



**Perth and Kinross
Child Protection Committee
Practitioner's Guide: Resolution and
Escalation Arrangements**

**Getting it Right
in Perth and Kinross**
Helping children be the best they can be

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Context	3
Purpose	3
Key Working Practice Principles.....	4
Resolution	5
Escalation (Stage 1)	5
Escalation (Stage 2)	6
Escalation (Stage 3)	7
Escalation (Stage 4)	7
Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO)	8
Shared Learning	8
Appendix 1 Practitioner’s Flowchart	9

What to do if you are worried or concerned about a child or young person?

If you are worried or concerned about a child or young person, you should contact the Perth and Kinross Child Protection and Duty Team or Police Scotland:

Perth and Kinross Child Protection and Duty Team – (24 hours)	01738 476768
Police Scotland Non–Emergency Number	101
In an Emergency	Call 999

Document Control:

Guardians / Keepers	Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee (CPC)
Version Number:	1.0
Approval Date:	27 August 2019
Publication Date:	27 August 2019
Effective From:	27 August 2019
Review Date:	Continuous
ECHR Compliant:	Yes
Diversity Compliant:	Yes
Data Protection / GDPR Compliant:	Yes
FOI Compliant:	Yes
Health & Safety Compliant:	Yes

Introduction

This Practitioner's Guide has been produced by Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee (CPC).

This guidance has been developed to provide all practitioners and managers, working directly or indirectly with children, young people and their families across Perth and Kinross, with clear practice guidance on how to resolve practice issues and where necessary, how to escalate them.

Within Perth and Kinross, the protection of children and young people is ***everyone's job and everyone's responsibility***.

We consider this to be a shared responsibility for all practitioners and managers working across the public, private and third sectors. It is essential that ***everyone*** understands the contribution they have to make in ***keeping children and young people safe*** and ***protected from harm and abuse***.

This guidance should complement, not replace, any existing service or agency resolution and escalation guidance.

Guidance alone cannot protect children and young people; but a competent, confident and skilful workforce, working together with a vigilant public can. First Line Managers / Supervisors are therefore key to the successful implementation of this practice guidance.

Context

All children and young people (including unborn babies) have the right to be cared for; protected from harm and abuse and to grow up in a safe environment, in which their rights are respected and all their needs are met.

Children and young people should ***get the help they need, when they need it, for as long as they need it***. They should also ***get the right help, at the right time, from the right people*** and their welfare is always paramount.

Most children and young people get all the help and support they need from their parents, carers and families; in addition to the universal services of education and health. However, on some occasions, some children and young people may need further help and support in order to ***safeguard, support*** and ***promote*** their ***wellbeing*** and to protect them from harm and abuse.

Purpose

Occasionally, situations may arise where practitioners within one service or agency feel that the actions, inaction or decisions of another practitioner, service or agency do not adequately ***safeguard, support*** and ***promote*** the ***wellbeing*** of a child or young person.

This guidance aims to ensure that in such situations; issues between practitioners, services and agencies are resolved in a ***timely and effective manner and if not, are escalated quickly and without delay***.

Professional disputes or disagreements will sometimes arise over one practitioner, service or agency's actions, inactions or decision-making in relation to their involvement with, and support for, a child or young person and their family.

For example, in terms of the need to ensure the continuum of care of a child or young person (their journey through the system) and a whole-system holistic approach, this could include a dispute or disagreement in relation to the following areas of practice (this list is not exhaustive):

- a need for service or agency intervention and support;
- a child or young person's level of need or risk;
- a child concern report / referral pathway;
- a screening process outcome;
- an inter-agency referral discussion outcome;
- an investigation outcome;
- an assessment outcome;
- a planning agreement;
- an agreed course of action not being completed / complied with;
- a single / inter-agency meeting decision (i.e. Child Protection Case Conference; Child's Planning Meeting; Integrated Team Meeting; Core Group etc);
- a timescale decision;
- a registration decision;

which a practitioner, service or agency considers not to be in the child or young person's best interests.

Whilst professional disputes and disagreements can be healthy and can foster creative ways of working with children, young people and their families; disputes and disagreements always require a resolution. Problem resolution is an integral part of effective partnership working.

