



Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board

Protocol for Resolving Professional Differences

**February 2014
Version 7**

Name of responsible (ratifying) committee: Professional Practice Committee
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB) and the agencies it represents are committed to the continuous improvement of joint working arrangements to safeguard children and promote their welfare.
- 1.2. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a responsibility shared by all agencies. Whilst Children's Service's is allocated the 'lead' role in co-ordinating responses to the significant harm of children, effective intervention is dependent upon inter-agency planning and service provision. Sharing and evaluating information on an inter-agency basis is essential to gain an accurate picture of concerns about children and their families. Colleagues within agencies are available for consultation to assist staff in this context. All professionals must be clear of the nature of their concerns, including the available evidence to support their view, prior to sharing information with other agencies.
- 1.3. Professionals making referrals to Children's Services need to be aware that this will involve them in negotiation concerning the appropriate response to concerns and which agency is best placed to achieve positive outcomes for the child. Local and national evidence shows that effective intervention occurs where agencies co-ordinate their response. Professionals should anticipate their involvement in a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding the welfare of children.
- 1.4. It is inevitable that at times there will be professional differences and whilst this is accepted, it is essential that such differences do not adversely affect the outcomes for children and young people. Professional differences should be resolved in a constructive and timely manner. Professionals do not always agree over what action is required to best safeguard children. In the majority of cases these issues are resolved by discussion and negotiation between the professionals concerned. It does not apply to intra-agency professional disagreements. It is the responsibility of all agencies to ensure that they have robust arrangements to resolve their own internal disagreements. This protocol provides a process for resolving such professional differences. The protocol should not be used when there is a complaint about a specific professional. In such situations the relevant organisation's complaints procedure will apply. Any complaint should be made in writing to the professional's line manager and copied to the person with lead responsibility for child protection in their organisation.
- 1.5. This protocol is not for use by children, young people or families. They should use the child protection complaints procedure and/or the complaints procedure of individual organisations as appropriate.
- 1.6. Differences could arise in a number of areas of multi-agency working as well as within single agency working. Differences are most likely to arise in relation to;
 - Criteria for referrals
 - Outcomes of assessments
 - Roles and responsibilities of workers
 - Service provision

- Timeliness of interventions
- Information sharing and communication

1.7. At no time must professional differences detract from ensuring that the child is safeguarded. The child's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout and professional differences should not impede the progress of case working. This protocol is applicable to all PSCB agencies, including the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

2. Principles of resolving professional differences and professional responsibility

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

2.2. Professional differences and disagreements should not be viewed negatively as improvements to outcomes for children and young people can be found through learning

2.3. All professionals should take responsibility for their own cases, and their actions in relation to case work

2.4. Differences and disagreements should be resolved as simply and quickly as possible and at the individual practitioner/line manager level to begin with where this is possible

2.5. All practitioners should respect the views of others whatever the level of experience

2.6. All practitioners should have awareness of difficulties that challenging more senior or experienced practitioners may present to others.

2.7. Working together effectively depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies

2.8. Professional differences are reduced by clarity about roles and responsibilities and the ability to discuss and share problems in networking forums

3. Process for resolving professional differences

3.1. There are many aspects to safeguarding children and young people and many processes where professionals working together may find themselves having differing views on the best course of action for the child. This Resolving Professionals Differences protocol has been produced to enable a generic resolution process which can be used at any decision making stage in the child's journey when accessing services.

3.2. The most common areas where differences may occur are in relation to:

- Decisions about the need for Child Protection Conferences
- Decisions made at Child Protection Conferences
- Regarding the implementation of the Child Protection Plan
- Decisions made about undertaking the Common Assessment Framework

3.3. If a practitioner remains concerned about a practice issue, despite attempts at their level to resolve the matter, they should liaise with their manager. A meeting should be arranged as soon as possible so a formal note of the concern can be recorded. They should then consider a strategy to attempt to resolve the matter. This should include informing the other agency representatives that they feel that if the matter cannot be resolved they will be referring it to the Safeguarding Lead.

3.4. The following stages are likely to be involved:

- Recognition that there is a disagreement over a significant issue in relation to the safety and wellbeing of a child/young person
- Identification of the problem
- Possible cause of the problem
- What needs to be achieved in order for it to be resolved

3.5. The flow chart outlines the complete process. It should be remembered that differences can be resolved at any stage in the resolution process

3.6. The Resolving Professional Differences Record should be completed in all cases and contain full details of all discussions and actions undertaken and the outcome of the process once differences have been resolved

3.7. For the vast majority of cases that have reached this stage, the matter should have been resolved. However, if a resolution cannot be sought then the referral, the actions and the outcomes template will need to be forwarded by the referring Safeguarding Children Lead to their agency lead for safeguarding children. The same principles as above will apply to the agency's senior lead seeking a resolution with their counterpart. If this is still not achievable the disagreement should progress through to the final stage of resolution with a referral made to the Chair of the PSCB. It is anticipated that this would be the very last resort.

