## **Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board Escalation and Resolution Policy Refreshed March 2023**

The safety of Adults is paramount and learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews and other serious case reviews has highlighted the need for all staff across partner agencies to have a clear understanding about their responsibility for professional challenge and the importance of knowing how to escalate concerns about safeguarding, associated risk issues and decision-making.

Multi-agency working is the foundation of good Safeguarding Adults practice. All partner agencies have their own roles to play in the Safeguarding Adults process as set out in the agreed multi-agency policies and procedures. It is also crucial that partner agencies are committed and accountable for delivering their parts of the Safeguarding Adults’ processes to a high standard.

This policy aims to support the positive escalation and resolution of any professional difference between agencies working to safeguard adults in Rotherham. Whilst in general our working relationships between agencies are strong and it is acknowledged that professional challenge is a positive driving force in developing practice, occasionally disagreements may arise, which require timely resolution so as not to delay any decision-making needed in relation to the adult (s) concerned.

The Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB) is clear that there must be respectful challenge whenever a professional or agency has a concern about the action or inaction of another. Similarly, agencies / professionals should not be defensive if challenged and practitioners and managers in all agencies should always be prepared to review actions, decisions and plans with an open mind and act proportionately.

Such partnership working together to safeguard and promote the welfare and well-being of adults is essential to the achievement of good outcomes.

On occasion, there will inevitably be some areas of disagreement or concern between professionals or organisations in relation to responsibilities, opinions, decisions, and actions and how these are impacting on progress and positive outcomes for individual adult. To promote and maintain effective multi-agency working, it is vital that these concerns and disagreements are discussed in a timely, open, and transparent manner and that appropriate challenges are made.

It is acknowledged that providing or receiving challenge from another professional can sometimes be difficult for parties involved and this should be undertaken appropriately, with respect and always ensuring that the adult concerned and their outcomes is always at the heart of the discussion. If done in this way this will provide positive opportunities to reflect, review and revise opinions, approaches, and decisions; as well as supporting the development of professional confidence and competence and strong partnership approach to our safeguarding practice.

Resolving professional differences about practice should be seen as an opportunity to learn and develop both from each other as individuals and as organisations; it is about improving outcomes for the adults we serve and providing accountability.

Wherever possible, all efforts should be made to resolve these issues at the lowest possible level within and between organisations or agencies, as it is at this level that the adult’s specific circumstances and needs are known.

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring the adult is appropriately safeguarded. The adult’s wellbeing, wishes, and safety must remain paramount throughout any escalation and resolution to the concerns raised.

# However if the issue remains unresolved and in need of escalation these concerns should be referred to the Safeguarding Adult’s Team at the Local Authority using the Record of Escalation, Challenge and Conflict Resolution process (Appendix B)

### Principles of Resolving Professional Differences in Practice

The following principles must apply when resolving professional differences of opinion:

The safety and wellbeing of the adult is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement. Professional differences of opinion, disagreements, or disputes that obscure the focus on the person at risk of harm, or delay to services being provided must be avoided.

The aim should be to resolve any difficulties at the practitioner level or between agencies as simply and as quickly as possible always being proportionate to the issues giving the original cause for concern.

The adult at risk should not become involved in differences of professional opinion unless it is deemed appropriate to seek some level of agreed clarification or their views, wishes and feelings are required to assist with a way forward.

The views of all those involved with the adult should have their views and opinions valued and respected and any challenge should be in relation to practice issues and not the individual professional.

It is important to remember that multi-agency working with adults requires both individual and collective professional judgements to be made and these directly influence practice and decision making. Differences of opinion over professional judgements will not necessarily signify that there are practice issues. However, it is expected that any significant decision influenced by professional judgements have sound rationale, which is transparent, evidenced, clearly recorded and where appropriate, communicated to all those involved in providing multi-agency services to the adult.

Professionals have a duty to appropriately challenge one another when they believe that poor practice - judgement, decision-making or delay may impact negatively on positive outcomes for the adult; this includes where statutory requirements or local

procedures are not being adhered to and includes where there is a lack of consideration of the adult's wishes and feelings.

The number of professional differences/disputes is reduced when there is clarity and understanding relating to the respective duties, roles and responsibilities of individual professionals and agencies and a genuine belief in partnership working.

Effective working together depends on transparency and accountability within and between organisations, and an open and honest approach between professionals.

It should be acknowledged that differences in organisational or professional status and / or experience may affect the confidence of some professionals to challenge practice. This should not be a reason for this not to happen and appropriate support should be in place and provided within each organisation to enable and support its professionals / workforce to do so.

### Process for Resolving Professional Differences in Practice

The following processes and stages are likely to be involved:

### Identification or recognition that there is or may be a practice issue

If a professional identifies that there is or may be a practice issue, it is necessary for them to work in partnership with colleagues in their own and other organisations to clarify the issue. Early identification and resolution is key to maintaining the focus on outcomes for the adult and prevent an escalation of any issues at a later stage.