Practitioners have a duty of care to others and should trust their judgement, intuition or gut feelings. **Professional Curiosity** is vital, and all practitioners should be respectful and assertive; whilst exercising professional judgement and common sense.

Practitioners have authority to question, challenge and raise concerns about children and young people and decisions being made, or in some cases, not being made, about them.

The child or young person's safety and wellbeing must be the paramount consideration at all times and professional disputes or differences must not detract from timely, effective and clear decision making.

Key Working Practice Principles

Practitioners should:

- ***ensure the child or young person is safe;***
- keep their focus on what is in the child or young person's best interests at all times;
- avoid disputes or disagreements that put children and young people at risk or delay decision-making;
- seek to resolve any disputes or disagreements based on evidence, assessment and discussion and do so quickly and without delay;

- ensure that the process is kept as simple, succinct, transparent and as open as possible;
- seek a resolution quickly at the practice level, rather than escalating it to the management level;
- familiarise themselves with the routes for resolution and escalation within their own service or agency;
- identify any single or multi-agency process or practice areas where there is a lack of clarity or a need for further guidance and report this onwards;

Resolution

Where there is a professional dispute or disagreement, practitioners should:

- ***be mindful of the above key working practice principles;***
- ***ensure the child or young person is safe;***
- not feel frightened or intimidated;
- seek a meeting with the other practitioners, services and agencies involved in the dispute or disagreement quickly and without delay;
- keep in mind the roles, remits and responsibilities of the other practitioners, services and agencies involved;
- respect and recognise the experience and status of the other practitioners involved;
- keep an open mind, do not allow the dispute or disagreement to become personalised or lost in process;
- clarify their own role, remit and responsibility;
- confirm what their own service or agency perspective is;
- ask that they have their views listened to, understood and respected;
- explain their own thinking and rationale for the dispute or disagreement;
- attempt to resolve the dispute or disagreement by way of dialogue and discussion;
- seek to resolve the dispute or disagreement quickly and without delay;
- where possible reach a shared / agreed resolution at practitioner level;
- if no resolution can be found, ask that their position be noted and recorded in writing into any record being kept;
- intimate that it is their intention to escalate the dispute or disagreement further;
- record their position accurately and contemporaneously in their own service or agency records;
- quickly and without delay, escalate the dispute or disagreement further via their own service or agency arrangements;
- ***Remember – Doing nothing is not an Option!***

Escalation (Stage 1)

Where there has been a professional dispute or disagreement, which could not be resolved at practitioner level, and the practitioner feels that a child or young person ***is not safe***, the practitioner should:

- ***be mindful of the above key working practice principles;***
- ***ensure they have exhausted all possible means of resolving the dispute or disagreement through discussion and dialogue at the practitioner level;***
- seek support and discuss the matter with their First Line Manager / Supervisor quickly and without delay;
- explain what steps have been taken to resolve the dispute or disagreement at practitioner level;
- clarify the thinking and evidence the nature of the concern and reason for the dispute or disagreement;
- if necessary, quickly seek professional advice from their service or agency designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) or Lead for Child Protection;
- ask that the actions, inactions or decision-making dispute or disagreement be reviewed at First Line Manager / Supervisor level;
- confirm with the First Line Manager / Supervisor what their thinking is (whether they agree or disagree) and their rationale for that decision;
- confirm with the First Line Manager / Supervisor the agreed next steps, course of action and the timescales, if any;
- keep a written record of the discussion and agreement in their own service or agency records;
- where further action was agreed, ask for and seek feedback in due course;

Escalation (Stage 2)

At each stage it is important that the practitioner who originally raised the concern is supported, kept informed and given feedback on what action (if any) has been taken in response.

