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Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) Practitioner Escalation Policy

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Introduction

What is escalation?

Escalation is the formal process of challenging decisions made by other professionals, groups or organisations. Escalation procedures ensure that all professionals have a quick and straightforward means of resolving differences of professional opinion to safeguard the welfare of children and young people.

All practitioners working with children and young people have a responsibility to ensure that the child's welfare is seen as a priority at all levels.

When safeguarding children and young people it is inevitable that, at times, professionals will hold differing views. These differences of opinion can be positive as respectful curiosity, and challenge allows for review and can foster creative ways of working. Challenge should be restorative, and relationship based, using respectful language. Even when challenged in this way, these differences can impact negatively on positive working relationships and consequently on the ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning has highlighted the need for practitioners to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for children. Therefore, it is crucial that any differences are addressed and resolved promptly ensuring they **do not** affect outcomes for children and young people or detract from ensuring that the child or young person is safeguarded.

The Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) Escalation Policy recognises this and provides a tool to support individuals to exercise their responsibility when concerned about the actions, or inaction of others.

This policy sets out the steps to be taken to address differences of professional opinion when the issue relates to the safeguarding needs of a child or young person. It should not be confused with the process to be followed for making a referral to Children's Social Care when there is a child protection concern. A single agency may choose to escalate a professional disagreement with another agency or, if appropriate, more than one agency may choose to jointly escalate an issue.

The policy should be used in any situation where there are concerns about practice, safeguarding decision making or resource allocation, and applies whether the practitioners work in a paid or voluntary capacity. This policy offers guidance to assist practitioners in ensuring they have a clear understanding of the escalation process and confidence in when and how it should be applied.

This policy includes a link to a downloadable escalation monitoring form to ensure that the concerns are being appropriately actioned, monitored and relevant learning is identified.

Practitioners should complete this form for **children up to the age of 18**. The Warwickshire Safeguarding Adult's Board Escalation Policy is to be used for persons aged 18 and over and can be found [here](#).

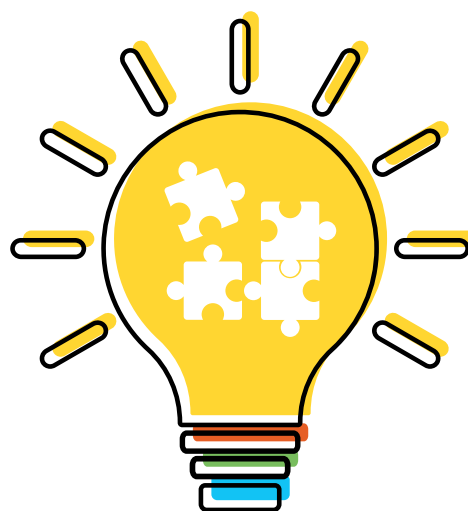
Examples of potential areas for escalation

When there are concerns raised:

- Around a decision for referral from one agency to another; whether the referral should be made or accepted
- About a Child and Family plan or its implementation
- About an intervention to bring about the necessary changes
- About the outcome of an assessment
- Over the sharing of information and communication in a particular case
- About the position taken by management linked to a specific safeguarding case which remains unresolved

It is important that practitioners and managers understand what action they need to take to address differences of professional opinion and the systems within their organisation to support this. If a practitioner is concerned about a safeguarding decision made by their managers, they should escalate the issue to the manager of their Line Manager, Safeguarding Lead, or to an alternative team or manager within their service.

It is very important that practitioners value and respect each other's perspectives. Inevitably, there will be times that practitioners have different opinions or disagree with each other. Timely discussions between practitioners can often resolve these misunderstandings and differences of opinion, enabling practitioners to reach a shared understanding and agree a resolution and forward plan, without the need for formal escalation. Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible, remembering that the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration.



Process for escalation and resolution

WSCP Stage	Action	Process	Duration	Maximum Length
One	Practitioner to Practitioner discussion raised with a responsible practitioner	When a practitioner identifies a concern or difference of opinion, they should resolve it through discussion or a meeting within one to three days, based on the risk to the child. It's important to ensure all parties understand the agreed actions, which should be recorded in the child's file with clear timescales. Practitioners must follow their agency's procedures for logging concerns as well as completing the WSCP Escalation Monitoring Form. Additionally, they should check back to confirm that the agreed actions have been fully implemented within the specified timeframe. If practitioners are unable to resolve differences within a suitable timescale, they should escalate that difference in professional opinion by moving to stage two.	1-3 days	3 days
Two	Escalate to Safeguarding lead or Line Manager – informal discussion	If practitioners cannot resolve the issue, the escalating practitioner should raise the matter with their line manager or safeguarding lead Respective managers liaise within one to three days (reflecting the level of risk to the child) to review available information and resolve if possible. The escalating line manager should be clear that they wish to raise their concerns under the escalation process. The Escalation Monitoring Form must be completed by the escalating line manager and stored on the child's file	1-3 days	6 days

