



LSCB Policy and Procedures

Safeguarding Arrangements for Escalation (SAfE) – Challenge & Resolution procedure

April 2018

The LSCB is required to have in place a quick and straightforward means of ensuring safeguarding arrangements and resolving professional differences of opinion.

All agencies work within different structures and from a variety of perspectives, however they should work co-operatively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This is reliant upon all agencies complying with identification, assessment and referral in line with Working Together 2015

Procedural compliance should be followed. Where there are concerns that this is not being applied these should be raised and a solution agreed.

Transparency, openness and a willingness to understand and respect individual and agency views are core aspects of a safe multi-agency / inter-agency working. Good preparation and planning by professionals who take responsibility for decision-making will ensure occurrences are kept to a minimum.

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring a child is safeguarded. The child's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout

Safeguarding arrangements apply across the whole of the child's journey and all agencies should encourage others to meet their responsibility. Where it is thought that this is not the case and a worker believes a child / children could be safeguarded by the agency the person/agency has responsibility for communicating such concerns through agreed procedures

WHEN ANY PROFESSIONAL CONSIDERS A CHILD IS AT IMMEDIATE RISK OF SIGNIFICANT HARM, THEN THE INDIVIDUAL MUST ENSURE THEIR CONCERNS ARE ESCALATED ON THE SAME WORKING DAY USING ESTABLISHED SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES.

Differences of opinion about early identification and help prior to a referral

All agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families. This requires all professionals, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems, share information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment. All agencies are therefore responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent and supported to identify, assess and intervene early with children and their families under the LSCB Early Help Framework.

Where it appears early help has not been provided in accordance with LSCB procedures and a referral has been made to social work services the receiving worker should escalate appropriate intra agency and inter agency concerns. Feedback should be given by the Local Authority's children's social care to the referrer on the decision taken. Where appropriate this feedback includes the reasons why a case may not meet the statutory threshold to be considered by children's social care and suggestions for other sources of more suitable support.

Initial attempts to reach solutions should be at practitioner/case worker level between agencies. The initial attempts to resolve the difference of opinion should be within a timescale that safeguards the child, prevents things becoming worse and when needed protects the child from harm.

The respective workers must identify explicitly what is expected and why they believe that the safeguarding arrangements are not being applied and what needs to be done to ensure that this is achieved.

If unresolved, the concern should be referred straight away by each worker to their respective line manager, for school staff this will be the designated person, who in turn is expected to discuss with their opposite number in the other agency.

Line managers should attempt to resolve the disagreement and ensure that a clear record must be kept at all stages by all parties. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about the nature of the disagreement(s) and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

If professional disagreements remain unresolved following discussions between respective managers then one of the options in the flowchart can be pursued (appendix 1).

A NLC Principal Officer will agree the type of review to be undertaken and coordinate a meeting.

The meeting will be chaired by a Principal Officer from the Local Authority and relevant professionals will be invited. A written record will be made of the key areas of discussion, disagreement, agreements and actions. This will be retained on the child's file.

Should the matter still remain unresolved it will be referred to the LSCB Chair by any manager who attended the meeting. The Chair will offer a mediation appointment and invite relevant professionals and managers. This needs to be undertaken in a timely manner to safeguard the child.

Differences of opinion arising during child protection conferences

Sharing information and reports 2 working days prior to an initial conference and 5 working days prior to a review conference will highlight potential areas of difference to the conference chair. The lead social worker should also discuss potential differences of opinion with the conference chair in advance of the meeting and the conference chair will record the discussion on the child's records.

Non-unanimous decisions in conferences

Differences of opinion arising during a conference should, in the first instance be managed by the conference chair. The main reasons for a difference of opinion will be around the decision whether or not a child needs a child protection plan or whether a child protection plan should be discontinued. Reasons for dispute must be considered within conference and the decisions reviewed by conference members.

Majority view in conferences

If within conference there is a majority view then the decision is made on this majority view.

The concerns and reasons of those who have a differing view will be clearly recorded in the full conference record. If the agencies who formed part of the minority view would like to discuss the decision making process and / or their evidence, analysis, professional judgement or have concerns about the safety or welfare of the child then they should refer the matter straight away to their line manager, for school staff this will be the designated person.

The line manager is expected to discuss the concern with the service manager for the Independent Review Service.

Line managers should attempt to resolve the disagreement and ensure that a clear record must be kept at all stages by all parties. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about the nature of the disagreement(s) and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

If professional disagreements remain unresolved following discussions between respective managers then one of the options in the flowchart can be pursued (appendix 1).

A Principal Officer from the Local Authority will agree the type of review to be undertaken and coordinate a meeting.

The meeting will be chaired by a Principal Officer and relevant professionals will be invited. A written record will be made of the key areas of discussion, disagreement, agreements and actions. This will be retained on the child's file.

