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Background

[Working Together 2023](#) requires safeguarding partners to have a quick and straightforward means of resolving differences of opinion in place. Learning from local and national reviews tells us that although partner agencies may disagree about the level of risk that a case presents, differing views are often not explored or challenged and escalation procedures are not always followed. Research shows that agencies can feel unable to challenge decisions, particularly where one agency is seen as the expert. Staff may not be aware of escalation procedures or know what to do about their concerns.

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Why it matters

All partner agencies are equally responsible for the welfare of a child and family, and the safety and wellbeing of the child should be kept at the forefront. Discussion and respectful challenge between professionals is key to robust decision-making. Framing this as 'resolving professional differences' rather than 'escalation' may assist in creating opportunities for constructive interprofessional dialogue.

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Information

Sometimes, disagreements can happen such as whether a referral is accepted at the front door of Blackpool's Request for Support Hub. A fully completed referral which includes clear details of what the concerns are will help to avoid disagreement. Other disagreements can include threshold disputes, or over the provision of services or sharing of information. It can help professionals to reach agreement if referrers can provide clear and specific evidence as to why you are

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worried, and about the impact the situation is having on the child. If a disagreement or difference of opinion can't be swiftly resolved at practitioner level, advice should be sought from the Safeguarding Lead in your organisation. The [Pan Lancashire Resolving Professional Disagreements / Escalation Policy](#)

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outlines the next steps and how to escalate through each tier of line management. Each stage (1, 2 or 3) should be completed within 5 working days (15 working days maximum). Where there is a need for intervention to prevent a life threatening episode immediate action to reduce the risk of harm will be required by all relevant parties whilst the dispute is ongoing. In such circumstances, where certain agencies maintain a position of non-involvement and other agencies disagree with this position, the MASA Team should be informed at the earliest opportunity.

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What to do

In the unlikely event that timely agreement can't be reached at [Stages 1 - 3](#) through respectful discussions and evidence based challenge between management peers, the dispute can be escalated to the highest level of management within each organisation. Disagreements must be resolved swiftly with no cost to the child's and family's wellbeing or safety. Only when all avenues have been exhausted should the formal escalation procedure be used.

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Questions to consider

Have I read the policy in full?
Is my team aware of and confident to use this procedure?
Have I followed all stages of the policy appropriately?
Have I made written records of all these discussions?

In situations where such senior officers have become involved in disputes which relate to the safeguarding needs of individual children, the [MASA](#) Team must be made aware of this.

