



Enfield Safeguarding Adults Board.

Escalation and Resolution Protocol

**Managing professional disagreements in work relating
safeguarding adults at risk.**

July 2024

Review date: July 2029.



Inter-agency Escalation and Resolution Protocol: The resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to safeguarding adults at risk.

1. What is 'Escalation' and 'Resolution'?

Escalation is the course of action that should be taken by professionals where they have concerns that the adult's safety is compromised by the action of other agencies, or that other professional input does not support effective safeguarding of the adult.

Resolution is the desired outcome of this protocol – that all parties concerned reach a shared understanding, with minimal dissent, of the next steps in order to keep the adult at risk safe.

2. Introduction and purpose of this protocol

Enfield Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB), The Care Act (2014) and the London Multiagency Adults Safeguarding Policies and Procedures set out a clear expectations that those working with adults at risk, to safeguard them from abuse and neglect, work to multi-agency plans and processes. This could cover assessment, treatment and safeguarding adults enquiry processes as well as any form of work with this group of people.

Learning from safeguarding practice has highlighted the need for staff across all agencies to have a clear understanding about their responsibility to make professional challenge and to know how to escalate concerns about decisions made where there are concerns about the welfare of an adult at risk. This was particularly mentioned in the Safeguarding Adults Review into Mr K which is available on the Safeguarding Adults Board website.

This ESAB protocol has been updated supporting frontline practitioners and their managers in the positive resolution of professional differences that they may have with colleagues from other agencies working with adults in Enfield. The document outlines why and in what situation escalation might be needed and who should be involved.

This guidance is intended to complement the [London Multi-Agency Adult Safeguarding Policies and Procedures \(2019\)](#). This does not cover disagreement within single agencies, nor does it cover cases where there may be concerns about the behaviour or conduct of another professional that may impact on an individual's safety and well-being. In such cases, reference should be made to the agency's own Whistleblowing Policy and in the case of a child an initial discussion should be held with line management and the LADO (see [London Child Protection Procedures part A: Chapter 7: Management of Allegations against Staff or Professionals who work with Children](#)).

In the case of adults, consideration should be given to if a separate Safeguarding Adults Concern should be raised via appropriate channels (if there are concerns about the professionals access to records/ processes then this should be raised with the MASH Team Manager directly) or, if an adult at risk has not been abused or neglected but there is still concern about them in a working role, if your own agencies' [Person In a Position Of Trust](#) procedures apply (link is to Enfield Council's processes).

3. Key Principles in escalating and in resolving disagreements

- **Share key information** appropriately and **often**
- Seek to **resolve** the issue **quickly** and at the practice rather than the management level
- **Avoid** disputes which place adults at **further risk by obscuring the focus on the adult** or which delay decision making.
- **Liaise with lead professionals in safeguarding** in your organisation **at the earliest opportunity**. Clarity is expected from all agencies in respect of designated roles and responsibilities.
- **Familiarise yourself with the escalation and resolution routes** within your agency.
- **Ensure accurate and contemporary recording** on the adult's file of key decisions and conversations in relation to the resolution process.
- **Stay proactively involved**; safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- **Use the ESAB escalation process** set out here at section 6.
- **Learn from disputes** to improve future practice.
- **Practitioners of equivalent levels should be discussing disputes** rather than senior managers from one agency challenging more junior staff or vice versa – both so that line management is fully aware of and can address disputes but also to ensure staff are supported (please see Appendix B for examples of equivalent roles across agencies).

Communication and Sharing Information to Enhance Decision- Making

Sharing and evaluating information on an inter-agency basis is required to gain an accurate picture of concerns about adults at risk and their carers. Colleagues in all ESAB agencies are available for consultation to assist staff in this context. All staff must be clear about the nature of their concerns, including the available evidence to support their view. This should be done prior to sharing information with other agencies.

Professionals making referrals for adults to the Enfield Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) should be aware that this will involve them in working with colleagues from Adult Social Care to identify the appropriate response to concerns, and what actions should take place to achieve positive outcomes for the adult. Local and national evidence shows that effective intervention occurs where agencies co-ordinate their responses.

5. Practice situations where possible dissent or disagreements may take place.

Disagreements can arise in several areas, but are most likely to arise around thresholds, roles and responsibilities, the need for action and communication. Some examples (this is not an exhaustive list) may include:

- The referral is judged not to meet the criteria for a Section 42 Enquiry under the Care Act (2014) or a Care Act Section 9 Assessment find that the adult is not eligible for Adult Social Care services. **NB –**

the MASH will facilitate early resolution of many professional disagreements around case decision making by involving other professionals in information gathering and decision making.

- Where one professional disagrees with another around a particular course of action or inaction, such as closing involvement with an adult, or where practice appears intrusive.
- Where one worker or agency considers that another worker or agency has not completed an agreed action for no acceptable or understood reason, which may compromise the safeguarding of the adult at risk.
- Where one agency considers that the adult's needs are not being best met by the current plan. This could include a disagreement that a particular agency does not feel it needs to be involved, but another does, or there is a decision to close the case.

