

**SOUTH WALES  
CHILD PROTECTION  
FORUM PROTOCOL**

**FOR THE  
RESOLUTION OF  
PROFESSIONAL DISAGREEMENTS**

**June 2006**

Adopted by Rhondda Cynon Taff ACPC

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## **Introduction**

Lord Laming refers clearly in his report following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry to social workers having the confidence to question the opinion of other professionals when making assessments of children's needs. This principle applies to staff of all agencies working in the field of child protection. Appropriate training, clarity about their own professional role and responsibilities and that of other agencies encourages staff to have the confidence to contribute effectively to inter-agency and multi-disciplinary work, which includes questioning the opinions of other professionals.

Professionals do not always agree over what action is required to best safeguard children. In the majority of cases these issues are resolved by discussion and negotiation between the professionals concerned

However, this protocol aims to detail what action should be taken to resolve outstanding disagreements, to clearly set out the responsibility of each professional to put the welfare of children first, to challenge constructively if disagreements arise and to follow through concerns to ensure that children are being adequately safeguarded and protected.

## **Scope**

This is an inter-agency protocol which applies to each stage of the child protection process and as previously stated provides guidance as to what action should be taken if there is a disagreement between professionals about how best to safeguard and protect a particular child or children. It does not apply to intra-agency professional disagreements. It is the responsibility of all agencies to ensure that they have robust arrangements to resolve their own internal disagreements.

The protocol should not be used when there is a complaint about a specific professional. In such situations the relevant organisation's complaints procedure will apply. Any complaint should be made in writing to the professional's line manager and copied to the person with lead responsibility for child protection in their organisation.

This protocol is not for use by children, young people or families, they should use the ACPC complaints procedure and /or the complaints procedure of individual organisations as appropriate.

## **Guidance**

If there are unresolved professional disagreements the following action should be taken:-

- a) An individual professional should immediately raise their concerns with their manager or seek advice from the person in their organisation with

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lead responsibility for child protection. This may take place in supervision (clinical) but action should not be delayed.

- b) A written record of the discussion should be made specifically identifying the essence of the disagreement. The concern may be resolved at this stage and if so should be recorded in case notes and supervision notes if appropriate
- c) If the disagreement remains the manager (or lead professional) of the person who raised the concern should contact the manager or supervisor of the other professional involved in the disagreement and the responsible Social Services Team Manager (if different) to attempt to resolve the matter. A copy of the written record of the disagreement should be provided to those contacted.
- d) If following discussion the matter is resolved a written record should be made by the person who agrees to do so in the course of the discussion. A copy should be held in the case records of both agencies.
- e) If the matter is not resolved it should be referred in writing to the ACPC Child Protection Co-ordinator by the Manager (or lead professional) raising the disagreement. An analysis of the disagreement, should be provided identifying the perceived risk to the child and detailing what steps have been taken to try to resolve the matter. Copies should be sent to the other parties involved, including the responsible Social Services Manager and the Lead Manager for Child Protection in the Agency from which the disagreement originated .
- f) The Child Protection Co-ordinator will make enquiries, review the written material, case file and supervision notes as appropriate and consider with the lead person for child protection in the organisation raising the disagreement the issues arising in the case. The Child Protection Co-ordinator may if necessary meet the parties to the disagreement and may wish to seek the views of other professionals involved in the case. A professionals meeting may be held to achieve this.  
  
The Child Protection Co-ordinator will ensure the outcome of the process is recorded for inclusion in both organisations case records.
- g) If the disagreement remains unresolved it should be referred to the Chair of the ACPC by the Child Protection Co-ordinator with copies of relevant documents. The ACPC Chair will consider what other action is necessary.

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## Child Protection Conferences

Guidance in relation to Child Protection Conferences already contained in the All Wales Child Protection Procedures is outlined below :

### 3.14 **Action to be taken when a professional believes a child is not being adequately protected**

*If any professional attending a conference considers that a child is not being adequately protected, this must be brought to the immediate attention of their line manager and their designated child protection professional as well as the Social Services Senior Manager responsible for child protection. In their absence, the Social Services Team Manager responsible for the case must be notified.*

*It is possible that an agency may consider it necessary to take unilateral action in some cases. In exceptional cases where an individual worker or agency insists on unilateral action contrary to the majority view at the conference where the plan is formulated or contrary to an agreed plan, the Key Worker and the Social Services team manager must be notified. The team manager will then discuss the matter with the senior manager responsible for child protection and the relevant senior manager of the agency concerned. Any issues arising out of this consultation will be brought to the attention of the Chair of the ACPC. A Child Protection Review Conference will be convened as necessary.”*

The guidance contained in this document should be followed by all agencies at each stage of the child protection process **except** when an organisation intends taking unilateral action following a Child Protection Conference; in these circumstances the guidance outlined above contained in 3.14 of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures, will apply.

#### Protocol Application

Response to a referral eg disagreement about the decision to undertake a section 47 enquiry or a section 17 initial assessment or NFA ( see para 3.4.3 All Wales Child Protection Procedures)

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Strategy discussion or meeting (see para 3.5.3All Wales Child Protection Procedures)

Outcome of a medical examination eg balance between medical opinion and social work concerns

Child Protection Conference eg decision whether or not to convene

Core Group

Child Protection Plan

Legal action to safeguard children

This list is not exclusive , other situations may arise to which the protocol is relevant.

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