Recognition of a practice issue may be as result of something a professional has observed, read, discussed, heard or been notified of (including from the adult) and / or arise from knowledge about Legislation, Policies / Procedures, Protocols and Pathways or Best Practice Guidance.

### Clarification of the practice issue within and between agencies

Early clarification of the practice issue is essential and will be informed by the status and circumstances of the adult, the likely impact on them and the level and priority of concern potentially raised by the issue. Clarification could involve consulting an experienced colleague, Line Manager, or named safeguarding professional (this should not be a substitute for supervision within the guidelines of the professional's own organisation) and can help clarify thinking in the wider context of the case, checking procedures and other practice documentation.

Seeking early clarification with colleagues in partner agencies involved with the adult may be enough to provide reassurance that a practice issue is not evident or that there are actions being taken or to be taken to address any adverse impact on the adult.

### Resolution of the Practice issue

### As previously detailed under the resolution principles the safety and wellbeing of the adult is the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement. Professional differences of opinion, disagreements, or disputes that obscure the focus on the person at risk of harm, or delay to services being provided must be avoided.

The aim of this escalation / resolution process should be to resolve difficulties at the practitioner level or between agencies as simply and as quickly as possible. The table and flow chart provided gives the necessary escalation stages and associated timeframes for each stage. Please note however these are maximum timescales and escalations must be made at the earliest opportunity linked to the risk level for the adult (s)

**Stage 1- within 48 working hours of concern being received**

A statement is needed to ensure cases of serious concern need to be escalated to Stage 3 if risk is

Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate should initially consult their supervisor/manager (in the agency concerned or in their own organisation, if the latter is the same as Stage 3). When consulting with the supervisor/manager they should

1. Be specific as to what the disagreement is about
2. Be clear about what they aim to achieve through the discussion

Initial attempts should be taken to resolve the problem at the lowest possible level. This would normally be between the practitioners who disagree. It should be recognised that differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to pursue this without support. In all cases, the discussion and its outcome should be documented on the adult’s case record by each of the professionals involved being careful to differentiate between fact and opinion, and to record the outcomes from the discussion including next steps to be taken and within what timescale

**Stage 2- within 5 working days of the concern**

A statement is needed to ensure cases of serious concern need to be escalated to Stage 3 if risk is imminent.If the problem is not resolved at Stage 1, the concerned worker should contact their supervisor/manager within their own agency and request that they raise the concerns with the equivalent supervisor/manager in the other agency. All recording should be completed as in Stages 1 using the adult’s case records

**Stage 4- within 10 working days of concern**

If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences within the agencies concerned a Safeguarding Adults Board Resolution Panel will be convened by the Board Manager of the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board. The panel must consist of representatives from three agencies (including the agencies concerned in the professional differences) and will be chaired by the RSAB Independent Chair. The panel will receive representations from those agencies concerned and make a decision as to the next course of action.

The decision of the panel is binding on all agencies concerned. The panel will produce a brief report of the issues and decisions made, which is submitted to the Safeguarding Adults Board on an annual basis.

The Board recognise that information in certain case discussions may need to be shared with commissioning in line with contract compliance.

**Stage 3- within 7 working days of concern**

If the problem is not resolved at Stage 2 the practitioners’ supervisor/manager reports to their respective operations manager or named /designated Safeguarding Adults lead . These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion. All recording should be completed using the adult’s case records as in Stages 1 and 2.

Stage Three

Senior Manager to Senior Manager

RSAB Board Manager must be notified at stage 3 to keep a record of all ongoing disagreement and also be involved when resolution is reached

Stage Two

Manager to Manager

Appendix A

# Escalation and Resolution Procedure for Raising Safeguarding Concerns Flowchart

Stage One

Professional To Professional

In the unlikely event the matter is not resolved; it should be escalated to the Independent Chair of the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board so that the matter can be reviewed. The outcome will be conveyed to the referrer- ESCALTATION REVIEW MEETING NEEDED /

Appendix B

# Record of Escalation, Challenge and Conflict Resolution

At all stages of escalation records of discussions and any decisions made should be recorded in writing and shared with any relevant personnel.

**When stage 3 is reached the RSAB Board Manager must be informed to record the disagreement and inform the Independent Chair**

The RSAB does not prescribe a specific reporting format, but this form can be used where helpful.- BETTER TO USE FORM STAGE 2 ONWARDS AS RECORD ??

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name of adult at risk. |  | |
| Summary of reason for dispute – include views of all agencies | Include evidence such as: Case notes  Minutes Emails  Supervision notes etc. | |
| Agreed outcomes or actions if satisfactory resolved / agreed next steps including escalation to the next stage if  unresolved |  | |
| Please indicate who this information is being copied to |  | |
| Stage at which  resolution agreed | Time taken to reach  resolution | Additional notes: |
|  |  |
| Referrer | Name |  |
| Job Title |  |
| Agency |  |
| Date |  |

**Action Note: Copy of this form to be held on the adult’s record in all agencies involved in the resolution of professional difference from Stage 2 onwards . If escalating to next stage use as basis of report to manager at next stage.**