Should the matter still remain unresolved it will be referred to the LSCB Chair by any manager who attended the meeting. The Chair will offer a mediation appointment and invite relevant professionals and managers. This needs to be undertaken in a timely manner to safeguard the child.

Equally Divided view in conferences

If there is an equally divided view, the conference will be adjourned for a brief period – not exceeding 15 working days in order for the matter to be reassessed.

Staff will inform their line manager and agencies should re-evaluate their evidence, analysis and professional judgement in preparation for the meeting. Line managers can discuss the case with the Service Manager for the Independent Review Service.

Line managers should attempt to resolve any disagreement and ensure that a clear record must be kept at all stages by all parties. In particular this must include written confirmation between the parties about the nature of the disagreement(s) and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

The conference is reconvened and each agency consulted to reach a consensus.

During this period the child will continue to have a child protection plan. If it was an initial conference where there was an equally divided view the child will be made subject of a child protection plan pending a reconvened meeting to reach a consensus.

If the reconvened conference cannot reach a unanimous or majority view then the child will continue to have a child protection plan and one of the options in the flowchart can be pursued (appendix 1).

A Principal Officer from the Local Authority will agree the type of review to be undertaken and coordinate a meeting.

The meeting will be chaired by a Principal Officer and relevant professionals will be invited. A written record will be made of the key areas of discussion, disagreement, agreements and actions. This will be retained on the child's file.

Should the matter still remain unresolved it will be referred to the LSCB Chair by any manager who attended the meeting. The Chair will offer a mediation appointment and invite relevant professionals and managers. This needs to be undertaken in a timely manner to safeguard the child.

Differences about convening child protection conferences

Local Authority specialist social work services should take carefully any decision not to proceed with a child protection conference where concerns of significant harm are substantiated and the child is judged to be suffering, or likely to be suffering, significant harm. A service manager from specialist social work services should endorse the decision.

Following section 47 enquiries if social work services decide not to proceed with a child protection conference then other professionals involved with the child and family have the right to request that the local authority children's social care convene a child protection conference, if they have serious concerns that a child's welfare may not be adequately safeguarded. The request should be supported by the agency's senior manager / designated professional and clearly detail the agency's concerns. The request will be made to the service manager for the Independent Review Service.

The service manager from the Independent Review Service will liaise with the senior manager / designated professional regarding the request for a conference. At this stage effort should be made to resolve the difference of opinion about how the case should be managed. This can be achieved through a professional consultation meeting.

If a resolution cannot be agreed the Service Manager for the Independent Review Service will inform the Principal Officer for Safeguarding who will liaise with the relevant manager from the agency and one of the options in the flowchart can be pursued (appendix 1).

If a resolution cannot be agreed, the Principal Officer for Safeguarding will notify the LSCB Independent Chair. The LSCB Chair will offer a mediation appointment. This needs to be undertaken in a timely manner to safeguard the child.

Learning and Improvement

If the application of the SAfE procedures results in escalation to Principal Officer level, and is resolved following a multi-agency audit or 'pit-stop' meeting, any non-case specific learning will be captured and communicated to the Safeguarding Pathway Lead Officer Group (SPLOG) by the Principal Officer.

