# Learning briefing

Herefordshire Multi-agency Resolution of Professional Differences Policy

### Introduction

Case reviews, nationally and in Herefordshire, have routinely highlighted the importance of professionals challenging decisions to ensure the best outcomes for children and their families. The purpose of the Professional Differences policy is to explain what to do when a professional has a concern or a professional difference with another agency’s decision or action related to a child or young person; and how to respond to that challenge.

This learning briefing provides a snap-shot summary of the policy and escalation procedure and does not replace the policy. Professionals should always refer to the full policy when dealing with a professional difference.

Access the [HSCP Professional Differences Policy – Multi-agency resolution protocol/guidance](https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/local-content/4gjN/escalation-policy-resolution-of-professional-disagreements/?b=Herefordshire) from the Herefordshire section of the West Midlands Child Protection Procedures website by following the link above

At Stage 2, Report to HSCP should be submitted as below.

### Reporting an escalation: Escalations that reach Stage 2 must be reported by completing the “Report to HSCP – Multi-agency Resolution Template” (Appendix 2). Submit the Form to [admin.sbu@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:admin.sbu@herefordshire.gov.uk) and send it to the relevant person at Stage 2 in the organisation to which the challenge is being raised.

### Formal escalation stages

Stages 1 to 4 below detail which professionals should be involved at different stages of escalation. If the matter is not resolved at any stage, it should move to the next stage in a timely manner.

**Stage 1: Line/Team Manager to Line/Team Manager**

**Stage 2 Safeguarding Lead/Service Manager/Head of Service to Safeguarding Lead/Service Manager/Head of Service**

**Stage 4 Escalation to HSCP Strategic Partners Board, via Chair**

**Stage 3 Executive Leader/Director/Senior Manager to Executive Leader/ Director/Senior Manager**

Within 1-3 working days of initial concern

Within 8 working days of initial concern

Within 13 working days of initial concern

Within 20 working days of initial concern

Pre-escalation: Before raising a formal escalation, all practitioners should first work together with their counterpart practitioners to discuss and attempt to resolve the matter in the best interests of the child.

NB – Refer to the full policy for more guidance and detail before raising an escalation.

### Four key messages

* Raising an escalation means that you are championing the best outcome for the child, and you will be respected for your challenge.
* Make it clear that you are raising an escalation under this policy. Learning from case reviews has shown that, in some cases, professionals may believe that they have challenged a decision but the challenge was not clear or not perceived as such.
* The timeframes indicated are maximum days to move from one stage of escalation to another. Do not delay if inaction will increase the risk to the child.
* The outcome of discussions and agreed actions must always be recorded on the child’s file and in each agency’s records. The Report to HSCP Form should be completed and submitted for escalations that reach Stage 2.