4. Recording the professional difference and resolution

4.1. All stages of the process should be well documented. The record in Appendix 2 should be used to accompany any professional difference and returned to the PSCB following resolution

5. Following Resolution

5.1. When the professional difference is satisfactorily resolved any learning should be identified and referred to the Chair of the Portsmouth Professional Practice Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board
psc@portsmouthcc.gov.uk / 023 9268 8646

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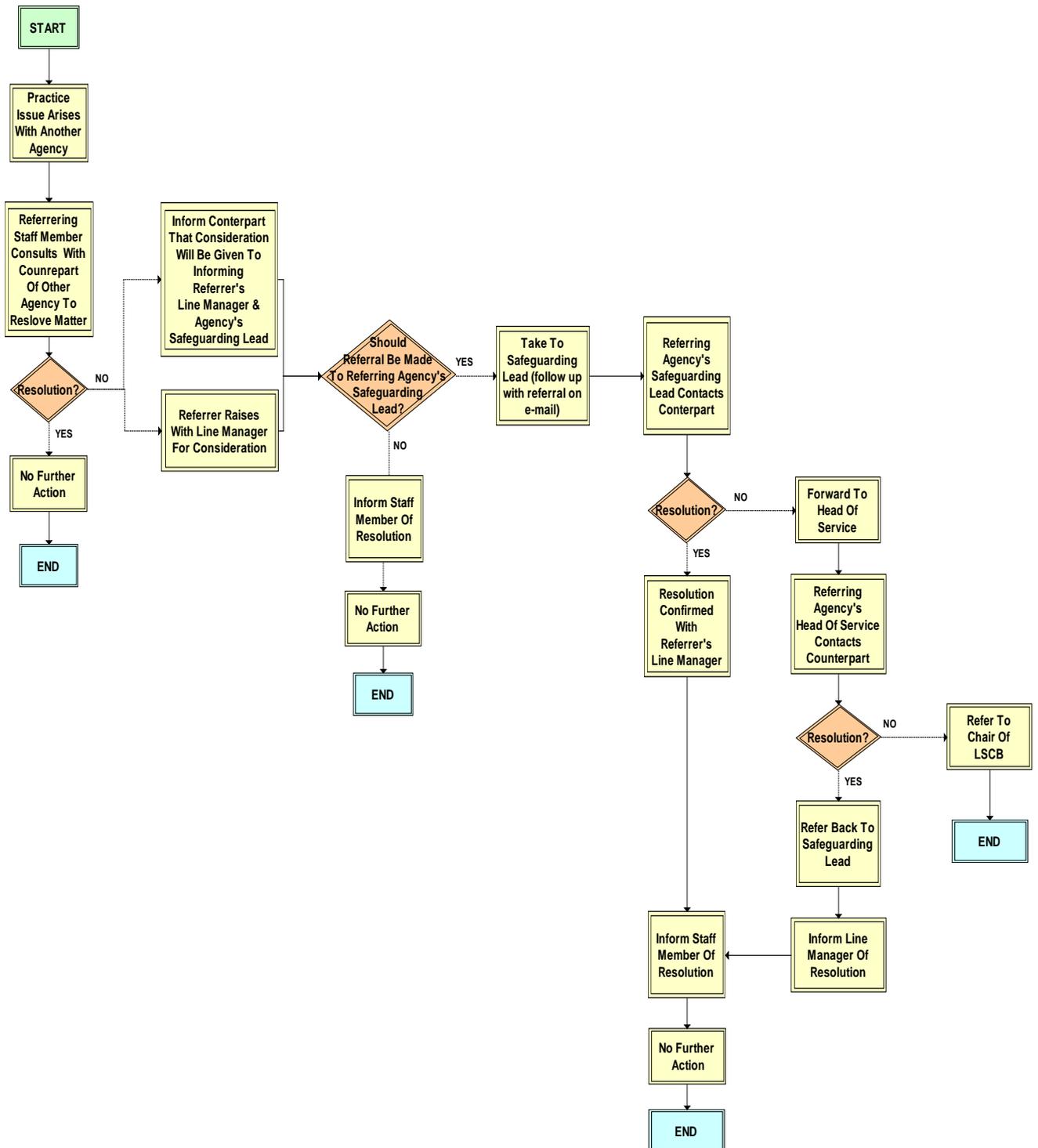
Committee. Please send the completed Appendix 2 stating the learning and actions to the PSCB: pscb@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

5.2. The Professional Practice Committee will then determine whether any amendments are required. Frequent reports on the amount and nature of professional differences will be monitored through the Professional Practice Committee on a six monthly basis and report to the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board as required.

5.3. This protocol provides information on how the process of resolving professional differences should be managed. It is helpful to promote good working relationships by resolving differences at the earliest opportunity on the same day if possible. If the process is followed in full to resolve the difference then this should also be seen positively as a way to promote shared understanding of issues and inform future practice. At any stage a reflective practice meeting can be convened.

Appendix 1

Resolving professional differences flow chart



Appendix 2

Resolving Professional Differences Record

Name of person raising professional difference			
Role of person raising professional difference			
Agency of person raising professional difference			
Child/young person's name			
Child/young person's date of birth			
Child/young person's address			
Child/young person's early year's placement/school?			
Name of lead professional?			
What was this issue about? I.e. a child protection referral / undertaking a CAF, an issue with an open case. Please specify			
Names of people these issues were reported to			
Issues			
Resolved/not resolved	Yes	No	Partial
If no or partial, to whom has this been escalated to. Please specify			
What actions have been taken as a result? Please provide timescales			

Is there any learning from this dispute? Please specify

Additional Comments

Signature:

Date: