



Escalation Policy

1. Scope

All professionals working with adults must be able to challenge each other appropriately. When they believe that others are not working well together and, as a result, the Adult remains at risk, or what is thought to be an unacceptable level of risk, then escalation should take place.

This procedure provides for the resolution of professional disagreements or issues in work relating to the safety of adults at risk of abuse. It is applicable to all agencies who have a role in the safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse, and supports Somerset's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policy.

Effective working together depends on resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies, and a belief in genuine partnership.

It is every professional's responsibility to 'problem-solve'. The aim must be to resolve a professional disagreement at the earliest possible stage as swiftly as possible, always keeping in mind that the adult at risk's safety and wellbeing is the paramount consideration.

This procedure has been endorsed by the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) and will continue to be monitored and reviewed by the SSAB as required.

The SSAB is clear that there must be respectful challenge whenever a professional or agency has a concern about the action or inaction of another. Similarly agencies/professionals should not be defensive if challenged. Practitioners and managers should always be prepared to review decisions and plans with an open mind and act proportionately.

It is expected that this escalation and resolution process should be used first and foremost. However, if at any stage it is felt necessary to make a formal complaint, each agency should follow the recognised complaints procedure and adhere to the timescales specified.

- Problem resolution is an integral part of professional cooperation and joint working to safeguard adults
- Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion
- At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring the adult is safeguarded. The adult's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout
- Disagreements could arise in a number of areas but are most likely to arise as a result of differing views of thresholds, lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities, the need for action possibly as a result of drift and issues of communication, including feedback, or where it is decided there is no further involvement required from Adult Social Care

- The aim should be to resolve difficulties at practitioner/fieldwork level between agencies if necessary with the involvement of their supervisors/managers, engaging in open discussion with colleagues in other agencies.
- Attempts at resolution must be within a time frame which clearly protects the adult/s involved.
- All involved need to be professionally satisfied that the disagreements have been resolved and that each party has the relevant information to make that decision, with all parties given the opportunity to express their views and present any relevant evidence
- There may be particular concerns when a case is about to be closed to Adult Social Care that may lead to a disagreement about the case being closed. The decision to close the case is ultimately the decision of the Team Manager for the relevant Social Care team coordinating the investigation; however, the decision to close will be discussed at the Adult Safeguarding Case Conference. Most cases will not be closed directly and will involve 'de-escalation' from Adult Safeguarding case management review. This allows further work to be undertaken by other agencies who may be involved with the adult at risk.

2. Process

- It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to escalate this unsupported. In these circumstances a third party should be consulted.
- If unresolved, the problem should be referred 'up the line' to the worker's own line manager, who will discuss with their opposite number in the other agency (see flowchart)
- In the case of Care Providers, unresolved disputes should be raised with the relevant team manager coordinating the safeguarding process
- Failure to resolve disagreements between managers should be further escalated by the manager's concerned. Senior Managers will, if and as necessary, be required to intervene
- Additionally, advice can be sought directly from the Safeguarding leads in each agency
- A clear record should be kept at all stages by all parties. 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. This record should be noted on the case management system within each individual agency in accordance with their internal processes.
- Where professional disagreements remain unresolved, the matter must be referred to the SSAB representative for each agency involved.
- In the unlikely event that the issue is not resolved by the steps described above and/or the discussions raise significant policy issues, it should be referred to the SSAB (ssab@somerset.gov.uk) who will determine a course of action and ensure reporting to the SSAB Independent Chair.

**APPENDIX 1
ESCALATION & RESOLUTION PROCEDURE FOR RAISING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS**

