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Background

[Working Together 2026](#) requires safeguarding partners to have a quick and straightforward means of resolving differences in place. Learning from reviews tell us that although partners may disagree about the risk that a situation presents, differing views are often not explored or challenged, and escalation procedures are not always followed. This 7mb outlines Blackpool's multi-agency approach for resolving professional disagreements. It explains the escalation stages, expected timescales, and responsibilities at each step. The process supports timely, proportionate action, giving practitioners clear guidance and key contacts.

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Why it matters

Effective escalation protects children by preventing delays, ensuring risks are addressed, and supporting professional accountability. When agencies disagree, structured escalation ensures that concerns are not dismissed, communication remains professional, and decisions are made at the appropriate level. It also supports shared learning and improves partnership working.

This 7mb must be read alongside the [Pan Lancashire Resolving Professional Disagreements Policy](#) and [Blackpool Local Process](#).

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Information

Professional judgement should always be used.

The escalation process consists of five stages, **each to be completed within 5 working days** (maximum 20 days in total)

Stage 1 – Practitioner Level Professionals attempt to resolve concerns directly. If unsuccessful, escalate to Line Managers.

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Stage 2 – Line Manager Level

Line Managers discuss the issue. If unresolved, escalate to Heads of Service or Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL)

Stage 3 – Senior Managers Heads of Service/Strategic Leads review the matter. At this level, a Stage 3 form completed. And sent to the MASA Business Unit MASA@blackpool.gov.uk. If unresolved at this stage, escalate to Director level.

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Stage 4 – Independent Scrutineer

Directors review the issue. If agreement cannot be reached, the Independent Scrutineer becomes involved, supported by DSPs and LSPs. Outcomes are recorded and used for learning.

Stage 5 – Secretary of State If still unresolved, the matter is referred to the Secretary of State. The MASA Business Unit supports this process.

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Questions to consider

- Have I clearly outlined my concerns with evidence?
- Have I tried resolving the issue directly?
- What is the risk if it is not addressed quickly?
- Am I escalating to the correct level?
- What outcome do I expect?
- Have I recorded all actions, decisions, and contacts accurately?

Immediate safeguarding risks must always trigger immediate action, alongside escalation where required.

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What to do

Address concerns early: Attempt resolution with the professional involved before escalating.

Escalate promptly: If disagreement remains or there are delays, move to the next stage.

Record everything: Document discussions, decisions, and outcomes at every stage.

Prioritise children's safety:

Never allow professional disagreement to delay action where a child or young person is at risk.

