

LSCP Multi-Agency Escalation Policy

Version Control

Date Issued	Version	Summary of changes	Approved by
May 2020	V1	Ratified May 2020.	LSCP Executive Board
May 2023	V2	Review due.	LSCP Executive Board
Jul 2024	V3	Updated in line with revised Working Together to Safeguard Children (Dec 2023).	LSCP Executive Board
Apr 2026	V4	New explanatory sections added to clarify when policy should be used, who it applies to & the principles of challenge and escalation. Timescales for resolution reduced from 30 to 10 working days. Requirement for multiagency meeting removed. Requirement to notify LSCP of Stage 3 and above escalations introduced. Escalation form added to Policy.	LSCP Executive Board

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1) Introduction

When working together to safeguard children, at times there will be differences of opinion and/or concerns about professional practice in relation to a child or family. The safety and wellbeing of the child is always the primary concern, and professional disagreements must not obstruct this. Professionals have a responsibility to respectfully challenge and raise concerns where they feel that another agency is not acting in a way which effectively safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, and to escalate those concerns where resolution is not achieved. Professionals have equal responsibility to respectfully listen and respond to the concerns raised by others.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that professional disagreements are resolved swiftly, transparently and in a way that results in improved safeguarding outcomes for children. This Policy explains how these disagreements and concerns can be raised and escalated in Lambeth.

2) When to use this Policy

This Policy should be used when there is a difference of opinion and/or concerns that the decisions, actions or inactions of another agency do not adequately safeguard or promote the welfare of children.

Disagreements can arise in several areas, but some common examples include:

- Concerns about application of thresholds, such as:
 - Decisions to take ‘no further action’
 - Decisions to end or step-down services
 - Decisions about which level the concern should be managed at
- Concerns that a lack of communication is compromising the effectiveness of safeguarding responses
- Concerns about drift, delay or lack of progress on a plan

This policy should not be used in the following circumstances:

- Where a child has died or suffered serious harm in circumstances where abuse and/or neglect is known or suspected, the [LSCP Serious Incident Notification and Case for Consideration](#) pathways should be followed.
- Concerns relating to decisions, suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work within an agency, should be raised in line with each agencies’ policies for dealing with

such matters, including but not limited to those setting out the arrangements for whistleblowing.

When this policy is overridden

If a child is thought to be at risk of immediate harm, a referral must be made to Lambeth Children's Social Care (and police, where appropriate) and the designated safeguarding lead in your agency should be informed immediately:

- 0207 926 3100 (office hours)
- 0207 926 5555 (out of office hours)
- helpandprotection@lambeth.gov.uk
- [Make a written referral to Lambeth Children's Social Care](#)

There are certain instances where this Policy should be over-ridden and the Corporate Director for Children, Families & Education and the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Partnership should be made immediately aware by whoever first comes to know. These are instances of:

- Child death
- Life changing injury
- Abduction of child on a Child Protection plan or in care
- Immediate threat of judicial review; or
- Imminent threat of media attention, particularly which might place a family under stress

3) Who this Policy applies to

This policy is for professional use only. Children and families who have concerns should follow the complaints process of the agency they are concerned about.¹

This Policy is for use by professionals at all levels and agencies in relation to inter-agency issues. Any agency can use this policy to raise concerns with any other agency involved in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

¹ [Make a complaint about Lambeth Children's Social Care](#)
[Make a complaint about other Lambeth Council services](#)
[Make a complaint about health services in Lambeth](#)
[Make a complaint about the police](#)

For all other agencies, please refer to the complaints procedure on their website

The term '*Concerned Agency*' is used to refer to the professional/agency who is concerned that another agency is not adequately safeguarding or promoting the welfare of children. The term '*Subject Agency*' is used to refer to the agency to whom the concerns relate.

All agencies are responsible for ensuring:

- Frontline professionals, managers and leaders are familiar with this policy; and
- Professionals are supported and empowered to professionally challenge and escalate intra-agency concerns.

4) How to use this Policy

The principles of professional challenge and escalation

Professional challenge is a normal part of safeguarding practice; escalation is the structured process for unresolved disagreements. Both are welcomed as positive practice which enables shared accountability with a focus on curiosity, respect, openness and the child's lived experience at the centre of all practice.

Whether a professional belongs to a Concerned Agency or Subject Agency, the following principles must be applied to any professional challenge or escalation:

- The safety and wellbeing of children is always the primary concern
- Professionals have a duty to respectfully challenge and raise concerns that another agency is not acting in a way which effectively safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, regardless of hierarchy or agency
- Concerns must be raised and resolved promptly
- Professional challenge and escalation are welcomed as a hallmark of good safeguarding practice
- Professionals approach all cases with an open mindset and a willingness to change their opinions based on the best available evidence
- Disagreements are grounded in professional judgement, not personal opinion or organisational pressure
- All communication must be respectful, focussed and solution-orientated.

How to raise and escalate concerns

These steps must be undertaken by agencies at each stage of escalation.

