

Edinburgh Child Protection – Professional Practice Resolution and Escalation Process



Management Information	
Lead Officer	Name: Brenda Anne Cochrane
	Designation: Service Manager - Independent Review, Children's Participation and Complaints
Lead Service Area	Edinburgh Child Protection Committee
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Introduction

Child Protection is everyone's responsibility. Professionals working with children and adults must work together to share information, assess needs and risks, and jointly plan and deliver coordinated services. In doing so, they can reduce the risk of harm to children and promote their welfare.

This Edinburgh Child Protection Committee (ECPC) Professional Practice Resolution and Escalation Process complements the [National Guidance for Child Protection \(2021\)](#) and the [Edinburgh and the Lothians Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures \(2024\)](#).

This document provides a clearly defined process for practice resolution and challenging inter-agency child protection arrangements, for professionals across the Child Protection partnership. The process ensures working relationships and outcomes for the baby, child, young person or their families are not impacted by differences of opinion or practice issues raised between professionals. The local child protection arrangements should enable robust information sharing and, where appropriate, professional challenge and escalation, so that issues can be resolved at the earliest opportunity. This document is intended to aid partners with this process.

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring a child is safe.

Challenge and Dispute

Robust discussion, challenge and differences of opinion are a valuable part of the Child Protection process and enable professionals to reach consensus about the best way forward. Professional challenge can allow for review and can foster creative ways of working.

This guidance applies to any point in the Child Protection inter-agency process where a professional remains unsatisfied that actions taken are sufficient to address need and reduce risk to a child(ren). It should be read in conjunction with the [Child Protection Planning Meeting Dispute Resolution Protocol \(2024\)](#), which applies to specific instances of dissent in at the Child Protection Planning Meeting stage.

Protecting children from harm or significant harm can be a challenging and upsetting experience, which is further impacted by our own personal and professional circumstances. Practitioners should be mindful that child protection is a dynamic, collective endeavour and there should be support and supervision within your own service or agency and additionally within a multi-agency team around the child throughout the staged assessment process. Further, there are a range of resources offered by Edinburgh's agencies in relation to [Trauma-Informed and Responsive Practice](#).

Informal Resolution and Promotion of Best Practice

No matter what stage of the child protection process, it is always best for matters to be raised between practitioners themselves in a timely and effective manner, at the earliest opportunity. Where the practitioner who raises the concern does so verbally, ideally, this would be followed up with something in writing, which is clear and evidential. The receiving practitioner will discuss, with their line manager, considering agency expectations on how best to review the situation and respond to the original practitioner. A record should be stored, in line with file management and information compliance arrangements within the agency.

Formal Resolution

Where informal resolution has not been successful and an individual, agency or service remain concerned for the safety and wider outcomes for a baby, child or young person, the practitioner and line manager will escalate the matter within their agency's line management structure.

The following Service Leaders have an overarching responsibility for Child Protection within the ECPC local partnership and can be contacted where other avenues have been exhausted:

Police Scotland	DCI, Public Protection Unit Police Scotland, E Division
NHS Lothian	Director of Public Protection NHS Lothian
City of Edinburgh Council Children and Justice Service	Director of Service City of Edinburgh Council
City of Edinburgh Education	Head of Education (Inclusion) City of Edinburgh Council
The Third Sector	Children and Families Development Worker EVOC

