



**Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership**  
**Multi Agency Dispute Resolution and Escalation Policy**  
**November 2019**

This document replaces all previously published Escalation Policy and Process guidance. It must be read in conjunction with the [Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures](#)

Version	Author/s	Signed off by	Date	Review Date
1	DDSCP Policy & Procedures	DDSCP Policy & Procedures	December 2019	November 2021

## Introduction

This policy relates to all practitioners who are working and are involved in case work planning for the unborn, children, young people and their families/carers within the Derby and Derbyshire Children's Partnership. The policy will include clear escalation procedures. If the dispute relates to dissent from Child Protection conferences, the local Derby City or Derbyshire Dissent process should be followed:

- [Derby Child Protection Conference Professional Dissent Process](#)
- [Derbyshire Child Protection Conference Professional Dissent Process](#)

1.1 National and local serious case reviews have highlighted the importance of practitioners challenging decisions to ensure the best outcomes for children and their families. [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (2018) states that 'clear escalation policies for staff to follow when their child safeguarding concerns are not being addressed within their organisation or by other agencies' should be in place. Similarly, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) promotes that - 'if, after a referral, the child's situation does not appear to be improving, the referrer should consider following the local escalation procedures'.

1.2 Children's safety can only be assured and their welfare promoted where practitioners work respectfully together, sharing responsibility for case management and decision making, challenging appropriately and ensuring all relevant perspectives are explored. With this in mind, the importance of a culture which actively supports professional challenge cannot be underestimated. Professional challenge should be recognised as a positive activity and a sign of good professional practice and effective multi-agency working.

Where there are differences and disagreements between agencies or practitioners, a clear framework should be in place to ensure that timely and effective resolution is reached. All workers should feel able to challenge decision making and to see this as their responsibility in order to promote the best multi-agency safeguarding practice for the unborn, children, young people and their families/carers. This policy provides workers with the means to raise concerns that they have about decisions made by other practitioners or agencies. Please also see [Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency safeguarding children procedures](#) for further information and guidance.

1.4 **It is every professional's responsibility to 'problem solve'. Communication is extremely important and is the key to resolving professional misunderstandings or disagreements.**

**At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that the child is safeguarded. The child's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout.**

## 2 Potential Areas of Disagreement

The following is not an exhaustive list of potential areas of disagreement for which this policy may be used:

- Provision of services
- Outcomes and findings of assessments
- Whether action plans are appropriate
- Application of threshold and case progression

## 3 Key Principles

Practitioners should always:-

- Follow the timescales which are prescribed within this policy;
- Ensure that they share key information in a lawful and appropriate manner;  
[See DDSCP Information Sharing Guidance for Practitioners in the Derby and Derbyshire multi-agency safeguarding children procedures.](#)
- Additional information on this issue can be found in the national guidance [Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.](#) **Note: The GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) does not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe;**
- The pathway should be followed and only in circumstances where there are imminent concerns should any stage of this pathway be expedited;
- Seek to resolve the issue quickly at the operational practice level rather than at the management level;
- Keep focus on the child's safety and welfare at all times ensuring professional differences do not place children at further risk by obscuring the focus on the child or delay decision making;
- Familiarise themselves with the escalation process within their agency;
- Ensure accurate and contemporary recording on the child's file of key decisions, actions and conversations in relation to this resolution process;
- Stay proactively involved – safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

## 4 The Process

Practitioners involved in this resolution process must keep an up to date record of all discussions they have and with whom, including within agency and multi-agency conversations.

Agreed actions and outcomes (including dates) must also be recorded along with any outstanding issues and how these will be addressed. All records should be retained on the child's case record.

Some matters may be resolved very quickly, and this will be determined by the complexity of the issue. In all cases, the matter should be resolved as swiftly as possible, and the primary focus shall be on ensuring the safety and welfare of the child concerned.

