

**Herefordshire  
Safeguarding Adults  
Board**

# **HSAB Guidance on Resolving Professional Disagreements**

This guidance is a means of resolving professional differences of view/opinion concerning an adult or adults at risk.

1. Potential Areas of Disagreement
2. Resolving a Professional Disagreement
3. Where Professional Disagreements Remain

### **1. Potential Areas of Disagreement**

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At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that an adult at risk is safeguarded. The adult's welfare and safety must remain a priority.

- 1.1 There is a range of situations in which professional disagreements may occur. Examples are given below although this list is not exhaustive.

- A referral is not considered to meet eligibility criteria for assessment
- Adult Social Services conclude that further information should be sought by the referrer before a referral is progressed
- There is disagreement as to whether adult protection procedures should be invoked
- Adult Social Care and the Police (and/ or other agencies) place different interpretations on the need for single/joint agency response
- There is disagreement over the sharing of information and/or provision of services
- Disagreements over the outcome of any enquiry or concern raised and whether the appropriate plan is in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of an adult at risk.

### **2. Resolving a Professional Disagreement**

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#### **2.1 First Stage – Professionals:**

The professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion and/or meeting within one working day, but if they are unable to do so, their disagreement must be reported by them to their managers or equivalent. Records of discussions must be maintained by all the agencies involved. The outcome of discussions and agreed actions should also be recorded.

## 2.2 Second Stage – First Line Managers:

Concerning most day to day issues, the relevant managers will liaise – wherever possible this contact should take place within 24 hours. The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. Where necessary this may involve a meeting between the managers. In some cases it may be helpful to involve a third party or hold a professionals only meeting. Any action agreed through this discussion should be fed back immediately to the operational staff involved, confirmed in writing between agencies and, where appropriate, include a date for review. If it affects the plan for the adult at risk, then the necessary procedures for reviewing the plan should be invoked. Records of discussions must be maintained by all the agencies involved. The outcome of discussions and agreed actions should also be recorded.

## 2.3 Third Stage – Senior Managers:

If agreement cannot be reached following discussions between the ‘first line’ managers (who should normally seek advice from her/his line manager or designated/named/lead officer) the issue must be referred without delay through the line management structure of the respective agency/agencies. Senior Managers should resolve this matter within 48 hours of the escalation to First Line Manager level (Second Stage).

Third stage professional disagreements are to be reported by single agencies to the Business Unit. The Business Unit will then record the professional disagreement. Performance, Audit and Quality Assurance (PAQA) will be notified to discuss and identify any learning from the disagreement.

**\*Note it is still the responsibility of the Senior managers to resolve the matter at the Third Stage.**

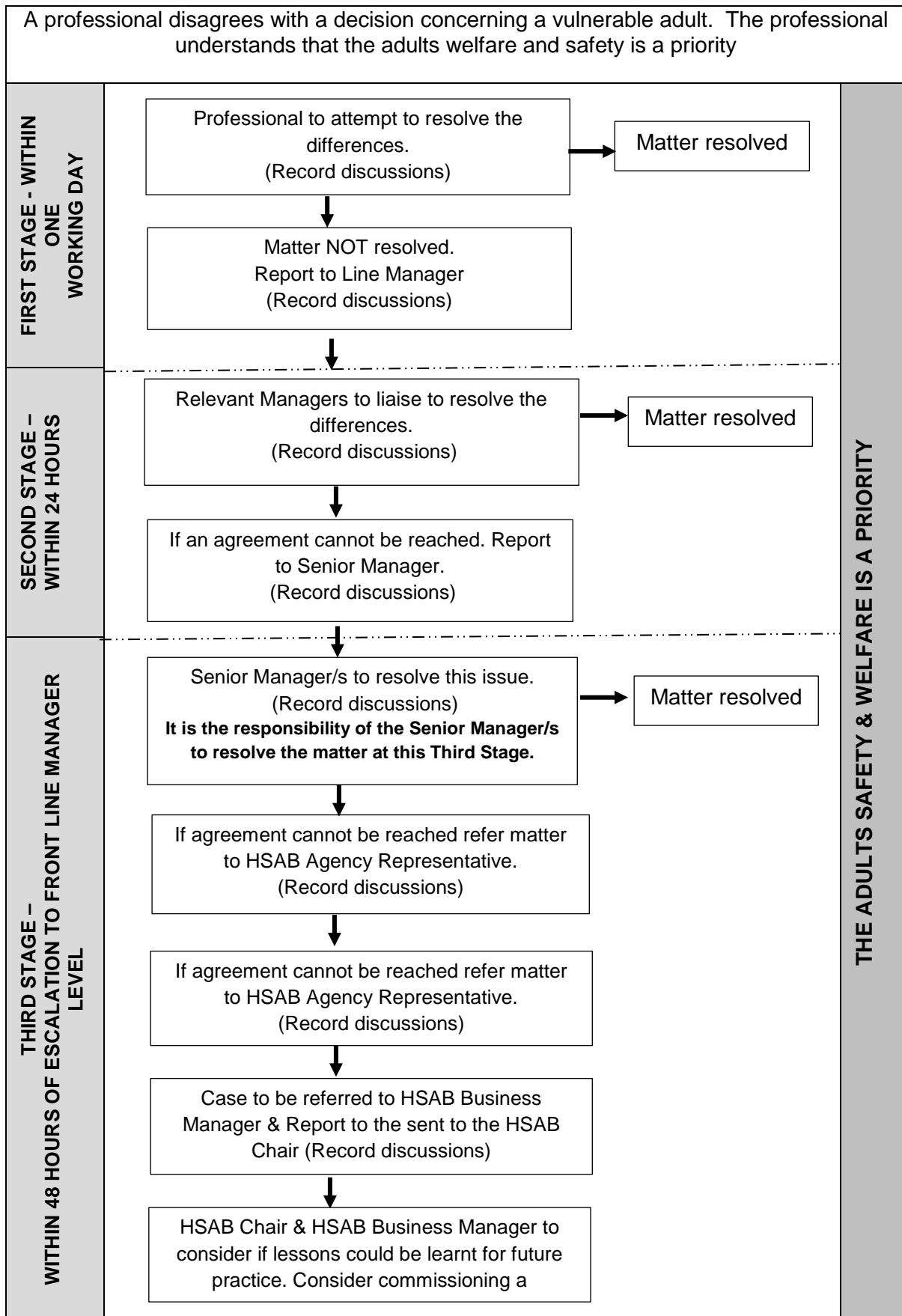
- 2.4 | In exceptional circumstances the meeting may involve the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adult Board to discuss the situation involving all parties. Records of discussions must be maintained by all the agencies involved. The outcome of discussions and agreed actions should also be recorded.

### **3. Where Professional Disagreements Remain**

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- 3.1 If professional disagreements remain unresolved, the matter must be referred to the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB) representative for each agency involved.
- 3.2 In the unlikely event that the issue is not resolved by the steps described above and/or the discussions raise significant policy issues; it should be referred to the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adult Board Business Unit Manager who will determine a course of action including reporting to the HSAB Chair.
- 3.3 In all cases where it has not been possible to resolve differences and/or where there may be lessons to be learned for future practice, consideration should be given to holding a management review, which should be undertaken using the Professionals Learning Review Procedure and delivered by the Joint Case Review (JCR) or PAQA.

**Fig.1 Guidance on resolving professional disagreements – flowchart**



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