6.The Escalation Process (also see Appendix A flowchart)

Stage 1: If practitioners working directly with the adult are unable to reach agreement about the way forward in an individual case, then their disagreement must be addressed by more senior staff speaking peer-to-peer. In most cases this will mean the first line manager who will discuss the disagreement with their equivalent in the partner agency. The line managers should be informed the same working day.

Where there is no information about who the individual's line manager is, the practitioner should be asked or, if they are unavailable, the organisation's Safeguarding Adults Lead can be contacted to direct colleagues to the right manager to deal with the dispute.

Stage 2: If the concern continues then the line manager should without delay, but no later than the next working day, refer to a Head of Service or equivalent and a discussion should take place with the equivalent in all of the key agencies involved with the adult, at a professionals meeting which is convened within 5 working days.

Written records must be kept of all these discussions, as well as an executive summary of the concerns and how they were resolved, and these should be retained on the adult's case file and by the agency raising the concern. It is important that timely feedback is given to the person who raised the concern as to what action has been taken in response.

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

Stage 3: If matters cannot be resolved at step 2, then the matter should be escalated to the next senior person in the agency's line management. The timescale for resolution should still be within 5 working days from initial stage 1 to resolution of the dispute.

Step 4: At Step 4, the matter will be referred directly to the Independent Chair of ESAB via the ESAB Business Unit for discussion.

Whichever Step or Level this discussion reached, there should be discussion about what wider learning may have been gathered about processes or practice to prevent such disputes in the future. Anonymised learning

from cases may be presented to the Practice Improvement group for discussion and development of practice. Each organisation should also have their own internal routes to ensure learning.

7. Specific practice scenarios where this protocol to escalate should be used.

One agency believes a Section 42 Enquiry should take place and Adult Social Care disagrees: The procedure outlined above in stage 1 should be followed. If concerns remain after this, the agency may formally request that Adult Social Care convene an Enquiry Planning meeting. Where one or more professionals supported by a senior manager or named or designated professional makes this request, Adult Social Care should convene a conference.

Complex High-Risk Cases: In a small number of cases, there may be significant areas of disagreement between Adult Social Care, police and health or other partner agencies which may lead to polarised 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, multi-agency oversight of the case involving senior staff is undertaken in a timely way by convening a 'short notice response' round table discussion, to include Heads of Service/ DCI/ Designated leads. This group would then propose actions to be communicated directly to front line staff involved, as well as noted on the adult's file, and any further disagreement would be considered.

In high-risk cases, even where there is not disagreement, regular multi-disciplinary discussion and planning is good practice.

8. Learning from Escalation in Practice:

Where the Escalation Process highlights wider learning points or gaps in policies and procedures: Any general issues should be identified and referred to the agency's representative on the ESAB for consideration by the **Practice Improvement group** to inform future learning and possible changes to existing policies and procedures. Where this relates to a **multi-agency** training need, then the **Practice Improvement Group** will give this consideration. If the process highlights any gaps in policies and procedures this will be brought to the attention of the Independent Chair of the ESAB.

The ESAB will ensure that some of the themes arising from escalation can be understood and fed back into practice. Information will be collected where cases or situation required escalation to partnership meetings or chairs, as well as any incidents where escalation required Level 4 or above intervention (see Appendix 2). In these cases, the Enfield Safeguarding Business Unit should be included in the emails (safeguardingenfield@enfield.gov.uk). This may take place through a range of activities for example multi-agency case reviewing. Additionally, themes can be identified where professionals meet to discuss and resolve the disagreement, through a reflective approach to the conversation.

All escalations of Level 4 or above, that have been shared with the Partnership, will be collated and monitored to ensure that the dispute is resolved at the earliest possible opportunity and we will be able to identify any emerging trends and through partnership working and recommend practice change where appropriate to avoid any future disputes of similar nature.

9. Cross boroughs disputes:

Should it not be possible to resolve disagreements at first line manager level, they should be immediately escalated through the agency management structure who will liaise with their other Local Authority counterpart to seek resolution.

The ADASS Out-of-Area Safeguarding Adults Arrangements (June 2016 – found [here](#)) should be referred to when resolving such disputes.

See below for appendices for staff involved in escalating cases and a process flowchart.

Contact Information

Direct general enquiries related to escalation to safeguardingenfield@enfield.gov.uk

Report Abuse and Neglect

To make a Safeguarding Adults referral – either about yourself or someone else - please [complete the online referral form](#), or email on TheMASHTeam@enfield.gov.uk or call our Adults MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 020 8379 3196, Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.

If you are calling between 5pm and 9am weekdays or anytime at the weekend, call the **Emergency out-of-hours duty team on 020 8379 1000**.

If you or another person are in immediate danger you should always phone 999.

