



SLOUGH CHILDRENS SERVICES TRUST

REVIEWING SERVICE ESCALATION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROTOCOL

This protocol has been developed to ensure that the Reviewing Service in Slough Children's Services Trust has an escalation process in place through which issues or concerns may be raised and resolved where there are concerns involving the care plans for children looked after or children subject to a child protection plan.

This protocol will cover the areas of responsibility for the IRO's and CP Chairs, throughout this document they will be referred to as Independent Chairs.

This protocol should be read in conjunction with:

- [The IRO Handbook: Chapter 6, Dispute Resolutions and Complaints](#)
- [The Children Act 1989 Regulations and Guidance Volume 2 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review paragraphs 4.44 to 4.47](#)
- Slough Children's Services Trust Standards for reviews for children looked after and Child Protection Conference.
- [Slough SCP Conflict Resolution Policy](#).
- [Pan Berkshire Child Protection Procedures](#).

TRUST VALUES

When making any form of escalation the way in which this is conducted is important to ensure that the Trust values are clearly adhered to in order to keep the child at the centre:

Child-focussed

Committed to outcomes for children and their families which ensure they are safe, secure and successful.

Honest and respectful

Being honest and respectful, as part of an inclusive culture where our communication is always professional.

Improving constantly

Aspiring to achieve our vision through our everyday work, strong leadership and management; working to develop as a Trust and as individuals

Looking ahead

Moving in the same direction with an ambition to provide excellent services, based on insight and smart working, while keeping the voice of the child at the heart of the Trust.

Delivering together

Working as one Trust, through solid teamwork to deliver the best services for children and young people.



KEY PRINCIPLE

It is always in the best interests of the child and those professionals supporting the child to seek resolution at the earliest point possible; to prevent drift or delay, to promote consistency of practice across the service and ensure a focus on continued improvement for the Trust.

There will be occasions where it is not possible to seek resolution to issues through informal discussion and on these occasions a formal escalation process will be followed.

ESCALATION PROCESS

The escalation process is a mechanism to raise formally issues or concerns in relation to the child, their care plan and any issues that impact on their outcomes.

The escalation process is not the appropriate mechanism to raise practice issues or concerns about individual social worker's behaviour / conduct. In these cases it is expected that the Independent Chair will alert the relevant manager that they have concerns outlining what those concerns are giving specific information to enable the manager to address those issues with the worker in supervision.

Addressing concerns about the Independent Chair / Reviewing Service

- Where possible should any agency attending a CP Conference or a CLA Review have a concern or issue to raise regarding the review process or the Independent Chair; they should initially speak directly to the Independent Chair to address and resolve the concerns.
- If they remain unsatisfied with the outcome they can then put their concerns formally in writing to the Reviewing Service Manager. The concerns will be investigated and a formal response will be given to the agency raising the concern.
- Should matters remain unresolved the concern will be raised with the Head of Performance and Quality Assurance who will carry out a further review / investigation where necessary.
- Children and young people and parents will have access to the Complaints procedure.

The escalation process is laid out in the flow chart below.

In certain circumstances the Independent Chair may bypass earlier stages of the procedure and progress escalation to a higher level if concerns are significant and require urgent senior management intervention; this decision will be made in conjunction with the Reviewing Service Manager and the reasons for bypassing earlier stages clearly recorded.

The IRO Handbook states that:

The IRO has the power to refer the matter to Cafcass at any point in the dispute resolution process [regulation 45] and may consider it necessary to make a concurrent referral to Cafcass at the same time that s/he instigates the dispute resolution process; this decision will be made in conjunction with the Reviewing Service Manager and the AD Quality, Improvement and Practice and reasons for doing so will be clearly recorded.



Independent Chair Escalation Protocol

INFORMAL STAGE

- **Independent Chair** will raise an issue or concern informally with the social worker / ATM and aim to seek resolution informally.
- **Independent Chair** will make a case note under Independent Chair Informal Challenge to record a discussion has taken place and what has been agreed.



