



Background

Professional Challenge is an integral part of safeguarding. It is a positive activity, good professional practice & effective multi-agency working. It leads to better outcomes for the child & their family.

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Why does Professional Challenge Matter?

Having different professional perspectives within safeguarding practice is a sign of a healthy and well-functioning partnership. Being Professional Challenged should not be seen as a criticism of a person's professional capabilities. It should lead to better outcomes for the child & their family, it is healthy & shows confidence in multi-agency practice. Learning from Serious Case Reviews has identified a reluctance to challenge inter-agency decision making and concerns not being followed up with robust challenge.

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Respectful (assertive) Challenge

can stimulate & motivate others. It can be uncomfortable; it needs to be evidenced-based, child focused & based on the desire for positive outcomes.

Use the escalation process where necessary & refer to your organisations policies on Complaints, Whistle-blowing, Record keeping, Information Governance etc.

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Professional Challenge

All agencies and services should promote a culture which encourages constructive challenge within and between organisations; acknowledging the important role that challenge can play in safeguarding children. Effective 'working together' depends on a culture of open & honest relationships between agencies. Where different professional perspectives are welcomed & given serious consideration by professionals who want the best outcomes for children & young people.

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Escalation of concerns should be carried out in the spirit of achieving better outcomes for children. Where possible, all efforts should be made to address disagreements as they happen rather than after the matter has been dealt with. Pan Cheshire Multi-Agency Escalation Policy (proceduresonline.com), provides guidance on the stepped process involved including initial professional discussions through to HCYPSP involvement. When using the procedure at step 3, your Safeguarding Partnership Representatives will be identified locally.

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Barriers to Professional Challenge

- . Communication skill
- . Types of Bias
- . Lack of confidence
- . Lack of knowledge of process/procedures
- . Fear / worry
- . Time constraints
- . Lack of experience

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Disagreement & Dispute Resolution

Differences of opinion, concerns and issues can arise for practitioners at work & it is important they are resolved as effectively and swiftly as possible. Having different professional perspectives within safeguarding practice is a sign of a healthy & well-functioning partnership. These differences of opinion are usually resolved by discussion & negotiation between the practitioners concerned. It is essential that where differences of opinion arise they do not adversely affect the outcomes for families & are resolved in a constructive and timely manner.

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