

Escalation Policy for Adult Safeguarding: Resolution of Professional Disagreements

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Accountability and partnership working are two of the key principles of adult safeguarding which underpin the Care Act 2014. However, when practitioners are working together in the complex area of safeguarding adults, there will inevitably be occasions where professional difference of opinion arise.
- 1.2 Learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) highlights that agencies do not always escalate concerns appropriately or seek to resolve professional differences of opinion in a timely and proportionate way. Constructive and respectful challenge is an important component of positive partnership working, and all practitioners should see this as their responsibility in promoting person-centred practice, as well as to support effective multi-agency working.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the steps that should be taken to address professional differences of opinion when the issue relates to the safeguarding of an adult with care and support needs. It should not be confused with the process to be followed when raising a safeguarding adults concern for consideration of whether to undertake a safeguarding enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014.
- 1.4 Matters relating to the following fall outside the scope of this policy and where relevant individual agency's formal complaints procedures should be followed:
 - Matters relating to social care assessment, eligibility for care and support and funding arrangements.
 - Individual practitioner performance and 'whistleblowing'.
 - Complaints about the involvement / conduct of an organisation.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Timely resolution at the earliest opportunity, and throughout every subsequent stage, with no delay.
- In line with Making Safeguarding Personal, to ensure that the adult is at the centre of the process, their voice is heard and wherever possible their views and wishes will inform the actions taken.
- Any immediate risks should be addressed regardless of any ongoing disputes.
- It is every professional's responsibility to problem-solve.

2. Professional disagreements within safeguarding adults

- 2.1 Professional disagreements can arise in a number of areas, but often are in relation to:
- Adult safeguarding concerns or enquiries where there are different opinions regarding decisions, for example as to whether the criteria to undertake an enquiry are met.
 - Misunderstanding about roles and responsibilities within and across agencies in relation to safeguarding interventions.
 - Ineffective communication or disagreement about the sharing of information within a safeguarding intervention.
 - Professionals disagreeing as to whether an adult has the mental capacity to make a specific decision at that time in relation to the safeguarding intervention.
- 2.2 This is not an exhaustive list and practitioners should always seek advice from their line manager or safeguarding lead / Head of Safeguarding once the difference of opinion is identified.
- 2.3 It is important that practitioners and managers understand what action they need to take in order to address professional differences of opinion, and the systems that their organisation has in place to support this action. A flowchart is located on the next page outlining the process to follow to escalate and resolve professional disagreements.
- 2.4 Practitioners must act in a timely way to ensure an adult's welfare is the main consideration throughout any professional disagreement. The emphasis is always on resolving any dispute at the earliest stage and we must never leave an adult at risk of immediate harm whilst the concerns are being escalated.
- 2.5 Practitioners who perceive there to be an inequality in their status or experience which may impact on how they engage in the process should be supported by their line manager or another manager within the organisation to ensure their commitment and participation.
- 2.6 For any matters identified within a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) as set out under Section 44 of the Care Act 2014 that require a national response, the National Network for Chairs of Safeguarding Adults Boards have produced a [National Escalation Policy for Issues from SARs](#).

3. Flowchart: escalation process for resolving professional disagreements within safeguarding adults