Concerned Agencies should:

- Maintain, on their own files, a written record of the concern, the evidence/rationale for this² and the resolution sought using the [escalation form](#).
- Communicate, in writing, the nature of the concern, the evidence/rationale for this and the resolution sought using the escalation form (being clear what stage the escalation is at and outcomes from any prior stages).
- Support involved frontline practitioners with direct knowledge of the child and family to remain actively involved in and contribute to the escalation process at each stage.
- Maintain, on their own files, a written record of the response received and whether the matter is resolved or will be escalated to the next stage.

Subject Agencies should:

- Maintain, on their own files, a copy of the written record received.
- Support involved frontline practitioners with direct knowledge of the child and family to remain actively involved in and contribute to the escalation process at each stage.
- Communicate, in writing, the response to the concern, the rationale for this and – where relevant – the contact details to whom further escalations should be sent if the concerned agency wishes to progress to the next stage.

The [escalation form](#) should be used to keep a centralised record of the status of the escalation, with the most current version being saved to the child's record in each agency's records.

² Evidence should include, wherever possible: a chronology, a summary of the impact of the concern for the child, reference to [Pan-London Thresholds](#) and specific risk indicators.

The stages of escalation

Stage one: Professional to Professional (working day 1)

What? Most professional disagreements can be resolved between professionals by having a conversation about the reasons for the difference of opinion and without having to escalate. The professional for the Concerned Agency should communicate their concerns in writing to the professional in the Subject Agency. The discussion must take place as soon as possible and could be a telephone conversation, online or face-to-face meeting.

When? The discussion date constitutes Day 1 of the process.

Who? The responsible professional level for this stage is frontline practitioners (for example, social workers, early help practitioners, teachers, nurses, doctors, police constables, health visitors, midwives, school nurses, parenting practitioners, GPs, youth workers, CAMHS practitioners, etc).

Stage two: Manager to Manager (by working day 3)

What? If professionals are unable to resolve the matter satisfactorily, the concern must be escalated to line management level in the Concerned Agency. The manager in the Concerned Agency should have a discussion with the equivalent manager/supervisor in the Subject Agency. The manager may wish to take advice from their own safeguarding team. If the case involves a child subject to a Child Protection Plan or a Looked After Child, the relevant Child Protection Chair or Independent Reviewing Officer must also be notified.

When? The manager to manager discussion must take place by working day 3, although may need to take place earlier dependent on professional judgement and the urgency of the concern.

Who? The responsible professional level for this stage includes, for example, Children's Social Care Team Managers, Lambeth Health Economy Clinical Safeguarding Managers (GSTT Community / Acute, KCH & SLaM), Designated Safeguarding Leads in a school/early years setting, Police Sergeant, GP Practice Named Safeguarding Lead, etc.

Stage 3: Senior Manager to Senior Manager (by working day 5)

What? If the problem is not resolved at Stage 2, the supervisor/manager must escalate to their respective senior manager in the Concerned Agency. The senior manager in the Concerned Agency should have a discussion with the equivalent senior manager in the Subject Agency. At this stage, the Concerned Agency should submit a completed escalation form to the LSCP (saferchildren@lambeth.gov.uk) marking it 'for information only'.³

When? The senior manager to senior manager discussion must take place by working day 5, although may need to take place earlier dependent on professional judgement and the urgency of the concern.

Who? The responsible professional level for this stage includes, for example, Children's Social Care Service Manager, Lambeth Council Head of Safeguarding, Safeguarding Lead, Named Lambeth Designated Safeguarding and Children Looked After Professionals (GP, GSTT Community / Acute, KCH and SLaM), Head of Safeguarding, Headteacher, Police Detective Inspector, etc.

Stage 4: Director to Director (by working day 7)

What? If there remains disagreement at senior management level, there should be a discussion between Directors (or equivalent) in each agency. Directors should alert and, where necessary, involve the LSCP Executive Board member for their agency. Directors from the Concerned Agency should also submit an updated escalation form to saferchildren@lambeth.gov.uk marking it 'for information only'.

When? The Director to Director discussion must take place by working day 7, although may need to take place earlier dependent on professional judgement and the urgency of the concern.

Who? The responsible professional level for this stage includes, for example, Children's Social Care Director or Assistant Director, Police DCI/Superintendent, ICB – Director of Integrated Commissioning for Children and Youth Services. Directors should alert and, where necessary, involve the LSCP Executive Board member for their agency.

³ The LSCP will keep an index of Stage 3 & 4 Escalations which will be used to inform analysis of any common themes/patterns for oversight of the Performance Challenge Impact Subgroup.

