



Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership:
Escalation and resolving professional
differences policy
2024

1 Introduction

In order to safeguard children and young people it is vital that there is close collaboration by all partner agencies working with the child and their family. However, safeguarding children requires a multi-agency response from a range of professionals with different perspectives on thresholds of harm and how best to keep children safe and promote their welfare. It is likely that there will be differences of opinion.

Disagreements may be about:

- decisions on levels of need and whether a child has met the threshold for a service or intervention;
- decisions on how the case should be conducted (i.e.: CIN or CP) or if a case should be stepped up to more robust intervention or closed;
- the roles and responsibilities of involved agencies;
- the actions or lack of action by any agency in progressing the child's plan;
- the level or quality of communication between agencies.

Use of the escalation policy is the best way to resolve issues in a timely and efficient manner that keeps children safe, and professionals should not delay raising issues under the policy. Professionals must not ignore any concerns they may have that the practice, action or lack of action of a partner agency may adversely impact on the safety and welfare of a child; all professionals have a duty to take action under this policy in order to ensure children are kept safe.

Where concerns about the progress of a case are linked to parental non-engagement or non-compliance in implementing the child's plan, this must be raised with the allocated social worker who will deal with the matter under the Children's Safeguarding and Family Help policy "Working with non-engaging, resistant and hostile families". CSCP multi-agency guidance on working with non-engaging families can be found here: <https://cscp.org.uk/resources/non-engaging-families/>

2 Purpose and scope of policy

Children's safety can only be assured and their welfare promoted where professionals work jointly, sharing responsibility for case management and decision making.

To ensure safe practice in multi-agency working, there must be a culture of constructive challenge and a mechanism that allows agencies to raise concerns

about practice so that they feel confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and appropriately addressed.

This escalation policy sets out what actions should be taken by agencies where there are professional differences around how to keep a child safe. It aims to ensure that the focus is kept on children's safety by providing a formal framework for the swift and satisfactory resolution of differences of opinion between members of a child's professional network.

It covers all members of the children's workforce in Camden who are working with children who are receiving an early help, child in need, child protection or looked after child service by the Local Authority, or who it is thought meet the threshold for a service.

3 Principles

- The child's safety and welfare should be the key focus at all times and a dispute between agencies should never leave a child unprotected.
- Differences of opinion should be resolved at the earliest stage possible with escalation to the next stage only taking place where a satisfactory resolution cannot be found.
- Disputes should be resolved in an open and timely manner with all relevant issues identified for resolution. At each stage, resolution of issues should be reached within 1 working week, at a maximum, but if it is thought that a child may be at increased risk, escalation to the next stage should take place within 24 hours.
- Where an issue arising from the dispute involves an operational issue between two or more agencies, for example the process of referring a case from one service to another, these agencies must be involved in finding a solution to the dispute.
- Where a dispute identifies an issue arising from strategic or policy issues, for example around the interpretation of statutory guidance, the matter should be referred to the CSCP Business Manager for consideration by the safeguarding partners. (CSCP@camden.gov.uk)
- Where a dispute involves a complaint about the behaviour or professional conduct of a worker, this should initially be reported to their manager or supervisor and dealt with under that agency's staff policies.

4 Procedures for dispute resolution

This process should be followed only where there is no risk of immediate harm to a child with each step taking no longer than 1 working week (or 24 hours where the situation is urgent) before being escalated to the next stage if no resolution can be found.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of harm call the police on 999.

If you require an urgent dispute resolution, the matter should be referred to the Head of Children Quality Assurance on 020 7974 3369 to decide on any action needed whilst the dispute, as outlined in the process below, is being resolved.

Whenever this process is begun, actions taken at each stage and the outcome should be recorded in the case notes section of the child's record held by the agencies involved. Case notes should clearly state:

- the date of and form of communication
- who was involved
- what was discussed
- what was the outcome, including any further escalation under this policy.

Stage 1: discussion between front line workers

Whenever a dispute arises, the professionals directly involved should discuss the matter in the first instance. Often, differences in professional opinion can be based on lack of communication or a misunderstanding of agency policy and procedures and can consequently be resolved quickly. If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage within 1 working week, the parties should identify what the issues are and agree to move to the next step of the escalation process.

Stage 2: discussion between frontline managers

The professionals involved in the dispute should contact their manager to consider the issues raised, what outcome they would like to achieve and how differences can be resolved. The frontline managers should then contact each other to try to negotiate a settlement to the dispute within 1 working week or if this is not possible, clarify the issues before moving on to the next step.

Stage 3: discussion between named/ designated safeguarding leads/ operational managers

Stage 3 disputes should be passed to the relevant named safeguarding lead officer for the agencies involved. These named officers should discuss the issues identified and try to find a solution within 1 working week that is child focussed and ensures their safety and welfare. If this is not possible, the matter should be escalated to the next stage.

Please contact cscp@camden.gov.uk for named officer contact details.