Stages of Child Protection Assessment and Planning

Practice Principles

Seek and consider the child's views

Protect the child's rights

Share information

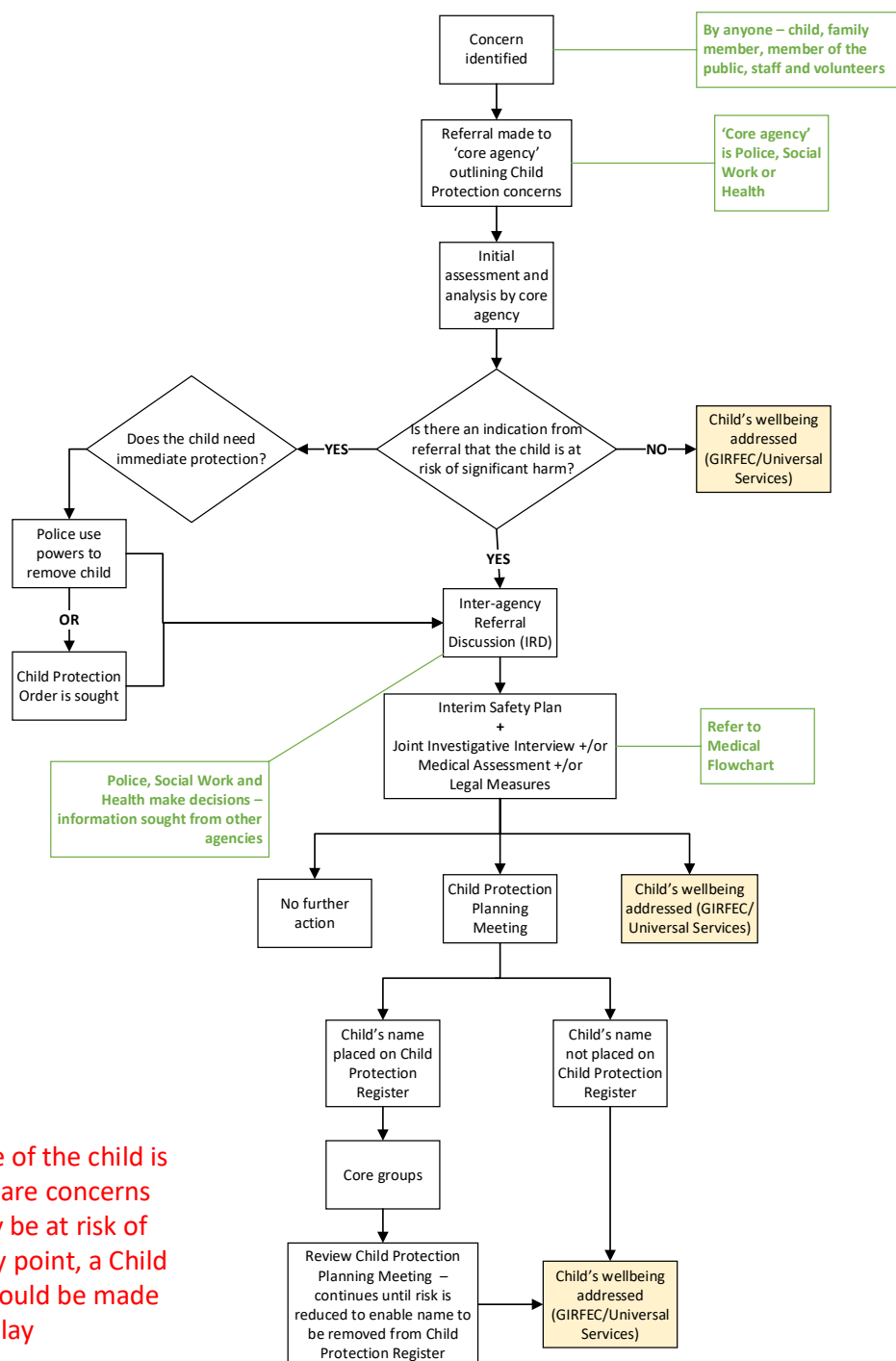
Take action at the earliest appropriate time

Assess and analyse risk

Consider referral to the Children's Reporter

Plan and intervene with an understanding of the impact of trauma

The safety and welfare of the child is paramount. If there are concerns that a child is or may be at risk of significant harm at any point, a Child Protection referral should be made without delay



Child Protection Concern and Initial Assessment by Core Agency

Child protection referrals can be received by:

- City of Edinburgh Council Children's Services
- NHS Lothian Child Protection Hub
- Police Scotland, Public Protection Unit, E Division.

Where a child protection referral is made by any child, family, concerned individual, service or agency, the responsibility for gathering information and initial assessment will sit with the 'core agency' who has received the concerns. The receiving agency has a responsibility to make an initial assessment of whether there is risk of significant harm to a child, based on the information available. It is best practice to inform the referrer of the outcome of the initial assessment and any next steps.

If the referral source does not agree with the decision taken, they should discuss this with their line manager before responding in writing, providing clear and evidential reasons for the query on the rationale for decision making or challenge on the risk of significant harm to the child(ren).

The receiving practitioner will discuss, with their line manager and respond to the original practitioner in a timely and proportionate manner, outlining the current position and any further assessment or oversight that has been carried out. A record should be stored, in line with file management and information compliance arrangements within the agency, so that it can be referred to in future, as required.

