



# **Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership**

**Procedure for Multi-Agency  
Professional Challenge and Resolution**

## **Introduction**

When working with practitioners from other agencies, at times there will be differences of opinion or concerns about professional practice in relation to a child, young person, adult or family. Throughout our work the safety and wellbeing of the child, young person or adult is always the primary concern, and professional disagreements must not obstruct this.

If you feel that a practitioner, or an agency, is not acting in the best interests of the child, young person, adult or family, you have a responsibility to respectfully challenge the practitioner, or agency, and escalate that concern if resolution is not achieved.

All agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are supported, and know how to appropriately challenge, escalate and resolve intra-agency concerns and challenges about a child, young person or adults wellbeing and the response to their safeguarding needs.

This procedure is not designed to replace the statutory complaints processes established within partner agencies.

## **Principles to Support Resolution**

It is important that practitioners feel empowered and supported within their agencies to challenge aspects of practice that they do not feel are in the best interests of the child, young person or adult. When trying to resolve a difference of professional opinion or concern about practice, practitioners should work within the following principles:

- The safety and wellbeing of the child, young person or adult is paramount, and should they be considered at significant risk then the relevant Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub should be contacted.
- The child, young person, adult and their family should be at the centre of all professional discussions.
- Ensure that the right conversations are had, with the right people, at the right time, taking place face to face where possible.
- Challenges must be resolved in a timely manner.
- Concerns, actions, responses and outcomes must be recorded.

## **Context**

Difference of opinion, or concerns about practice between practitioners and agencies can arise at any stage in the safeguarding process, and between any of the agencies involved. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure partner agencies have a quick and straightforward means of resolving any concerns, in order to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults.

Effective working together depends on resolving different professional perspectives to the satisfaction of workers and agencies, and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard children, young people and adults. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional cooperation and joint working to safeguard those in

need. Professional challenge can be positive, it demonstrates that professionals are willing to consider different perspectives and escalate matters that they do not feel will result in positive outcomes for the child, young person or adult. It becomes dysfunctional only if not resolved in a constructive and timely way.

Each agency should have a recording system that can demonstrate the use of the professional challenge and resolution procedure from stage 1 to stage 3. Alongside an entry in the persons record, agencies should be able to report to Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership (DSPP) the outcomes of resolutions at stages 2 and 3. DSPP will maintain a record of all resolutions and outcomes at stage 4 but may request information from partners about the outcomes of any professional challenges at stages 2 and 3 as part of the Quality Assurance Framework.

### **Stage 1: Professionals resolving disagreements (Day 1)**

Most disagreements can be resolved between professionals by having a conversation about the reasons for the difference of opinion and without having to escalate the matter further. If resolution is reached at stage 1 then DSPP does not need to be informed. The matter should be recorded within each agency on the persons record. When concerns arise, the worker must raise the issue with the other agency within **one working day**. If the matter remains unresolved, it is the individual's responsibility to notify their line manager/ designated/ named safeguarding lead who will move to stage 2.

### **Stage 2: Line Manager/ Safeguarding Leads (No later than day 3)**

The respective parties must identify explicitly what the problem is and have absolute clarity about the nature of the professional challenge and what the practitioners aim to achieve. This challenge and the outcome should be recorded, and this information should be available to DSPP if requested. The resolution should also be fed back to the practitioner who raised the concern. This stage should be concluded no later than **day 9**.

Should you need details on who the safeguarding lead is within another agency, please contact the DSPP Business Unit via email: [DSPPB@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:DSPPB@dudley.gov.uk).

It is recognised that within the Third Sector, the designated/named safeguarding professional may be the same worker as the professional identifying the concern in stage 1. The procedure should nevertheless be adhered to.

### **Stage 3: Dudley Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB) / Dudley Safeguarding Children Partnership Group (DSCPG) representative (no later than day 9)**

If safeguarding leads/line managers are unable to resolve the concerns, they must be escalated by a senior manager (or in the case of schools, the Chair of Governors alongside the Head Teacher) to the relevant representative of DSAB / DSCPG as appropriate. They will then seek resolution with their equivalent and the challenge and the outcome should be recorded. The resolution should also be fed back to the practitioner who raised the concern. This stage should be concluded no later than **day 14**.

Should you need details on who is represented at DSAB or DSCPG, please contact the DSPP Business Unit via email: [DSPPB@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:DSPPB@dudley.gov.uk).

### **Stage 4: DSPP Executive (No later than day 16)**

In cases where the DSAB or DSCPG representatives are unable to resolve the concern, it should be escalated to the appropriate DSPP Executive representative. Written representation will be requested, and a meeting may be called. A recommendation will be made based on the most appropriate action and resolution for the dispute. The Professional Challenge and Resolution Template should be used for submitting the appropriate information to the DSPP Business Manager. This stage should be concluded no later than **day 21**.

### **Stage 1: Day 1**

When concerns arise, initial attempts should be made between workers to resolve the issue. This is stage 1. If a resolution can't be reached, professionals must escalate the issue to their line manager or the named/ designated safeguarding lead in their organisation.

This is when the process moves to stage 2.



### **Stage 2: Days 3 to 9**

The line manager or named/ designated safeguarding lead should discuss the concerns with their opposite manager in the other agency.

If a resolution can't be achieved, the professionals must notify their senior manager and the process will move to stage 3.



### **Stage 3: Days 9 to 14**

The senior manager will escalate the issue to their DSAB / DSCPG representative, who will arrange to seek resolution. They may request a meeting with the involved parties.

If an agreement can't be achieved the issue should be brought to the DSPP Business Manager and the process will move to stage 4.



### **Stage 4: Days 16 to 21**

DSPP Executive will ask for written representation and may request a meeting with the involved parties.

A recommendation will be made based on the most appropriate action and resolution for the dispute.