

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ESCALATION POLICY – RESOLVING PROFESSIONAL DISAGREEMENTS

Version 1.2 - Ratified by NSAB Strategic Board	13 th May 2020
Date of next review	July 2021

1. Introduction

In order for practitioners to work together effectively to safeguard adults at risk of harm and abuse, professional challenge should be seen as part of a 'healthy' professional working relationship. Successful partnership working is reliant upon resolving professional disagreements in a timely manner in order to avoid any potential risks to the adult in question.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that resolution of any professional disagreement(s) leads to better outcomes for adults and positive partnership working in Northamptonshire.

In the Care Act 2014, 'accountability' and 'partnership' are two of the six key principles that underpin adult safeguarding. All partners have their roles to play in order to safeguard adults and it is important that agencies are accountable for delivering their part of the safeguarding process.

In Northamptonshire, the Decision Making Framework provides guidance for practitioners when a safeguarding concern is reportable or non-reportable. However, it is recognised that working with adults with care and support needs can be difficult, and involves making important decisions often based on incomplete information and changing circumstances.

In most circumstances, agreement between practitioners can be reached but where there are concerns or disagreements over another professional's decision making, including their action or lack of action as the case may be, timely professional challenge is paramount as any delay could put adults at further risk.

In order to resolve professional disagreements positively, practitioners should remain respectful of each other at all times and this should be evidenced in both direct and written communication, and throughout the escalation resolution process.

Disagreements could arise in a number of areas such as:

- Whether a safeguarding concern is reportable or non-reportable;
- Practitioner's roles and responsibilities;
- Lack of action from an agency; or
- Sooner than expected case closure.

This list is not exhaustive.

This policy provides practitioners with the steps to raise concerns they have about decisions made by other professionals or agencies by:

1. Avoiding professional disputes that put adults at further risk or take away focus from the adult;
2. Resolving the difficulties within and between agencies quickly and openly; or
3. Identifying problem areas in working together where there is a lack of clarity and to promote the resolution via amendment to protocols and procedures

Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the adult at risk is protected. Disagreements should be resolved at the earliest possible stage, however if an adult is thought to be at risk of immediate harm discretion should be used as to which stage is initiated.

2. Stages of Escalation – Pathway



Additional Matters to Consider

At all stages of the process, actions and decisions must be timely, recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement, the timescales for responses / actions and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

Where the disagreement relates to a family member or professional differences in opinion about a best interest decision being made for a person who lacks mental capacity to make that decision themselves, reference should be made to Chapter 15 of the Code of Practice – Mental Capacity Act 2005. Where no consensus of agreement can be reached despite taking all practical steps to do so, then the Court of Protection should be approached.

A clear record should be kept by all parties at all stages. In particular, this must include written confirmation between all parties about the agreed outcome of the dispute and how any outstanding issues will be pursued. This should be documented in the appropriate record system within each individual agency in accordance with their own internal processes.

3. Complex High Risk Cases

In a small number of cases, there may be significant areas of disagreement between adult social care, police and health which may lead to divided views. This can make it difficult to come to a common agreement and if acute health services are involved there is an added time pressure. In such cases, it is suggested that multi-agency oversight of the case involving senior staff is undertaken early on by convening a round-table discussion. This group would then propose actions to be communicated directly to the front line staff involved for including in case files and any further disagreement would be considered

4. Concerns about the practice of colleagues within your own organisation

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.

5. Wider learning points or gaps in policies and procedures

If the process highlights gaps in policies and procedures this will be brought to the attention of the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ESCALATION RECORD

Name of adult at risk:	
Name of practitioner raising the dispute:	
Name of Agency:	
Contact details of person raising the dispute:	
Summarise reason for dispute – include views of all agencies concerned:	
Agreed outcomes/actions if resolved including agreed next steps:	
Escalation to next stage if unresolved:	
Indicate who this information is being copied to:	
Stage at which resolution is achieved:	
Action taken to reach resolution:	
Additional notes:	

Signatures of all agencies involved in the dispute:				
1.	Name:		Job title:	
	Agency:		Date:	
2.	Name:		Job title:	
	Agency:		Date:	
3.	Name:		Job title:	
	Agency:		Date:	