Agency	Named officer
Adult Social Care/Safeguarding	Avril Mayhew, Director of ASC Operations
North London NHS Foundation Trust	Graeme McAndrew, Director of Safeguarding
NCL Integrated Care Board (Camden)	Claire Taylor, Designated Doctor Christine Jenkinson, Designated Nurse
Camden Safety Net	Caitriona Scanlan, Violence Against Women and Girls Lead
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust	Crystal Larteef, Named Nurse, CNWL Provider Services
Early Help Service	Jessica Eneberi, Head of Family Support and Complex Families
Integrated Early Years Service	Debbie Adams, Head of Early Years and Family Hubs
Children Safeguarding and Family Help	Michelle O'Regan, Head of CIN services (CP and CIN cases) Brenda Amisi- Hutchinson, Head of Corporate Parenting Service (CLA and leaving care cases) Crina Popa, Head of Children and Young People Disability Service
GOSH NHS Foundation Trust	Michelle Nightingale, Named Nurse for Child Safeguarding
Housing	Maria Jacobs, Head of Neighbourhoods, Supporting Communities
Metropolitan Police Service, Safeguarding, CN BCU	A/DCI Sarb Kaur, Safeguarding Partnership, Central North BCU, Met Police
Metropolitan Police Service, Gangs, CN BCU	DCI Chris Soole, Gangs team
Probation NPS	Rose Carew - Senior Probation Officer Camden & Islington
Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust	Mel Squibb (MS), Named Nurse for Safeguarding, Royal Free Hospital
Schools	Chris Roberts, Senior Adviser – Safeguarding and Inclusion, Camden Learning

Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust	Sheva Habel – Named Doctor - Tavistock & Portman NHS FT Nicole Anderson - Interim Safeguarding Children Lead - Tavistock & Portman NHS FT
UCLH NHS Foundation Trust	Farrah Quintyne, Named Professional for Safeguarding, UCLH
Youth Justice Service	Tim Cosh, Head of Integrated Youth Services

Stage 4: referral to a named senior manager/ Director

Stage 4 disputes should be referred to named senior managers or directors within the relevant agencies to negotiate a resolution to the dispute.

Please contact cscp@camden.gov.uk for named officer contact details.

Agency	Named officer
Adult Social Care/Safeguarding	Jess McGregor, Director Adult Social Care
North London NHS Foundation Trust	Peter Cartlidge – Divisional Director
NCL Integrated Care Board	David Pennington, Director of Safeguarding & Looked After Children, NHS North Central London ICB
Camden Safety Net	Jamie Akinola, Head of Community Safety and Public Protection
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust	Emma Kay, Head of safeguarding, CNWL
Early Help Service	Rashida Baig - Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding
Early Years	
Children Safeguarding and Family Help	
Great Ormond Street Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Tracy Lockett, Chief Nurse
Housing	Glendine Shepherd, Director of Housing
Metropolitan Police Service, Central North BCU	DSu Emma Barker, Head of Public Protection, Central North BCU, Met Police
Metropolitan Police Service, Gangs, Central North BCU,	DSu Jack Rowlands, Neighbourhoods, Central North BCU MPS
Probation NPS	Craig Simpson, Head of HQ D&I, HMPPS.

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust	Helen Swarbrick, Deputy Director of Safeguarding
Schools	Stephen Hall, Director, Camden Learning
Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust	Chris Abbott, Chief Medical Director
UCLH NHS Foundation Trust	Tim Hodgson, Medical Director
Youth Justice Service	Rashida Baig - Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding

Stage 5: The CSCP Dispute Resolution meeting

At this stage, a decision should be made that settles any dispute and ensures that there is a clear way forward for the case and that this solution ensures a continued high level of partnership working in Camden that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children.

This decision will be made at a specially convened CSCP Dispute Resolution meeting involving CSCP Lead Safeguarding Partners or their delegated officers and where relevant, the CSCP Independent Scrutineer.

The meeting will consider the issues raised and look at earlier efforts to resolve differences. When deciding on the solution, the meeting will take into account the impact of their decision on future partnership working and service delivery. The meeting may also agree changes to thresholds, policies, working practices and the operation of joint protocols in consultation with all partners.

Stage 6: Secretary of State

In the unlikely event that the issues remain unresolved following the CSCP Dispute Resolution meeting, the final stage of escalation is to the Secretary of State. This will be escalated through the CSCP Lead Safeguarding Partners following the outcome of the Dispute Resolution meeting.

Resolution of differences involving other local authorities

The London Borough of Camden often works in partnership with other local authorities as children and families cross borough boundaries. This policy will apply to any issues arising from decisions relating to provision of services to a child and family involving another local authority and escalation will take place in the same manner as for internal Camden disputes via the relevant team/service managers.

- Where there are disputes relating to the provision of services for a child from another borough or transfer of cases into Camden, these will be dealt with by the MASH manager, MASH service manager and CIN Head of Service.

- Where there are disputes relating to the provision of services for a Camden child in another borough or the transfer of cases from Camden, these will be dealt with by the allocated team manager, relevant service manager and Head of Service.
- Where the case involves child protection concerns, advice should be sought from the Child Protection service manager who will liaise with their counterpart in the other borough to seek a resolution and agree any actions to be taken to safeguard the child.
- Where a child presents as homeless to the MASH team from address outside of Camden or who had been looked after by or received a child in need service from another authority previously, the MASH team should refer the child back to the originating authority and use this escalation procedure to resolve any issues.
- Cases should be escalated in the following order:
 - Relevant Head of Service
 - Head of Quality Assurance
 - Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding
 - Executive Director
- Cases should be escalated within the 1 working week timescale (or 24 hours for urgent cases) at each stage.

Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership – Escalation Procedure flowchart

Website: <http://www.cscp.org.uk>

Email: CSCP@camden.gov.uk

Timescales for escalation at each stage is 1 working week or 24 hours in urgent cases