Where further escalation has been agreed as being necessary, the First Line Manager / Supervisor should:

- ***be mindful of the above key working practice principles;***
- ***ensure the practitioner has exhausted all possible means of resolving the dispute or disagreement through discussion and dialogue at a practitioner level;***
- seek a meeting with their opposite number, or equivalent, in the other services or agencies involved in the dispute or disagreement quickly and without delay;
- explain what steps have been taken to resolve the dispute or disagreement at practitioner level;
- clarify the thinking and evidence the nature of the concern and reason for the disagreement;
- ask that the actions, inactions or decision-making dispute or disagreement be reviewed and seek a resolution at First Line Manager / Supervisor level;
- if no resolution can be found, ask that their position be noted and recorded in writing into any record being kept;
- intimate that it is their intention to escalate the disagreement further;

- record their position accurately and contemporaneously in their own service or agency records;
- quickly and without delay, escalate the dispute or disagreement further via their own service or agency arrangements to Senior Management / Head of Service;
- provide feedback to the practitioner who raised the original concern;

Escalation (Stage 3)

Where further escalation has been agreed as being necessary, the Senior Manager / Head of Service should:

- ***be mindful of the above key working practice principles;***
- ***ensure they have exhausted all possible means of resolving the dispute or disagreement through discussion and dialogue at a practitioner level and First Line Manager / Supervisor level;***
- seek a meeting with their opposite number, or equivalent, in the other services or agencies involved in the dispute or disagreement quickly and without delay;
- explain what steps have been taken to resolve the dispute or disagreement at practitioner and First Line Manager / Supervisor level;
- clarify the thinking and evidence the nature of the concern and reason for the dispute or disagreement;
- ask that the actions, inactions or decision-making dispute or disagreement be reviewed and seek a resolution;
- if no resolution can be found, ask that their position be noted and recorded in writing into any record being kept;
- intimate that it is their intention to escalate the dispute or disagreement further;
- record their position accurately and contemporaneously in their own service or agency records;
- quickly and without delay, escalate the dispute or disagreement further via their own service or agency arrangements to the **Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO)**;
- provide feedback to the practitioner who raised the original concern and the First Line Manager / Supervisor who brought the original concern to their attention;

Escalation (Stage 4)

Where it has been necessary to escalate the dispute or disagreement to the CSWO, the Senior Management / Head of Service should:

- ***be mindful of the above key working practice principles;***
- ***ensure they have exhausted all possible means of resolving the dispute or disagreement through discussion and dialogue at a practitioner level, First Line Manager / Supervisor level and at Senior Manager / Head of Service level;***
- seek a meeting with the CSWO quickly and without delay;
- explain what steps have been taken to resolve the dispute or disagreement at practitioner, First Line Manager / Supervisor level and at Senior Manager / Head of Service level;

- clarify the thinking and evidence the nature of the concern and reason for the dispute or disagreement;
- ask that the actions, inactions or decision-making dispute or disagreement be reviewed and seek a resolution;
- if no resolution can be found, ask that their position be noted and recorded in writing into any record being kept;
- ask that the CSWO escalate the dispute or disagreement quickly and without delay to the Child Protection Committee (CPC) / Chief Officers Group (COG);
- record their position accurately and contemporaneously in their own service or agency records;
- provide feedback to the practitioner who raised the original concern, the First Line Manager / Supervisor and Senior Manager / Head of Service who brought the original concern to their attention;

Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO)

The important role of the CSWO is clearly specified in [Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer Responsibilities](#) (Scottish Government: February 2019).

In summary, the CSWO's role includes a responsibility for providing professional advice and challenge to all partners on *values and standards; practice and managerial decision – making; leadership; accountability; reporting arrangements and learning and development through reflective discussions and constructive debate.*

The CSWO will have the final determination responsibility in terms of any unresolved dispute or disagreement. If, in the unlikely event, the original dispute or disagreement remains unresolved, the CSWO may decide to refer the matter to the Child Protection Committee (CPC) and / or the Chief Officers Group (COG).

Shared Learning

Throughout this process, all participants should be provided with regular feedback and where necessary de-briefed in terms of the outcome (s). To be effective, the process of resolution and escalation should be followed quickly and without delay in every case.

Throughout this process, any practice, policy and / or procedural learning should be identified and shared with the practitioners, services and agencies involved.

Where there is an identified need for practice, policy and / or procedural improvement work, then this will be referred to the CPC and / or the CPC Practice Improvement Working Group.

This will promote and encourage continuous improvement and effective partnership working.

Any concerns which relate to professional behaviour, conduct and / or wrong-doing to not fall within the scope of this guidance. These are matters that should be progressed via existing service / agency formal statutory complaints and / or disciplinary procedures.

If appropriate, single and / or multi-agency Whistleblowing procedures can also be considered, and if necessary, applied.

Appendix 1 Practitioner's Flowchart

