



## **Barnet Safeguarding Children Board**

### **MULTI-AGENCY ESCALATION POLICY**

**What to do if you are unhappy with a safeguarding decision or any action or inaction of an agency.**

**Our Vision is “to ensure that every child and young person in Barnet is safe and has the opportunity to reach their potential.”**

## 1. Introduction

This policy has been reviewed to ensure it fits with the complaints/escalation policies of partner organisations. The changes are shown in this colour on page 3.

It is every professional's responsibility in every agency to safeguard children and act in their best interests at all times. Effective working together requires and is fully dependant on an open, transparent approach between all agencies, including the ability to challenge each other's **actions**, **inactions** or **decisions** where there are concerns that a child's safety may be at risk.

This escalation policy provides the mechanism for resolving disagreements at the earliest possible stage, both speedily and constructively and ensuring that at all times the child's safety and welfare is paramount. At no time, should professional disagreement detract from ensuring a child is safeguarded. Any unresolved issues between professionals must be escalated on the same working day having regard to the risks pertaining to the child.

If a child is believed to be at risk of immediate harm, the designated safeguarding lead in your agency must be informed immediately. The designated safeguarding lead will inform the Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance in Barnet.

Examples of disagreements which, occasionally arise are listed below, however, this is not an exhaustive list:

- Level of need
- Threshold for investigations and interventions
- Roles and responsibilities of professionals / agencies
- Whether a case conference should be initiated
- Communication between agencies
- Progression of plans

This document must be read in conjunction with the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) **Threshold Document**, which provides partner agencies with clear criteria for taking action and providing the right help at the right time to children, young people and their families in order to effectively meet their needs.

## 2. Resolution Process

The aim of this process is to resolve disagreements between agencies at the earliest possible stage, both speedily and constructively and ensuring that at all times the child's safety and welfare is paramount.

### Key Principles

- Respective professionals must be clear about what the problem is and the outcome they are seeking to achieve.
- A clear contemporaneous record of discussions and actions must be kept at all stages, by all parties. In particular, this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreements and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.
- Where the escalation is at stage 1 or 2, there are no immediate safeguarding issues and a partner organisation has an existing complaints/escalation process the Boards Business Manager can refer into this and leave stage 3 open. In these circumstances the business manager will log as an escalation and be informed of the resolution.

### Stage 1 – discussion between the professionals in disagreement

Professionals should endeavour to resolve the issue urgently between them either face to face or by telephone. If the issue remains unresolved, escalate to Stage 2.

### Stage 2 – Escalate up to line manager / supervisor / manager : discussion between respective managers / supervisors in each agency

Any professional who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should consult their line manager or supervisor to (1) articulate and clarify the issue in dispute and (2) clarify the outcome they are seeking to achieve. This process in itself may help to resolve the disagreement. It will also ensure that any differences in status, knowledge or experience between professionals are addressed to ensure they have the confidence to make a challenge.

If the disagreement is not resolved between professionals at Stage 1, the issue should be referred by each professional to their respective line manager / supervisor / manager. The respective managers from each agency will then discuss the concerns between themselves and attempt to achieve an agreement. This will involve escalating up line management from Deputy Team Manager, Team Manager and Head of Service in an attempt to resolve the disagreement.

### Stage 3 – escalate up to BSCB representatives (named / designated safeguarding leads in each agency)

If the issue remains unresolved between managers and / or the discussions raise

significant policy issues the dispute must be referred to the BSCB representative in each agency for resolution.

#### Stage 4 – escalate up to BSCB for a chaired meeting

If the issue still remains unresolved between safeguarding leads in each agency, the issue should be referred to the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board Manager and the Head of Safeguarding in Barnet, who will agree a way forward such as mediation or a meeting chaired by a safeguarding lead from the partnership whose agency is not involved in the dispute.

### 3. Timescales

The safety of a child or young person must not be compromised by using the Escalation Policy. In most cases it is expected that the matter will be resolved by partners escalating the matter with managers or supervisors the **same** working day. If the matter is escalated to the BSCB representative and finally to the BSCB Board Manager this process should still be completed and resolved the same working day.

It is expected that all issues will be resolved within *five working days at the maximum*.

If the matter takes longer than 5 working days to resolve, the reasons for this should be recorded with the agency escalating the matter. The Manager for that agency must ensure that the safety of a child or young person has not been compromised by the delay.

### 4. Key Learning

When the issue is resolved, any learning points should be identified and referred to the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board Manager for consideration by the relevant BSCB subgroup to inform future learning.

It may also be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes in order to promote continuing good working relationships.

The issue in dispute and the learning and outcomes will be recorded in the BSCB Action Log.

