

**APPENDIX TWO – ESCALATION POLICY FLOWCHART**

Professional disagrees with a decision or response from any agency regarding a safeguarding or welfare concern. Discussions between professionals have not resolved the issue.

**STAGE FOUR – MEDWAY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP**

**STAGE THREE – ESCALATE TO ASSISTANT/ DEPUTY DIRECTORS**

**STAGE TWO – ESCALATE TO DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD/ HEAD OF SERVICE**

Issue Resolved

Issue Resolved

Issue Resolved

Issue Resolved

If agreement cannot be reached the MSCP Escalation form should be updated and sent to Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership (mscp@medway.gov.uk)

Professional discusses with Line Manager who supports contact to raise the issue with their equivalent in other agency.

If issue is not resolved escalate to Service Manager (or equivalent) who will discuss with equivalent Service Manager in other agency to seek resolution – within 5 working days.

**STAGE ONE – ESCALATE TO SERVICE MANAGER**

If issue is not resolved escalate to more senior manager e.g. Head of Service / Designated Safeguarding Leads who will discuss with equivalent in other agency to seek resolution – within 5 working days copy sent to mscp@medway.gov.uk

If issue is not resolved escalate using Escalation form to Assistant/ Deputy Director/ Head teacher/ Governor who will discuss with equivalent in other agency to seek resolution – within 5 working days copy sent to mscp@medway.gov.uk

Escalation considered by the MSCP Executive and outcome reviewed by the MSCP Independent Scrutineer

**APPENDIX THREE**

Report template: Partnership Practice Alert for the MSCP Learning Lessons Subgroup

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| --- |
| **Name of informer and title:****(Should usually be the safeguarding lead)** |
| **Service:** | **Contact details:** |
| **Date of Partnership Practice Alert:**  |
| **Summary of what happened. Please include specific dates and examples.** |
|  |
| **What measure have already been taken to try and address or resolve the issue?** |
|  |
| **Summary of contributory causes/barriers/challenges** |
|  |
| **Identified areas of good practice** |
|  |
| **Action taken or recommended to prevent a recurrence**  |
|  |