	<i>(Management lead to be identified by each agency based on individual organisation structures)</i>	It's important to ensure all parties understand the agreed actions, which should be recorded in the child's file with clear timescales. All actions should be clearly recorded and immediately fed back to operational staff. They should be confirmed in writing between agencies and include a review date.		
Three	Escalate to Service Senior Manager –formal escalation <i>(Senior Management lead to be identified by each agency based on individual organisation structures)</i>	If concerns remain unresolved, a discussion between senior managers should take place, and if necessary, a joint meeting arranged with the involved practitioners and relevant line managers. Advice and support should be sought from the Designated Safeguarding Leads within the agencies (unless the escalating practitioner or manager is the Designated Safeguarding Lead for their setting, for example a school or early years setting). The escalating senior manager should be clear that they wish to raise their concerns under the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership escalation process. The Escalation Monitoring Form must be updated by the escalating Senior Manager and stored on the child's file. The outcome of the discussion and agreed actions should be recorded in writing, with consideration given to where the meeting record will be held. Managers should immediately feedback the agreed actions to operational staff and ensure these actions are accurately recorded in the child's file. Senior managers should review policies or procedures and address any compliance or professional competence issues as needed.	2 days	8 days

		Managers have a responsibility to ensure the agreed actions have been completed within the agreed timescale. If a resolution cannot be reached, the difference in professional opinion should be escalated to stage four.		
Four	Escalate to WSCP	In the unlikely event that the issue is not resolved by following stages one to three or these discussions have raised significant policy issues, the matter should be referred by the relevant professional to Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in a timely way. This should include the completed Escalation Monitoring Form which states clearly and concisely what has been done so far to resolve the issue. If necessary, a meeting should be convened to seek a resolution. The outcome of the discussion and agreed actions should be recorded in writing, with consideration given to where the meeting record will be held. Managers should immediately feedback the agreed actions to operational staff and ensure these actions are accurately recorded in the child's file. Senior managers should review policies or procedures and address any compliance or professional competence issues as needed. Managers have a responsibility to ensure the agreed actions have been completed within the agreed timescale.	2 days	10 days

The role of the independent scrutineer, within the Partnership, will 'provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.' (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023).

More general cumulative concerns about how another agency operates should be raised with your Designated Safeguarding Lead for a decision to be made as to how this should be dealt with (as it may sit outside this policy and procedure).

Monitoring process

By completing the [Escalation Monitoring Form](#) at each stage, professionals can ensure that concerns are being properly addressed. Agencies will be required to submit an annual return to the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership based on their completed Escalation Monitoring Forms, detailing the number of escalations they have made, the number they have received and any themes and issues.

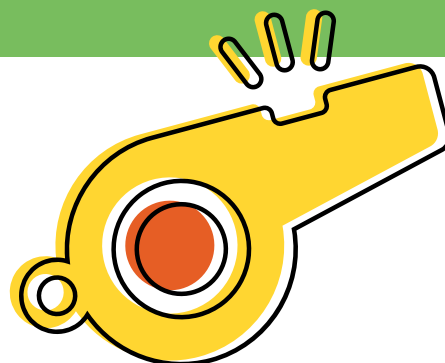
Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Partnership will review agency annual returns to determine whether there are any key trends identified and whether any learning or policy amendments are required. This will be managed through the joint Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Reviews subgroup.

