



## Inter and Intra-agency Dispute Resolution Protocol

Edinburgh APC would like to thank and acknowledge Fife ASPC for support in informing our dispute resolution protocol.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to support and protect adults at risk of harm.

1.2 Occasionally situations arise when workers within or across an agency feel that the actions, inaction or decisions of another agency or other part of their service do not adequately support or protect an adult. If the adult is thought to be at immediate harm, the designated adult support and protection lead in your agency should be informed immediately. This inter-agency protocol defines the process for resolving professional difference and should be read alongside the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, Edinburgh Inter-agency Adult Support and Protection Guidance (2024) and relevant individual agency procedures.

1.3 Disagreements can arise at any point in the adult support and protection process and in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- **levels of risk**
- **application of the 3 point criteria**
- **roles and responsibilities**
- **the need for action**
- **progressing plans and communication**

1.4 Where professional opinion differs in relation to actions proposed or taken within the adult support and protection process, professionals are responsible for progressing a resolution in line with this policy. They should also record clearly and timeously reasons for these views and keep a note of actions taken.

- The safety of the adult is the paramount consideration in any professional activity
- Resolution should be sought within the shortest timescale possible to ensure the adult is supported and protected
- As a guide, professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within one working week or a timescale that protects the adult from harm (whichever is shortest)

- Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage

1.5 Any worker who feels that a decision is not safe or is inappropriate can initially consult their supervisor/manager to clarify their thinking if required. They should be able to evidence the nature and source of their concerns and should keep a record of all discussions.

1.6 Individuals may wish to refer to any Escalation Policy for their organisation to clarify the approach required where the issue is of an intra-agency nature. However, the principles expressed at 1.4 above remain paramount.

1.7 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*.

## **2. Stages of Resolution**

### **2.1 Stage One: Discuss with the other worker**

2.2 The people who disagree have a discussion to resolve the problem. This discussion must take place as soon as possible and could be a telephone conversation or a face to face meeting.

### **2.3 Stage Two: Escalate to line manager**

2.4 If the problem is not resolved, the worker should contact their supervisor/ manager / named adult support and protection lead professional within their own agency who should have a discussion with the equivalent supervisor/ manager in the other agency.

### **2.6 Stage Three: Escalate to senior managers**

2.7 If the problem is not resolved at Stage Two, the supervisor/ manager reports to their respective manager or named/ designated safeguarding representative. These two managers must attempt to resolve the professional differences through discussion.

2.8 If there remains disagreement, the expectation is that escalation continues through the appropriate tiers of management in each organisation until the matter is resolved. The respective agency members on the Adult Support and Protection Committee (ASPC) should be engaged in seeking resolution before the case is raised with the ASPC Chair.

### **2.9 Stage Four: Resolution by ASPC Chair**

2.10 If it has not been possible to resolve the professional differences within the agencies concerned (and after the agency ASPC members have been involved), the matter should be referred by the concerned agency to the Chair of the ASPC, who

may either seek to resolve the issue direct with the relevant senior managers, or convene a Resolution Panel.

2.11 The agency raising the dispute must e-mail the details to the ASPC Chair.

2.12 The Resolution Panel must consist of a senior officer from the key statutory agencies who are members of the ASPC and must include the agencies concerned in the professional differences.

2.13 The Panel will receive representations from those involved in the dispute and will collectively resolve the professional differences concerned.

### **3. Additional Notes**

3.1 At all stages of the process, actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who triggered the initial disagreement.

Where resolution requires a revision of recording of decisions proposed or a review of actions taken/not taken which triggered the dispute then relevant information should be recorded on the adult's records and circulated to relevant agencies.

3.2 Where there is evidence of recurrent dispute from various sources related to a specific area of practice/part of the process there may be a need to consider learning and development or improvement action to address a process barrier. This will be the responsibility of involved agency leads to address on an inter-agency basis.

## 4. Dispute Resolution Protocol Flowchart

