Redbridge

Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP)

Escalation and Resolution Policy

5th Edition
Issued November 2026
Review Date November 2029

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy has been developed by Redbridge Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) to ensure that all agencies working with children and young people in the Redbridge (including Health, Education, Housing, Children's Social Care, Adult Services, Probation, Police and community and voluntary sector organisations), have access to a straight forward multi-agency policy to quickly resolve, and where necessary escalate, professional differences where there are concerns that the welfare and safety of children and young people are at risk of being compromised.

1.2 The aim of this policy is to promote a culture of partnership working, whereby all agencies working with children, young people and their families feel confident, able and supported to address concerns in situations where there are differences in professional judgements around the response to the well-being and safety of children and young people.

1.3 Occasionally situations arise where professional disagreements occur. Disagreements can be healthy and foster creative ways of working with children and their families. However, disagreements can also impact negatively on positive working relationships and consequently on the ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Disagreements always require resolution.

1.4 The child's safety and wellbeing must be the paramount consideration at all times and professional differences must not distract from timely and clear decision making. All professionals working with children and families have a duty to act assertively and proactively to ensure that the child's welfare is seen as a priority at all levels of professional activity, as outlined in the DfE statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) and the London Safeguarding Children Procedures and Practice Guidance, 8th Edition, 2026.

1.5 This policy is not designed to replace the statutory complaints processes established within individual partner agencies. All agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are supported and know how to appropriately escalate and resolve interagency concerns and disagreements about a child or young person's well-being and the response to safeguarding needs.

2 Key Principles

2.1 Professionals should always:

- Share key information appropriately and often. There can be no justification for failing to share information that will allow action to be taken to protect children.
- Seek to resolve the issue quickly and at the practice rather than the management level.
- Ensure that professional differences do not place children at further risk by

obscuring the focus on the child or delay decision making.

- Keep focus on the child's safety and welfare at all times.
- Familiarise themselves with the escalation routes within their agency for resolution and escalation.
- Ensure accurate and contemporary recording on the child's file of key decisions and conversations in relation to the resolution process.
- Stay proactively involved; safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Use RSCP resolution process when necessary set out below in section 4.

3. Context

3.1 Disagreements between practitioners and agencies can arise at any stage in the safeguarding process and between any of the agencies involved. Some examples of potential areas of disagreement may include:

- Levels of need/threshold
- Concerns in relation to an agency's response to safeguarding concerns
- Roles and responsibilities
- Intra/inter agency communication
- Disagreement on lead agency or professional (this can be at step down or step up to/from children's social care intervention
- Practice/case management issues

4. Process

4.1 In cases where there is a difference of professional opinion and a professional considers a child or young person is at immediate risk of significant harm, concerns must be escalated to a manager and/or safeguarding lead immediately.

4.2 When there is a disagreement over a significant issue, which potentially impacts on the safety and welfare of a child but the child is not considered at immediate risk, the respective workers must identify explicitly the issue they are concerned about, the risk to the child, the nature of the disagreement and what the respective workers aim to achieve.

4.3 The professionals involved in the conflict resolution process must contemporaneously record each intra and inter-agency discussion they have, approve and date the record and place a record on the child's file together with any other written communications and information. The agreed outcome of discussions and how any outstanding issues will be pursued must be recorded. A flowchart of the process is on page 6.

4.4 **Stage 1**

In the first instance the professional with concerns should raise the matter with the

relevant practitioner/decision maker verbally or in writing **within 2 working days** of the disagreement or receipt of a decision.

The professional with concerns should provide clear evidence based reasons for their disagreement. The receiving practitioner / decision maker must read and review the case file and **must speak to the concerned professional within 3 working days** and attempt to find a mutually agreeable way forward sought via discussion or meeting.

The matter must be resolved more quickly if delay would fail to protect the child from harm.

Where a resolution is reached the responsible worker will confirm the outcome with the professional who has raised the concerns in writing within a further **2 working days.**

4.5 **Stage 2**

If the professionals are unable to resolve the matter satisfactorily within the timescale, the concern or difficulty should be escalated to their respective line managers **within the same working day** and a resolution should be achieved **within a further 5 working days** or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less). These first line managers should where necessary seek advice from their agency's designated safeguarding children professional.

Where a resolution is reached the receiving line manager will confirm the outcome with his / her counterpart in the agency raising concerns within a further **2 working days.**

4.6 **Stage 3**

If agreement cannot be reached following the involvement of first line managers **within a further 5 working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less)**, the issue must be referred without delay to the relevant senior manager (e.g. Child Protection and Assessment Team Service Manager / Detective Inspector / Head Teacher or other designated senior manager).

Alternatively (e.g. in health services), input may be sought directly from the named safeguarding children doctor or nurse in preference to the use of line manager.

The RSCP Business Manager should be copied into disagreements that have escalated to this level.

