



# **Resolving Professional Disagreements about Safeguarding Adults (Escalation Policy)**

## I. Context

- I.1 Safeguarding adults can often be complex and/or challenging involving a number of different professionals who can all have different views and contributions to make. Resolving differences of opinion is a shared responsibility of all organisations which often requires collaboration. Occasionally situations arise when workers within one organisation may believe or consider that the actions, inactions or decisions of another do not adequately safeguard an adult. Disagreements are most likely to arise around:
- decisions about levels of need or whether an adult has met the thresholds for a service
  - the roles and responsibilities of the different organisations involved
  - the actions or lack of action in progressing plans
  - the quantity or quality of communication between individuals and/or organisations
- I.2 Professionals in all agencies have a duty to act proactively and assertively. The Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB) recognises that good practice will sometimes include constructive challenge between workers. Therefore, when a professional disagrees with the practice of another professional, they should work with the colleague first to seek to understand the rationale for the decision. However, if concern still exists, the professional concerned should challenge the practice using this policy.
- I.3 All agencies are committed to working together to safeguard adults. Consequently the assumption should, in the first instance, focus on understanding the decision. Only where disagreement continues should the escalation policy be implemented. Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the adult is safeguarded, however...

**.....if an adult is thought to be at risk of immediate harm the designated safeguarding lead in your agency should be informed immediately. The designated safeguarding lead will inform the local authority who will ensure appropriate action is taken.**

## 2. Stages of the policy

- 2.1 Professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within **ONE WORKING WEEK** or a timescale that effectively protects the adult from harm, whichever is shortest. For example, if there is ongoing concern about the immediate safety of a vulnerable adult, the timescales would be reduced to 24 hours.

### **Stage One – involving your line manager**

- 2.2 Any worker who considers that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult a supervisor/manager within their organisation and discuss their concerns. They should clarify their thinking in order to identify the problem, to be specific as to what the disagreement is about, and to identify the desired outcome.

### **Stage Two – involving the worker from other agency/service**

- 2.3 The professionals in disagreement should seek to resolve the dispute through discussion. This discussion must take place as soon as possible and could be either a telephone conversation or a face

to face meeting. There may be instances where disparity in perceived status or experience may inhibit the ability of some workers to resolve the disagreement without some support from their line manager.

### **Stage Three – escalate line manager to line manager**

- 2.4 If the problem is not resolved at Stage Two the worker should contact their supervisor/manager within their own agency. The supervisor should have a discussion with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency.

### **Stage Four – escalate to named/designated safeguarding leads or senior operational manager (see table attached at Appendix I)**

- 2.5 If the problem is not resolved at Stage Three the supervisor/manager reports to their respective operations manager or named/designated safeguarding representative. At this point, the Safeguarding Board's Business Unit ([BFSB@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:BFSB@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)) should be notified that an issue has been escalated so that it can be reported to the Safeguarding Board. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

### **Stage Five – resolution by Safeguarding Board (BFSB) Chaired meeting**

- 2.6 Operational issues must be resolved by the agencies identified as directly involved in the case. When a resolution has not been achieved at Stage Four, the Chair of the BFSB should be approached to identify a Board member from an uninvolved agency to Chair a meeting of the most senior managers with operational responsibility for the case. This meeting will review the issues at hand and provide a final opportunity for the involved agencies to ensure that there is a full understanding of the issues before a decision is finalised. The Chair of this meeting will then report on issues arising from this process to the Case Review Subgroup of the BFSB.

### **Important Additional Notes**

- At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, including the worker who raised the initial concern. This must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.
- If the process highlights gaps in policies and procedures this must be brought to the attention of the Chair of the Safeguarding Board.

## Appendix I - Stage Four – Named/designated safeguarding leads or senior operational manager

Agency / Organisation	Position
Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Head of Safeguarding
Bracknell Forest Council (local authority including both Children's and Adults Services)	Assistant Director: Adult Social Care Health & Housing Assistant Director: Children's Social Care
Care Homes (or other individual establishments)	Registered Manager
Care Quality Commission (CQC)	Tel: 03000 616161 or <a href="https://www.cqc.org.uk">Contact us - Care Quality Commission (cqc.org.uk)</a>
NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board (formerly Clinical Commissioning Group) Covering: Aldershot, Ascot, Ash, Bagshot, Bracknell, Camberley, Farnborough, Farnham, Fleet, Maidenhead, Slough, Windsor & Yateley	Associate Director of Nursing – Safeguarding
Continuing Health Care	<a href="mailto:frimleyicb.bechc@nhs.net">frimleyicb.bechc@nhs.net</a> or Tel: 01753 636302
Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust	Adult Safeguarding Lead Childrens safeguarding lead
Healthwatch	<a href="mailto:info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk">info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk</a>
National Probation Service	Head of Berkshire Local Delivery Unit
Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service	Risk Reduction Manager & Designated Safeguarding Officer
South Central Ambulance Service	Assistant Director of Patient Care
Thames Valley Police	Bracknell Forest & Wokingham LPA Commander
Voluntary Sector Organisations	Relevant organisation's Chief Executive