Inter-Agency Referral Discussion

The Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD) is the start of the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis and decision making where one or more of the core agencies assess that there is a risk of significant harm to a child up to the age of 18 years.

The IRD represents a period of intense contact and information sharing between core child protection agencies, Police, Health and Social Work, alongside other partners and interface with other processes. Professional curiosity and challenge is commonplace and productive when risk assessing and enacting interim safety plans and IRD Practitioners should be experienced professionals who have the skills and abilities to communicate effectively with one another to develop shared assessments and plans. They are supported in doing so by effective support and supervision within their organisation and line management structures who contribute to collective operational and strategic leadership through the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee. IRD Participants can also access dedicated multi-agency learning and development opportunities that support their practice.

In addition to addressing issues directly, the concerns can be made in conjunction with a team or service manager, to the IRD Review Group, by emailing the **Edinburgh Concern Hub** mailbox with the details of the child(ren); the concern or disputed issue, the services involved and detailing team or service manager oversight.

The IRD Review Group is made up of operational leaders across the multi-agency child protection 'core agencies.' The group meets on a weekly basis to ensure quality assurance of the early-stage Child Protection assessment and decision making (**IRD Review Group Terms of Reference**).

Where a child protection concern or query is escalated, it will be placed on the agenda for IRD Review Group members to review and provide a response to the service who raises the concern and involving any other parties noted.

Child Protection Planning Meetings

Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPM) are formal multi-disciplinary meeting to share information, decide whether a child(ren) is at risk of significant harm and devise a plan to reduce the risk. Please see the [Edinburgh and the Lothians Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures \(2024\)](#), which provides further details of the process.

As in other parts of this document, in the first instance, professional disagreement or practice issues identified in the lead up to or during a Child Protection Planning Meeting should be addressed directly between practitioners, involving line management where appropriate.

CPPMs are chaired on behalf of the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee and operate as a devolved function of the Committee. In Edinburgh the CPPM chairs are Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). An IRO is responsible for ensuring that any practice issues or lack of progress is challenged and suitably escalated with the relevant agency. As such, there will be instances when the IRO will use their authority, skill and experience to seek a resolution. This is often achieved by informal, early and effective communication between parties.

A formal resolution process should only be initiated or escalated when informal methods have not achieved resolution. This will be managed by the IRO who will escalate the concern with a Children and Young Person's Review Team (CYPRT) Team Leader, Service Manager, alongside timely communication with the relevant Service Lead, where required (see page 3).

Where the concern is around dissent in relation to the decision to place or remove a child from the Child Protection Register within the Child Protection Planning Meeting, these matters are underpinned by the [Edinburgh and Lothians Child Protection Procedures \(2024\)](#) and further supported by the [Edinburgh Child Protection Dispute Resolution Protocol](#).

Core Group Meetings

Core Group Meetings are interim meetings for the team around the child, in partnership with children and their families, to update and share progress on the Child Protection Plan. All members of the core group have responsibility for the Child Protection plan and must work together to ensure its success. Please see the [Edinburgh and the Lothians Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures \(2024\)](#), which provides further details on the purpose and role of the Core Group.

Professional disagreement or practice issues identified within the Core Group should be addressed directly between practitioners, involving line management where appropriate.

If this cannot be achieved by practitioners and their line manager, any Core Group member can approach the IRO, who chairs the CPPMs for the child(ren). This is because the IRO is responsible for ensuring that any practice issues or lack of progress is challenged and suitably escalated with the relevant agency. As such, there will be instances when the IRO will use their authority, skills and experience to seek a resolution. This is often achieved by informal, early and effective communication between parties.

When a Child is Removed from the Child Protection Register

Removal of a child's name from the Child Protection Register can only happen at a Review Child Protection Planning Meeting (RCPPM). Once a child(ren) is no longer subject to formal Child Protection processes, any concerns for their care and protection should be raised in a timely manner with their Lead Professional or Named Person using the principles outlined in this document.

More Information on Formal Resolution Process

Where informal methods have not achieved resolution and a matter has been escalated, which will take more than a few days to complete and therefore necessitates unavoidable gap in time between the resolved action being agreed, the

parties will agree an expected outcome and a manageable timescale. A record will be drawn up, by each party's line managers or the IRO (where there is a Child Protection Registration or CPPM has taken place), shared and stored with all relevant parties.

