



Richmond and
Wandsworth
**Safeguarding
Adults Board**

Escalation Guidance

Guidance on how to resolve disagreements in relation to the London Safeguarding Adults Board's multi-agency safeguarding policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Effective working together depends on an open and honest approach to relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation in a multi-agency approach to safeguard adults.
- 1.2. Occasionally situations arise when staff within one agency feel that the actions, inaction or decisions of another agency do not adequately safeguard an adult at risk of abuse or neglect as required within the [London Multi-agency Safeguarding Policy and Procedures](#). This multi-agency guidance defines the process for resolving such professional differences and should be read alongside Richmond and Wandsworth's Safeguarding Adults Policy and relevant internal organisational policies on escalating matters in dispute. This guidance does not replace an individual's right to complain about the actions of an individual agency using their own complaints procedure and escalation via relevant channels, i.e., the Health and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 1.3. Disagreements can arise in several areas, but are most likely to arise around:
- Levels of need
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - The need for action
 - The progress of plans and communication
- 1.4. Safeguarding is Everybody's responsibility. Where professionals consider that the practice of other professionals is placing an adult at risk of harm, they must be assertive, act swiftly and ensure that they challenge the relevant professionals in line with this guidance.
- The safety of the individual adult is the paramount consideration in any professional activity.
 - Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the adult is protected.
 - As a guide, professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion ideally within one working week or a timescale that protects the adult from harm (whichever is shortest).
 - Disagreements should always be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

If an adult is thought to be at immediate risk of harm, the designated safeguarding lead in your agency should be informed immediately.

- 1.5. Any member of staff who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult their immediate supervisor / manager to clarify their thinking, if required. Those concerned should be able to evidence the nature and source of the concerns and must keep a record of all discussions.
- 1.6. Concerns relating to decisions, suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work within an agency, should be raised in line with each agencies' policy for dealing with such matters, including but not limited to those setting out the arrangements for 'whistleblowing' or People in Position of Trust.

2. Stages of Resolution

2.1. Stage One: Discuss with the other Professional/Practitioner

Those individuals who are unable to reach an agreement should have a discussion to try and resolve the problem. This discussion must take place as soon as possible, ideally within three working days and could be a telephone conversation, a virtual or face-to-face meeting. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this if they are not supported by their respective agency.

2.2. Stage Two: Escalate to Line Manager/Safeguarding Adults Manager (SAM)

The professionals involved in the dispute should contact their respective line managers within one working day to consider the issues raised, what outcome they would like to achieve and how differences can be resolved. The Line Managers should then contact each other to try to negotiate a settlement to the dispute or, if this is not possible, clarify the issues before moving on to the next step. This conversation should aim to happen within a further five working days.

If the case involves an adult who is already subject to an adult safeguarding plan prior to any dispute, then this should be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Adults Manager with responsibility for that plan.

2.3. Stage Three: Escalate to your Service or Senior Managers

If the problem cannot be resolved at Stage Two above, then the Line Manager/SAM should report the situation to their respective manager and Head of Service for Safeguarding and Professional Standards. It is then for these Managers to attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion which should happen within five working days.

If the disagreement cannot be resolved at this stage, then the expectation is that escalation should continue through the appropriate tiers of management within each agency able to make a decision to resolve the dispute. Resolution should be sought within no more than 5 working days, for a total of 10 working days for stage 3. If it remains unresolved then it must be expedited to Stage 4 without delay.

2.4. Stage Four: Resolution by the Richmond and Wandsworth Safeguarding Adults Board Executive

If it has not been possible to resolve the disagreement between the involved agencies, the matter should as a very last resort be referred by the agency concerned to the RWSAB Executive, via the RWSAB Business Unit. The Executive may then either seek to resolve the issue directly with the relevant senior managers or convene a Resolution Panel.

The agency raising the dispute must complete the referral form with the details of the case through to the RWSAB Business Unit at sab@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk, who will arrange for the matter to be presented to the Executive.

Any Resolution Panel must be composed of the Independent Chair of RWSAB and Senior Officers from at least three agencies who are members of the RWSAB. The Senior Officers should, as far as practicable, include the agencies engaged in the escalation process. The meeting will consider the issues raised and consider earlier efforts to resolve differences. When deciding on the resolution, the partners must have regard to the Care Act 2014 and

London multi agency guidelines. The safeguarding and welfare of the individual will be the primary concern. It will be the responsibility of the accountable agency to ensure the views and desired outcomes of the service user, and or advocate have been taken into account, in line with the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal.

The Panel will consider the impact of their decision on future partnership working and service delivery, and take account of statutory duties, relevant legislation, national and local policy, and best practice. Legal advice may be required. The Panel may also agree to review policies, working practices and the operation of joint protocols in consultation with all Board partners.

Any resolution will be advisory and as such requires the agreement of the relevant agency to consider and accept the decision for implementation.

3. Escalation Flowchart