Following referral to senior managers, a resolution should be achieved **within a further five working days** or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less). The managers dealing with the issue will involve the Head of Service in their agency if required. Where a resolution is reached the senior manager in the agency receiving the concerns will confirm the outcome with his / her counterpart in the agency raising concerns within a further **two working days.**

4.7 **Stage 4**

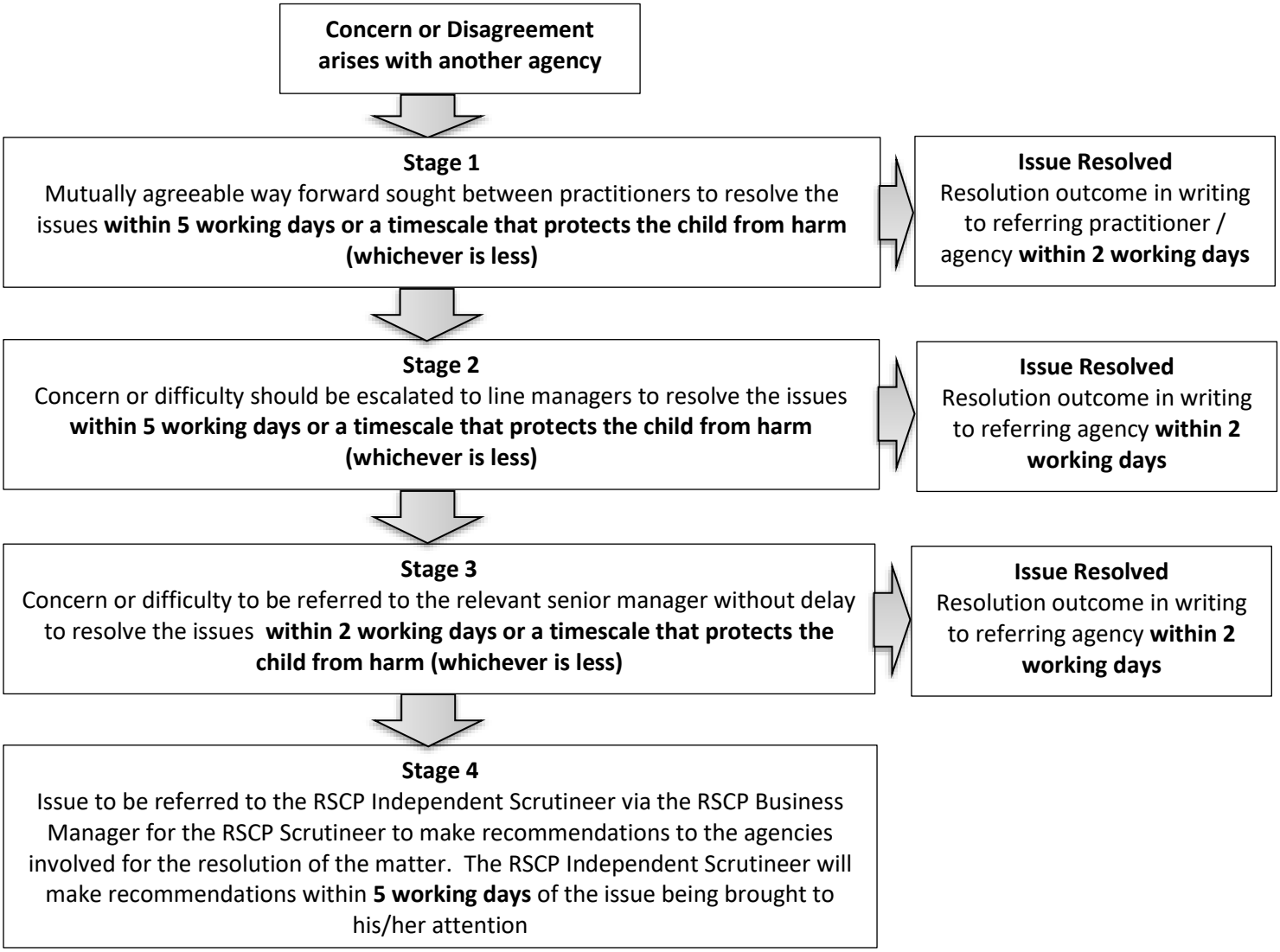
In the unlikely event that the professional disagreements remain unresolved following discussions between respective Heads of Services and/or the discussion raises significant policy issues, the matter must be referred to the RSCP Independent Scrutineer. The **RSCP Business Manager** should be copied into disagreements that have escalated to this level.

4.8 Should the matter remain unresolved within the timescales, the matter will be referred directly to the RSCP Independent Scrutineer via the RSCP Business Manager **within the same working day**. In the absence of the RSCP Independent Scrutineer, the matter will be dealt with by the Chair of the RSCP.

The RSCP Independent Scrutineer may seek further written information and will confer as necessary with senior managers / named / designated professionals in the agencies involved, and others as required, and will make recommendations to the agencies for the resolution of the matter. The RSCP Independent Scrutineer will make recommendations within **five working days** of the issue being brought to their attention.

The RSCP is not an operational body and cannot direct the actions of partner agencies. However, the RSCP as a body has a strong expectation that the recommendations of the RSCP Scrutineer, who is independent, will be acted upon.

Flowchart


Concern or Disagreement arises with another agency
Stage 1
Mutually agreeable way forward sought between practitioners to resolve the issues within 5 working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less)
Issue Resolved
Resolution outcome in writing to referring practitioner / agency within 2 working days
Stage 2
Concern or difficulty should be escalated to line managers to resolve the issues within 5 working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less)
Issue Resolved
Resolution outcome in writing to referring agency within 2 working days
Stage 3
Concern or difficulty to be referred to the relevant senior manager without delay to resolve the issues within 2 working days or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is less)
Issue Resolved
Resolution outcome in writing to referring agency within 2 working days
Stage 4
Issue to be referred to the RSCP Independent Scrutineer via the RSCP Business Manager for the RSCP Scrutineer to make recommendations to the agencies involved for the resolution of the matter. The RSCP Independent Scrutineer will make recommendations within 5 working days of the issue being brought to his/her attention