

## Resolving Professional Differences

- 1.1 This guidance explains how professional differences relating to the safety of adults at risk of abuse should be resolved. It is applicable to all individuals and organisations who have a role in the safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse, and supports Somerset's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults policy.
  - 1.2 It is expected that all agencies/ practitioners work with the interests of the individual central to all they do- person centred approach.
  - 1.3 All professionals working with adults must be able to challenge each other appropriately and in a professionally respectful way when agencies are not working well together. Where the risk is elevated there may be cause to escalate this concern among agencies.
  - 1.4 Effective working together depends on resolving differences and in most cases this includes the individual and/ or their advocate, professionals and organisations. It is every professional's responsibility to provide solutions. The aim must be to resolve professional differences at the earliest possible stage as swiftly as possible, always keeping in mind that the adult at risk's safety and wellbeing is the paramount consideration. This would be at practitioner level between organisations, if necessary with the involvement of their supervisors/managers, engaging in open discussion with colleagues in other organisations.
  - 1.5 The SSAB is clear that there must be respectful challenge whenever a professional or organisation has a concern about the action and/or inaction of another. Similarly, professionals/organisations should not be defensive if challenged. Staff at all levels, and managers, should always be prepared to review decisions and plans with an open mind and act proportionately.
- 1.5 Why this RPD may be needed:** Efficient resolution of differences requires the effective use of line management structures and courageous conversations in order that escalation is effective. Differences may arise in relation to:
- Application of the care act guidance e.g outcome of safeguarding referral, risk management
  - Lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities and engagement by agencies
  - Timeliness of interventions- need for action as result of drift
  - Information sharing and communication (including feedback)
  - Where it is decided that there is no further involvement from key agencies / services

This list is not exclusive, and differences may arise about other matters.

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1.7 It is expected that this escalation and resolution process should be used **first and foremost**. However, if at any stage it is felt necessary to make a formal complaint, each agency should follow the recognised complaints procedure and adhere to the timescales specified.

1.8 This guidance should not be used when there is a complaint about the conduct of an individual staff member. In such situations the relevant organisation's complaints procedure will apply. Where you believe a practitioner's conduct may have harmed an adult you will need to follow your agency's Safeguarding Adults, Staff allegations management and Freedom to speak up / Whistleblowing policies.

1.9 **At no time must professional differences detract from ensuring the adult is safeguarded.** The adult's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout. Professional differences are only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion.

### 2. The Escalation Process

Stage	Action
	<p>Consider at each stage, if not already done so, making a safeguarding referral to the Local Authority via Adults Social Care via Somerset Direct (0300 123 2224) or the Safeguarding Adults referral portal.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If an adult is in immediate danger contact the Police on 999.</p>
One	<p><b>Early Resolution</b> Practitioner A contacts practitioner B to discuss the issue and resolve it, if possible. This should be clearly and accurately recorded on the adult's record in line with each involved agencies guidance. <b>If not resolved, move to stage 2</b></p>
Two	<p><b>Informal Resolution Procedure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioner A seeks advice from line manager / safeguarding lead. Practitioner A's manager contacts practitioner B's manager for discussion and negotiation, clearly setting out the issue that needs to be resolved and the desired outcome of the resolution for the adult.</li> <li>• Agree a clear timescale (that will not put the individual at risk of further harm or cause drift to the ongoing risk management) and required response from the Agency B's manager, if it is not possible to resolve the issue straightaway.</li> <li>• This should be clearly and accurately recorded on the adult's record in line with each agencies guidance.</li> </ul> <p>For the purposes of this process, the appropriate Management lead within the organisation referred to above. <b>If not resolved, move to stage 3</b></p>

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Three	<p><b>Formal Resolution Procedure</b></p> <p>If there is still no resolution, then a referral should be made to the three SSAB statutory partners via the SSAB mailbox providing details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisations involved</li> <li>• The request that has been made, when it was made and why it was made</li> <li>• Action already taken to attempt a resolution</li> <li>• Any reasons given for refusal</li> <li>• Any other relevant information, including urgency</li> </ul> <p>The relevant statutory SSAB partners* will facilitate a meeting where all the relevant organisations are invited. Agencies will provide a suitable representative, who have decision making authority in relation to the organisation and its response to the person's circumstances.</p> <p>The SSAB Business manager will take responsibility for the coordination of the meeting.</p> <p>*Local Authority, Integrated Care Board and Police</p>
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2.1 All involved need to be professionally satisfied that the differences have been resolved, with clear outcomes and plan moving forwards agreed and that each party has the relevant information to make that decision, with all parties given the opportunity to express their views and present any relevant evidence.

### 3. Escalation Principles

3.1 Differences in status and/or experience may affect the confidence of some workers to escalate this unsupported. In these circumstances a third party should be consulted.

3.2 In the case of Independent Care Provisions unresolved disputes should be raised with the relevant Commissioning contract and quality officer.

3.3 Stage 3 **must not** be used to escalate day-to-day safeguarding alerts in an attempt to inappropriately bypass normal processes, abdicate individual or organisational responsibilities or as a route to resolve personal differences between professionals.