Where a child is on the Child Protection Register, the IRO will also forward a copy of the agreed actions for the Children and Young Person's Review Team (CYPRT) team leader to endorse and add to the **Dispute Resolution Tracker** held by the CYPRT management team on behalf of the ECPC.

A short report on the Tracker activity will be provided to 8-weekly ECPC Performance, Quality and Improvement Sub-Committee Meetings (PQI Sub) and any protracted issues explored strategically. Analysis of this data will be considered as part of the Multi-Agency Quality Assurance framework and shared with CEC Children's Service Management Team, as required.

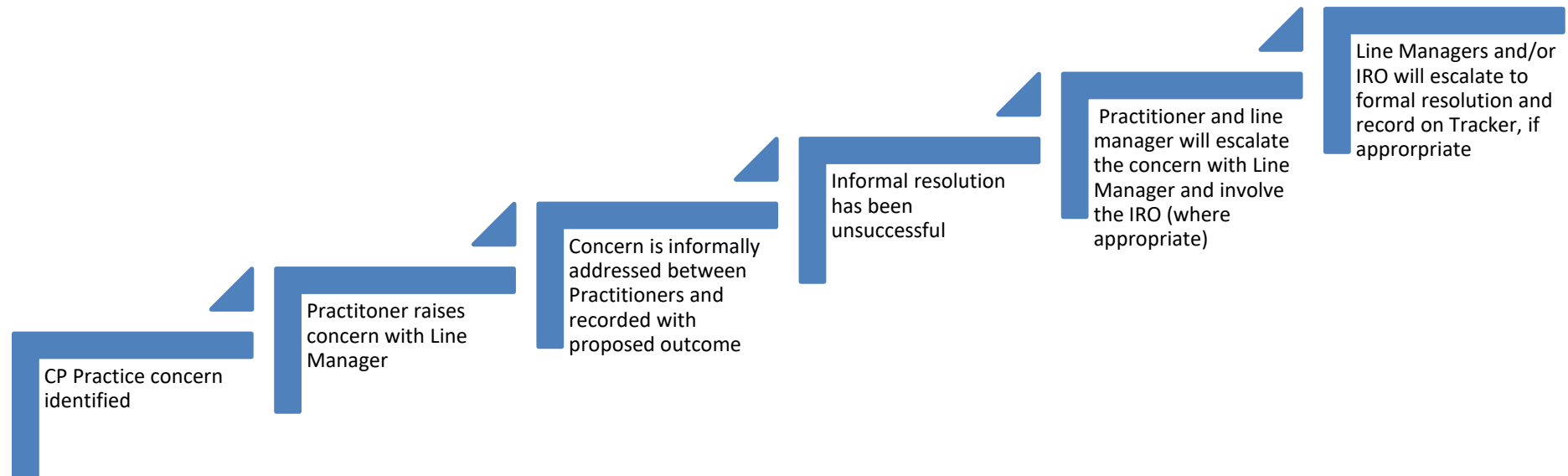
Complaints and the Resolutions Process

Complaints operate independently of the Practice Resolution and Escalation Process. Children and their families who do not agree with child protection processes, should consider making a Complaint. A complaint made by a child, family member, or someone advocating on behalf of the child should be addressed within the Local Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure should not prevent multi-agency professionals from working to resolve the problem within this guidance.

Quality Assurance

All practitioners are responsible for ensuring that all correspondence and discussion in relation to the Professional Practice Resolution and Challenge Process are recorded within their records' management systems and reviewed as appropriate.

Appendix 1: Stages of Resolution



Appendix 2 - Examples where resolution should be sought

- A child protection referral has not been progressed and the rationale for decision making is unclear or disputed.
- There is disagreement about the level of significant harm between core agencies in an IRD.
- There is disagreement about the level of Interim Safety Planning (ISP) required during an IRD or an agency believe the ISP is not being followed by partners.
- Incomplete and/or a poor standard of report /late reports or no reports provided for a CPPM.
- Visits to the child not undertaken to the agreed level or the record of visits missing or incomplete.
- Where one or more decisions agreed at a RCPPM have not been acted upon and completed within the timescale agreed.
- Where there is drift and delay such that there is no clear plan in place or the plan is not protecting a child from (risk of) significant harm.
- Where the rights and/or wellbeing of the child not being met, for example the child's views not being given sufficient weight in decision making.
- Where there is a concern about provision of services/ resources allocated to meet the child's individual needs or protect them from (risk of) significant harm.