## **Escalation process**

### **Stage 1: Discussion between frontline practitioners – resolution within 2 working days (unless there is an imminent safeguarding concern)**

In the first instance the practitioner with concerns should raise the concerns with the relevant practitioner in the other agency verbally. The key at this stage is trying to come to an understanding of each other's perspectives and to potentially fill in the gaps of knowledge either practitioner might have. For example; what other assessments have been completed or the strengths of protective factors or any risk factors. This is the key opportunity to ensure effective collaboration to ensure the best possible decisions are reached.

The practitioner with concerns should seek advice from their manager or agency's designated safeguarding lead if they do not feel that their concerns have been understood and they feel that the issue has not been resolved.

If there is no resolution it is important that the relevant practitioners should meet wherever possible, prior to considering escalation to Stage 2.

If the practitioners are unable to resolve the difference of opinion at this stage, this conversation should be recorded and stage 2 progressed. Differences should be resolved within 2 working days.

### **Stage 2: Discussion between front line operational manager or named /designated lead. Resolution within 2 working days (unless there are imminent safeguarding concerns).**

If the practitioners are unable to resolve their concerns within the 2 day timescale it must be reported by them to their front line operational manager or named / designated leads or equivalent in each agency, who should together discuss the issues and concerns raised.

The purpose of escalating the dispute to this level is to reach a position where differing professional opinions have been taken into account and efforts made to explore whether dispute has arisen through lack of clarity or understanding in the professional dialogue. Ultimately a decision will need to be reached where agencies agree a way forward where the welfare of the child takes precedence.

If there is no resolution it is important that the relevant practitioners should meet wherever possible, prior to considering escalation to Stage 3.

If the issue is not resolved and professional differences remain at Stage 2, the front line operational manager or named / designated Leads or equivalent must complete the DDSCP

Escalation Template (see appendix 2) and identify the presenting and underlying issues. It is expected that they will provide feedback to all frontline parties and send the completed template to the relevant partner agency Senior Management to review and resolve.

**Stage 3: Escalation to Senior Management- resolution within 10 working days from escalation to them (unless there are imminent safeguarding concerns).**

In cases where significant concerns remain after discussion between front line operational managers or named /designated leads, this should be raised with respective senior managers, to review and resolve with equivalent lead.

If there is no resolution it is important that the relevant practitioners should meet wherever possible, prior to considering escalation to Stage 4

Senior Managers must update/submit DDSCP Escalation template (see appendix 2) and identify the presenting and underlying issues. Senior Managers will provide feedback to all parties involved in the process in their organisation.

Progress to Stage 4 if necessary

**Stage 4: Escalate to Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership**

In some cases, practitioners may feel concerned about the actions of a particular agency, but it is the statutory responsibility of that agency to make a final decision on case work (for example, agreeing a social care single assessment is the responsibility of the relevant local authority). In such cases, after following stages 1-3 of the escalation policy, the responsible agency will make a final decision.