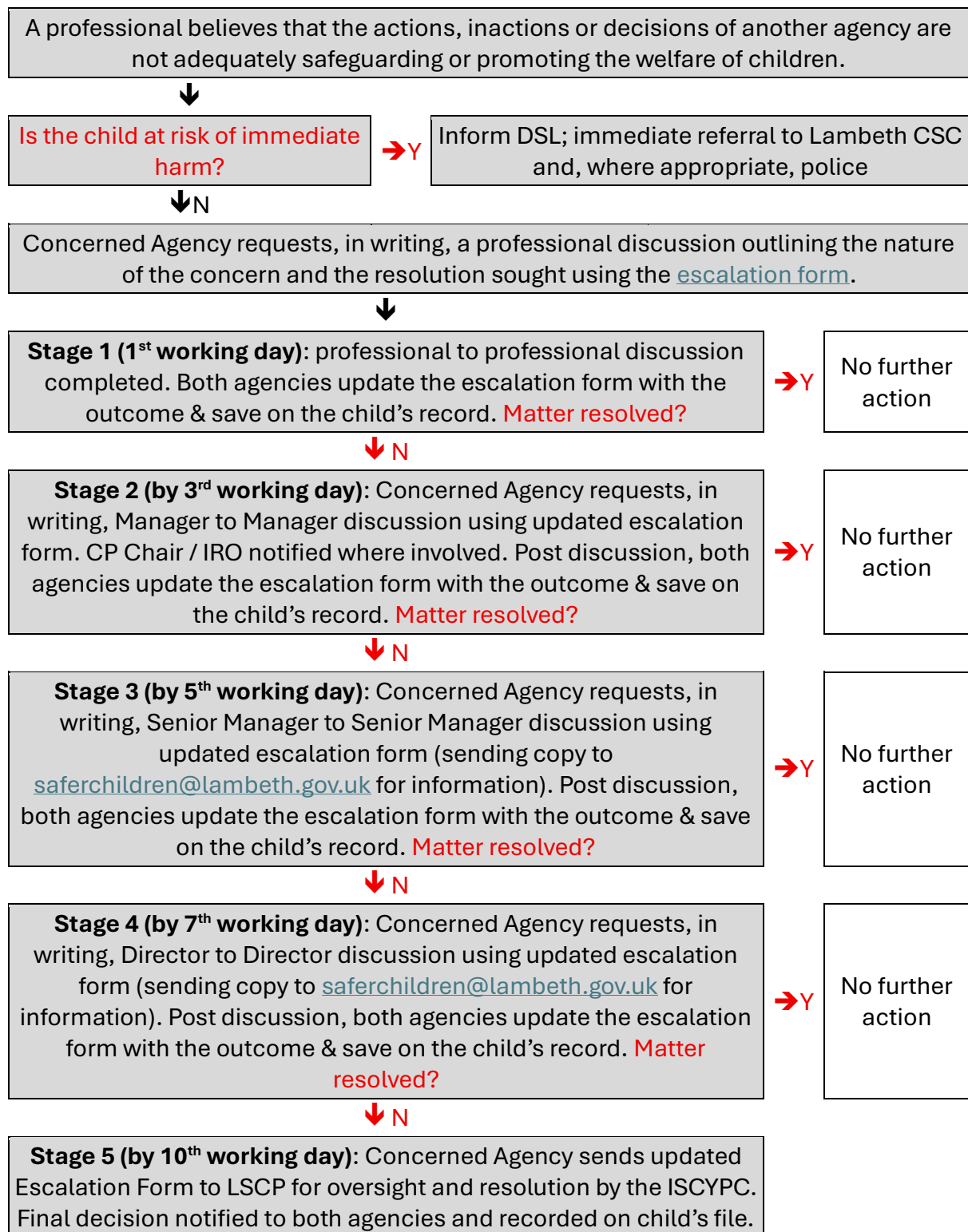
Stage 5: resolution by Lambeth Safeguarding Children Partnership (by working day 10)

What? If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences within the agencies concerned, the matter should be referred by the Concerned Agency to the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Partnership's Independent Safeguarding Children & Young People Commissioner (ISCYC). The Concerned Agency should submit the updated escalation form to saferchildren@lambeth.gov.uk marking it 'for the attention and resolution of the LSCP ISCYC'.

The ISCYC will seek to resolve the issue directly with relevant senior managers and/or directors and provide a final resolution.

When? The final resolution must be completed within 10 working days of the process being triggered.

5) Escalation Process Flowchart



Appendix A – Escalation Form

Please use this form to document the nature of the concern and keep a record of the progress of escalation until resolution is achieved. The safety and wellbeing of the child is always the primary concern, and professional disagreements must not obstruct this. Professionals have a responsibility to respectfully challenge and raise concerns where they feel that another agency is not acting in a way which effectively safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, and to escalate those concerns where resolution is not achieved. Professionals have equal responsibility to respectfully listen and respond to the concerns raised by others.

Please ensure the updated copies are saved to the child’s record, regardless of whether you are a concerned agency making an escalation or subject agency about whom an escalation has been made.

Your name	
Your agency	
The agency you are concerned about	
The nature of the concern	
The evidence/rationale for the concern <i>(Evidence should include, wherever possible: a chronology, a summary of the impact of the concern for the child, reference to Pan-London Thresholds and specific risk indicators.)</i>	
The impact on the child	
Actions taken so far to resolve the issue	
The resolution being sought	

Details of stage 1 outcome:

Where relevant, details of subsequent outcomes:

Stage	Trigger date	Sent to	Discussion date	Response outcome	Resolution achieved? (Y/N)
2					
3					
4					
5					