Resolved – issue is resolved and no further action is required.

Not resolved – escalate to formal stage one



FORMAL - STAGE ONE ESCALATION TO ASSISTANT TEAM MANAGER (ATM)

- The Independent Chair will submit a stage one formal escalation to the ATM outlining the areas of concern and what actions are required to address them.
- This will be completed on the form within ICS and the ATM will receive this via their work tray (a separate email will also be sent to the ATM to alert them that a formal challenge has been made).
- The ATM is expected to reply to the escalation within 5 working days, completing the section on the form and tasking this back to the Independent Chair in ICS.

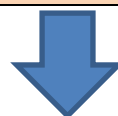
Once the Independent Chair receives the form in their task tray they will review the response and either:

- Agree the issue has been resolved and sign off the escalation on the form and finalise the document.
- Identify that the issue has not been resolved and make contact with the ATM to discuss the issues further and determine if issues can be resolved.
- If the issues cannot be resolved an escalation to stage two of the process is needed to get the issue addressed.



Resolved – issue is resolved and no further action is required.

Not resolved – escalate to stage two





FORMAL STAGE 2 ESCALATION TO TEAM MANAGER (TM)

- The Independent Chair will submit a stage two formal escalation to the TM outlining the areas of concern, actions previously taken to try and resolve the issues, and what actions are required to address them.
- This will be completed on the form within ICS and the TM will receive this via their work tray (a separate email will also be sent to the TM to alert them that a formal challenge has been made).
- The TM is expected to reply to the escalation within 5 working days, completing the section on the form and tasking this back to the Independent Chair in ICS.

Once the Independent chair receives the form in their task tray they will review the response and either:

- Agree the issue has been resolved and sign off the escalation on the form and finalise the document.
- Identify that the issue has not been resolved and make contact with the TM to discuss the issues further and determine if issues can be resolved.
- If the issues cannot be resolved an escalation to stage three of the process is needed to get the issue addressed.



Resolved – issue is resolved and no further action is required.

Not resolved – escalate to stage three



FORMAL STAGE 3 ESCALATION TO HEAD OF SERVICE (HOS)

- The Independent Chair will submit a stage three formal escalation to the HOS outlining the areas of concern, actions previously taken to try and resolve the issues, and what actions are required to address them.
- This will be completed on the form within ICS and the HOS will receive this via their work tray (a separate email will also be sent to the HOS to alert them that a formal escalation has been made).
- The HOS is expected to reply to the escalation within 5 working days, completing the section on the form and tasking this back to the Independent Chair in ICS.

Once the Independent chair receives the form in their task tray they will review the response and either:

- Agree the issue has been resolved and sign off the escalation on the form and finalise the document.
- Identify that the issue has not been resolved.
- ***Prior to an escalation to stage four a meeting will be set up with the Reviewing Service***



Manager, Head of Service QA and Safeguarding, Relevant Head of Service and Independent Chair to determine whether the issues can be resolved prior to a further escalation to stage four.



Resolved – issue is resolved and no further action is required.

Not resolved – escalate to stage four Assistant Director



FORMAL STAGE 4 ESCALATION TO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OPERATIONS (AD)

- The Independent Chair will submit a stage four formal escalation to the AD outlining the areas of concern, actions previously taken to try and resolve the issues, and what actions are required to address them.
- This will be completed on the form within ICS and the AD will receive this via their work tray (a separate email will also be sent to the AD to alert them that a formal escalation has been made).
- The AD is expected to reply to the escalation within 5 working days, completing the section on the form and tasking this back to the Independent Chair in ICS.

Once the Independent chair receives the form in their task tray they will review the response and either:

- Agree the issue has been resolved and sign off the escalation on the form and finalise the document.
- ***At stage four If the issues cannot be resolved by the AD a meeting will be set up between the AD Operations, the AD Quality, Improvement, Performance and Practice, Reviewing Service Manager, Head of QA and Safeguarding and relevant Head of Service to determine the next steps in relation to the issues identified.***