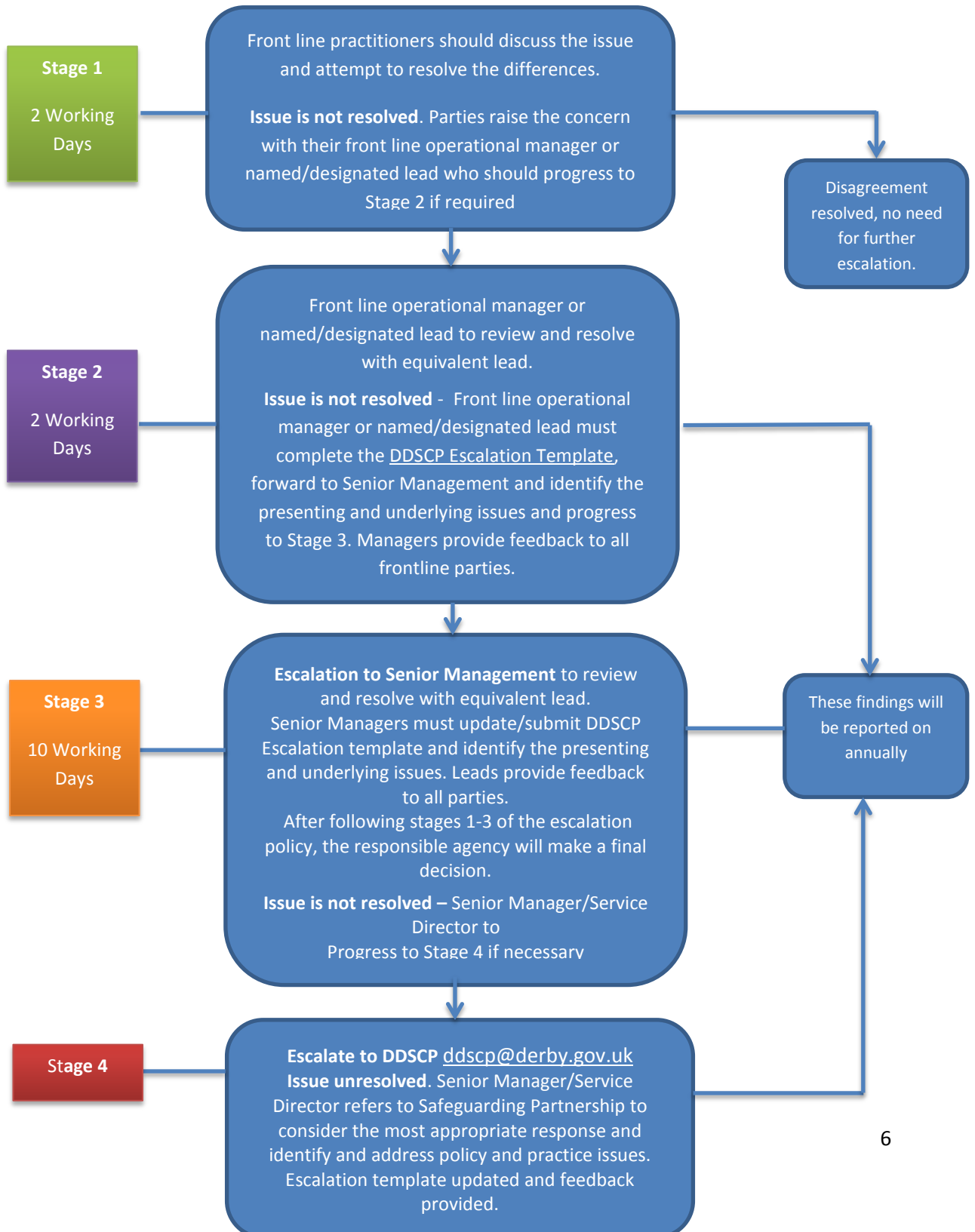
Where disagreements raise significant issues or themes in relation to local safeguarding practice, these should be relayed to the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership @ [ddscp@derby.gov.uk](mailto:ddscp@derby.gov.uk) to consider the most appropriate response and identify/address any policy and practice issues. The Senior Manager/ Service Director leading on the issue should ensure the Escalation Template is updated and shared with the Partnership team, and that feedback is given to all parties involved in the process within their organisation.

## Appendix 1: Resolution of Professional Disagreement Flowchart

**It is every professional's responsibility to 'problem solve'. Communication is extremely important and is the key to resolving professional misunderstandings or disagreements.**

This is for any professional working with a child who has concerns about another agency's decision. Concerns should be specific and evidenced based as to the need and difference.

**At all stages the discussion and outcome should be within the timescales prescribed and focused on the child's needs.**



## Appendix 2: Escalation & dispute Resolution Template

(To be used when concerns are escalated to stage 3 and 4)

Pin No. e.g.(mosaic, liquid logic)	Name of Unborn/Child/ Children:	Date of Birth:	Department & name/position of practitioner escalating	Agency (with which there is a concern) & name of practitioner/position:

Escalated to (name & position)	Stage 3 or 4	Date of escalation	Escalated to within partner agency (name & position)	Date of escalation

**Brief description of nature of concern:**

**Outcomes sought:**

**Update from each stage of Escalation:**

**Name of Referrer:** .....

**Agency / Department:** .....

**Telephone number:** ..... **Email:** .....

**Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

Derby & Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Email for Stage 4: [ddscp@derby.gov.uk](mailto:ddscp@derby.gov.uk)