Appendix A: Enfield Safeguarding Adult's Inter-agency Escalation Procedure For Professionals with Safeguarding Concerns

Please consider wider learning identified at every stage to prevent further disputes where possible.

Note: At all stages actions / decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant professionals

If a professional is unhappy with a decision or response from any agency

Professional speaks to their manager or safeguarding lead in their own agency regarding their concern – record discussion and outcome

resolved

No Further escalation action required

unresolved

Manager/Named Professional / in the Agency discusses concern/response with the opposite number in the agency

A Multi-disciplinary meeting could be considered at this stage to further explore issues if complex/helpful. These can be called by any agency.

If concern continues the manager / named professional in the Agency discusses concern / response with the relevant designated managers

Named professional advises concerned professional of outcome at this stage

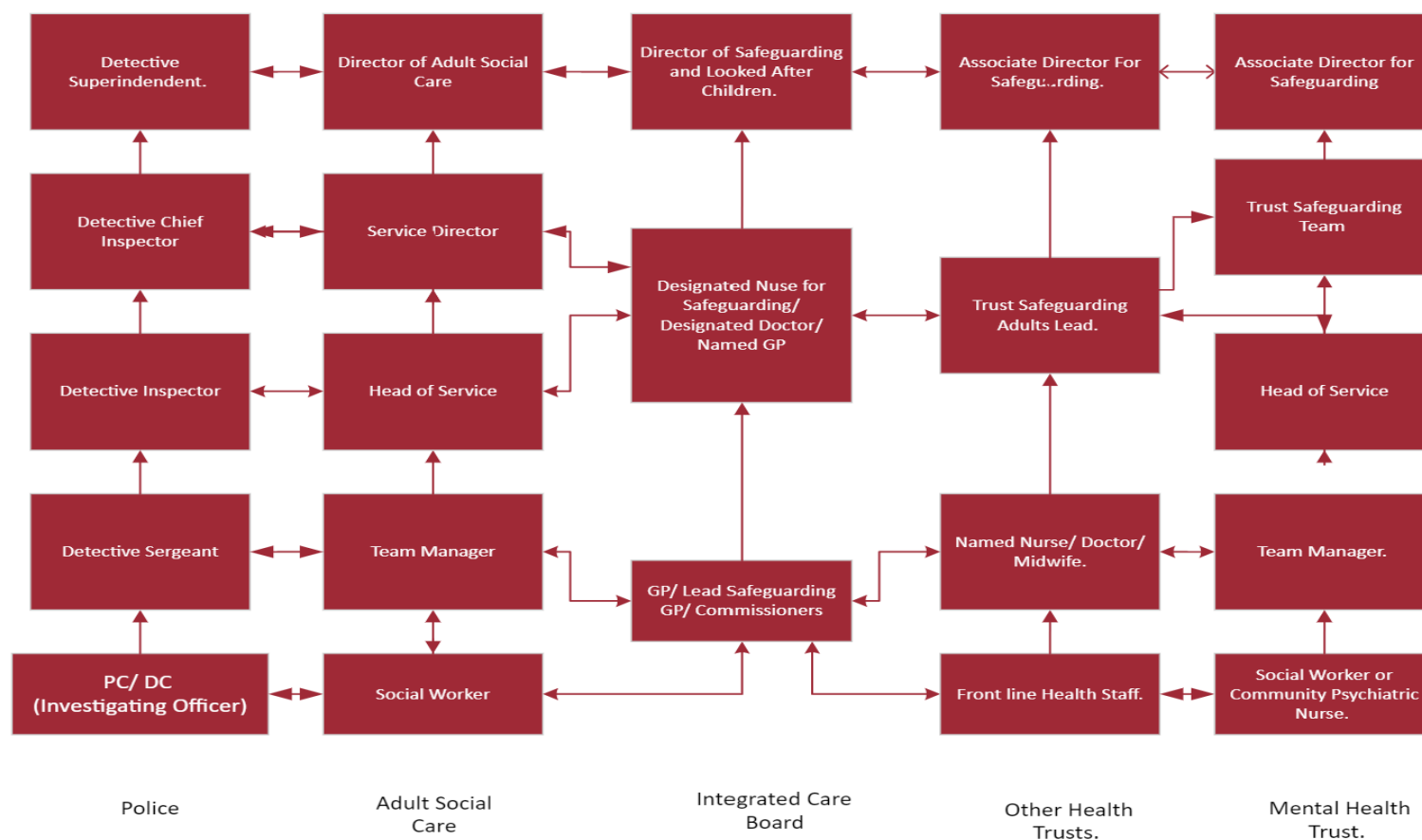
Designated Lead for Safeguarding Adults is provided with original concern

Should Designated Lead require to escalate further the Board's Practice Improvement Group should be notified

Appendix B

Equivalent Roles examples.

Enfield Safeguarding Adults Board - Examples of Equivalent Roles.



Equivalent Roles

