



North Wales Safeguarding Board

North Wales Protocol for the Resolution of Professional Disputes

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	Description of Reason for Change	Author	Authorisation	Date Issued

1.0. Introduction

1.1. Occasionally situations arise when practitioners/ workers in one agency feel that the decision made by a worker from another agency on a child protection/ adult at risk or child/ adult in need of a care and support plan is not a safe decision. Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- Levels of need
- Roles and responsibilities
- The need for action
- Communication

NB - This policy does not apply to Child Protection Conference appeals or if the disagreement is between you and your manager then you should consider using your agency's whistle-blowing process.

1.2. The safety of individual children/ adults is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement and any unresolved issues should be addressed with due consideration to the risks that might exist for the child/ adult.

1.3. All workers should feel able to challenge decision making and to see this as their right and responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice. This policy provides workers with the means to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

- Avoiding professional disputes that put children/ adults at risk or obscure the focus on the child/adult
- Resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly and
- Identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures.

1.4. Working together effectively depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional cooperation and joint working to safeguard children/ adults.

2.0. Stages of the policy

2.1. Professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within a timescale that protects the child/ adult at risk from harm.

2.2. Stage one – involving the worker from other agency/ service (five working days)

The professional with concerns should raise the matter directly with the relevant practitioner. They should give clear evidence based reasons for their disagreement. This discussion must take place as soon as possible and could be a telephone conversation or a face to face meeting. There may be instances where disparity in perceived status or experience may inhibit the ability of some workers to resolve the disagreement without support.

2.3. Stage Two – escalate line manager to line manager (5 working days after stage 1)

2.4. If the problem is not resolved at stage one, the worker should contact their supervisor/ manager within their own agency/ service who should then hold a discussion with the equivalent supervisor/ manager in the other agency/ service.

2.5. Stage three – escalate to named/ designated safeguarding leads or senior operational manager (five working days after stage 2)

2.6 If the problem is not resolved at stage two, the supervisor/ manager reports to their respective operations manager or named/ designed safeguarding representative. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

2.7. Stage four – resolution by North Wales Safeguarding Board Chaired meeting (five working days after stage 3)

2.8. Operational issues must be resolved by the agencies directly involved in the case. When a resolution has not been achieved at stage three, the Chair of the NWSB (Children's/ Adults) should be approached to identify a Board member from an uninvolved agency to chair a meeting of the most senior managers with operational responsibility for the case. This meeting will review the issues at hand and provide a final opportunity for the involved agencies to ensure that there is a full understanding of the issues before a decision is reached and finalised.

3.0 Additional notes

3.1. At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued. It may be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

Resolution of Professional Disputes – Stages

In the first instance, professionals should attempt to resolve their differences through discussion within a timescale that protects the child/ adult at risk from harm.

Stage 1

The professional with concerns should raise the matter directly with the relevant practitioner; they should have clear evidence based reasons for their disagreement. The discussion must take place asap via telephone conversation or face to face meeting.

Stage 2

If the problem is not resolved at Stage 1, the worker should contact their supervisor/ manager who should then hold a discussion with the equivalent supervisor/ manager within the other agency/ service.

Stage 3

If the problem is not resolved at Stage 2, the supervisor/ manager reports to their respective operations manager or named/ designed safeguarding representative. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

Stage 4

When a resolution has not been achieved at Stage 3, the Chair of the NWSB (Children's/ Adults) will identify a Board Member from an independent agency to chair a meeting of the most senior managers with operational responsibility for the case.

This meeting will reach and finalise a decision.

At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel. This must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.