



Professional Challenge Policy

2019 -2021

Purpose

- ▣ To establish processes to ensure a culture which promotes professional challenge.
- ▣ To ensure that staff in all agencies are competent and confident in challenging practice in the child's best interests.

Introduction

Professional challenge is a positive activity and a sign of good professional practice, a healthy organisation and effective multiagency working. Being professionally challenged should not be seen as a slur on the person's professional capabilities.

Many serious case reviews, both nationally and locally, have identified an apparent reluctance to challenge interagency decision making. The serious case reviews have often identified one, if not more, professional(s) who is/are concerned with a decision made by a different agency. However the serious case reviews have identified that their concerns have not been followed up with robust professional challenge which may have altered the professional response.

Professional challenge and critical reflection about the focus and intended outcome of intervention should include questioning and being open to professional challenge from colleagues as well as being confident to challenge others.

Professional challenge is a fundamental professional responsibility. In this context it is about challenging decisions, practice or actions which may not effectively ensure the safety or well-being of a child or young person or his/her family.

Many professional challenges will be resolved on an informal basis by contact between the professional raising the challenge (or their manager) and agency receiving the challenge and will end there.

How should a professional make a challenge?

1. Any professional who is unhappy about the decision/action should contact the professional who made the decision/took the action to express their views and concern and discuss/explore the basis of that decision.
2. If the issue cannot be resolved between them both professionals should raise the issue with his/her manager/Named professional.
3. If the manager considers it appropriate an interagency meeting should be held between the agency raising the professional challenge and the receiving agency to discuss the different views. At this point the LSCB Business Support Team should be notified of the nature of the professional challenge.

4. If the issue cannot be resolved at this interagency meeting the worker's manager should discuss it with the relevant head of service.
5. If resolution still cannot be found, the relevant head of service should raise the issue with the agency's representative on the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The threshold for reporting the use of professional challenge to the LSCB

The threshold for reporting professional challenge to the LSCB is when it becomes necessary to move to stage 3 above. (i.e. it has not been possible to satisfactorily resolve the issue at stages 1 and 2 and an interagency meeting is held between the agency raising the professional challenge and the receiving agency to discuss the different views).

Reporting the use of professional challenge

To monitor the use of this procedure the following information should be provided to the Safeguarding Children Board Business Support Team by the Named Person for the agency which raised the challenge:

- ☐ What was the challenge?
- ☐ What was done to address the challenge?
- ☐ What was the outcome of these actions?
- ☐ How was the issue resolved?
- ☐ Are the professionals involved satisfied with the outcome?
- ☐ If resolution could not be achieved was the issue referred to the LSCB?

Reporting professional challenge activity

1. The areas of challenge, the use of this procedure and the outcomes will be reported to the Safeguarding Children Board and also reported to the Chief Executive of the respective local authority on a six monthly basis.
2. Statistical information about professional challenge and the use of this procedure to address professional challenges will be reported in the Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report.
3. This procedure will be reviewed in the light of feedback provided to the Safeguarding Children Board.

Resolution process for children in care

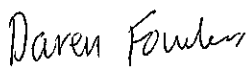
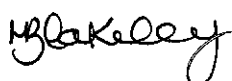
It should be noted that all Local Authorities are required to have a Resolution Process in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002 where there is a concern or disagreement concerning a child in care. This requirement is clearly stipulated in the guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers. One of the Independent Reviewing Officer's key roles is problem resolution. Where an issue of poor practice is identified the IRO will negotiate with the Local Authority management up to the highest level if needed. In the last resort the IRO has the power to refer a case to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS). The IRO will also work with the Local Authority complaints officer and advocates where necessary for the resolution of a problem.

If a professional is unhappy about the way a case involving a child in care is being dealt with the professional should contact the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.

Raising awareness of this procedure

The Local Safeguarding Children Board will raise awareness of this procedure across multiagency staff through its training programme and website.

Signed

D. Fowler		Chair of Governors	16.1.19
H. Blakeley		Headteacher	16.1.19

Reviewed: 8.1.19