Concerns about the practice of colleagues

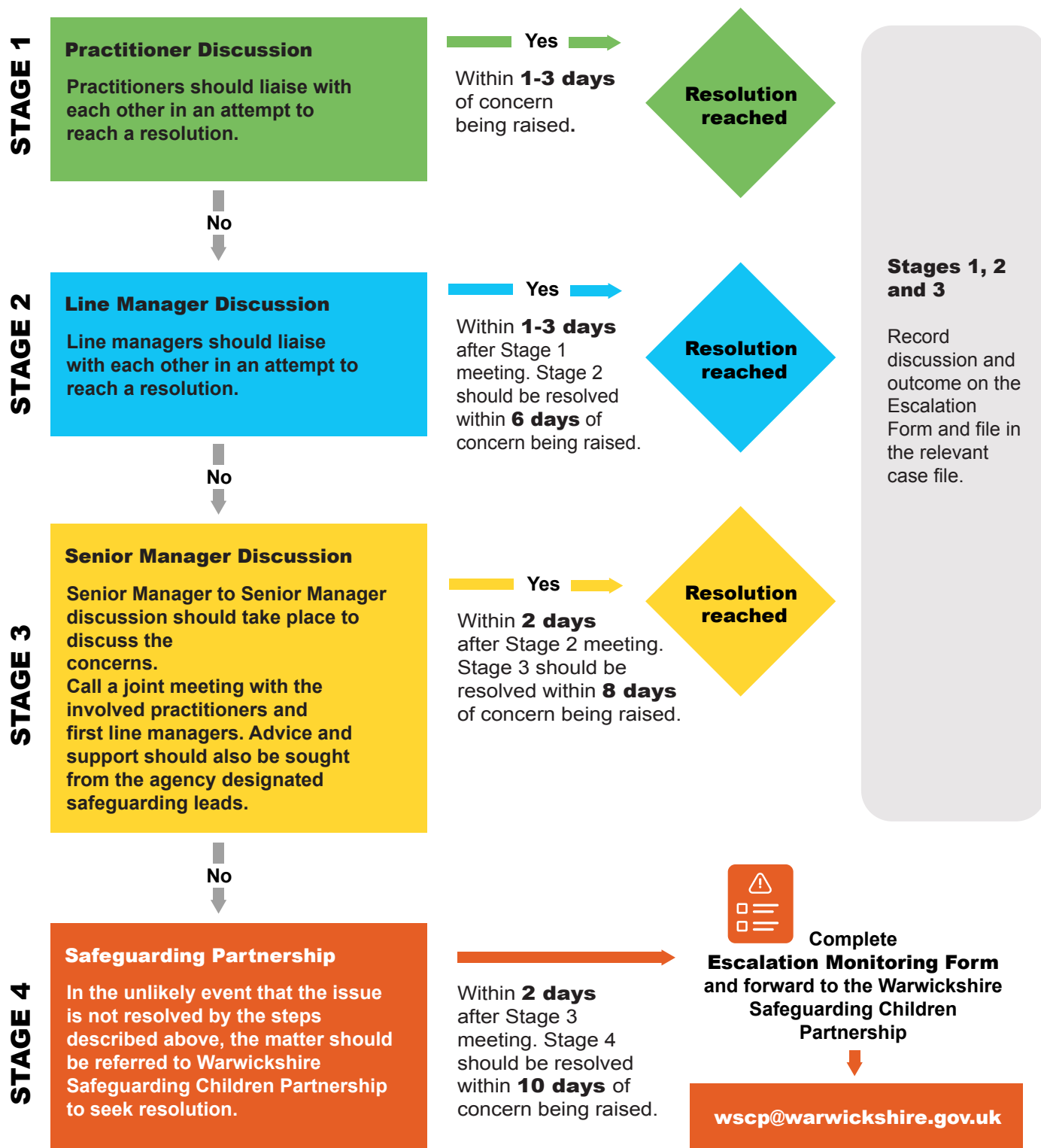
Each agency should have its own clear and accessible policy in respect of 'whistleblowing' which should be consulted when there are serious concerns about the practice of a colleague which have not yet been resolved by discussion with the relevant managers. If you have exhausted your organisation's whistleblowing process you should escalate outside the organisation.

See here for details: <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>.

Whilst it can be very difficult to raise issues about the professional practice of a colleague this should not be ignored if doing so might leave a child at risk of abuse or neglect.



WSCP Escalation Process Flowchart



Appendix 1

This form must be used to record and monitor the escalation.
You can access the form [here](#)

Warwickshire Safeguarding Escalation Monitoring Form

Stage one escalation – Practitioner to practitioner (to be completed within one to three days)
*To be completed by the practitioner who is **escalating** a concern.*

Summary of concerns: Clearly describe the decision, action, or inaction that led to the escalation. Focus on how the concern relates to the safety or welfare of the child. <i>To be completed before the form is sent to the relevant agency.</i>			Date form submitted to relevant agency:
Concerns:			
Requested action: Clearly state what outcome or action you are seeking to happen.			
Actions taken to resolve the difference: Include who you spoke to, date of the discussion, summary of the discussion and any agreed actions or outcomes. <i>To be completed after practitioner-to-practitioner discussion by the practitioner raising the concern.</i>	Date of discussion:	Method of escalation (email, phone or face-to-face):	Is the escalating practitioner satisfied with the outcome? If not, progress to stage two . ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, explain why:

Stage one resolution – Practitioner to practitioner (to be completed within one to three days)
*To be completed by the practitioner who is **responding** to the stage one escalation.*

Resolution of issues: How was the issue resolved? Is the child safe? Are all parties satisfied and in agreement with the outcome?	
Name:	Date:
Next steps: Outline any follow up actions from the escalation process. Please ensure a copy is saved on the child's records and include: - Agreed actions, who will complete them and by when	
Name:	Date:
If the matter is resolved , file this completed form on the relevant case file. If the matter remains unresolved , progress to stage two and complete the form below.	