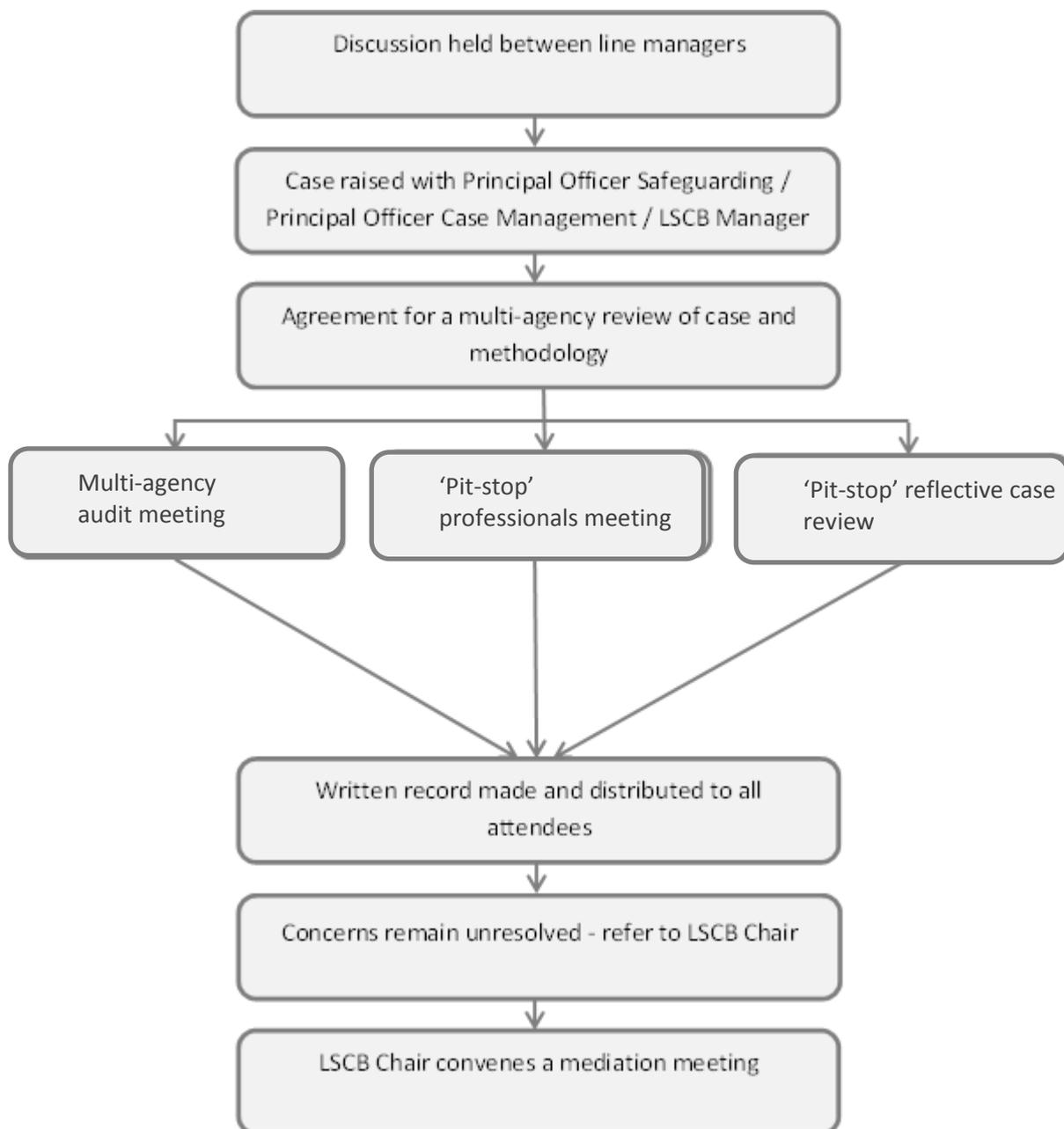
At the SPLOG a decision will be made regarding how the learning will be shared across the LSCB partnership, and whether any other actions are required as a result.

Contacts

To contact a Principal Officer telephone:

01724 297240

Appendix 1 Flow chart of reviews of cases under the LSCB escalation process



Appendix 2 Pit Stop meetings

Background and Context

The idea of developing the 'pit stop' emerged from a multi-agency audit event organised by North Lincolnshire LSCB in October 2015. As a result of the audit, the LSCB reflected on the complexity of cases that multi-agency teams work with and identified that group supervision/ reflection may be a helpful additional process for achieving the 'synergy' that appears to be present in effective teams.

The LSCB audit process helped to draw out a number of common characteristics present in teams that were achieving good outcomes for children:

- Clear engagement and contribution in the plan by all professionals
- Clear leadership from the lead professional
- All professionals were clear about the plan and the risks to the child
- Excellent communication and liaison with each other on a formal and informal 'touch base' basis
- Coordination of work by agencies, not just cooperation
- Working complementarily to one another, with clarity of focus
- A shared willingness to 'go the extra mile' and to be creative
- At least 2 professionals who knew the family really well and had built up trust over time
- Responsiveness to change and events

The LSCB considered that this analysis provided the Board, alongside the clear examples of excellent practice seen at the audit event, with the basis for the development of a 'pit stop' model of group supervision / reflection to support the development of 'synergy' in complex cases, or where there was disagreement about progress and next steps.

Aims of the model

The pit stop aims to provide a reflective space for the professional team around a child or family to critically reflect on their work, their thinking about risk, strengths and needs, the relationships with the child and family, and the plan. The meeting is chaired by the Principal child and Family Social Worker or nominated representative, and may be undertaken using a 'signs of safety' approach, or a reflective de-brief using the circle of adults methodology.

The model is not a replacement process for assessment and planning, it is a facilitated group discussion between professionals to help create the conditions for effective team work, for critical and creative thinking, and for reflective reviewing of risks and strengths in

families. The group may agree on next steps, which in the context of an escalation would act as the resolution.

The outcome of a pit stop session is to:

- create opportunities for change and success in cases through collective reflection

Guiding principles to underpin the approach

1: Empathy - respectful non-judgemental attitude expressed towards children and their families and the workers supporting them

2: Developing discrepancy - tuning into discrepancies in current behaviour and present values or future goals

3: Recognising resistance will be inevitable at some point and reassessing where necessary to create collaboration and change

4: Supporting self-efficacy and confidence that change is possible, highlighting the strengths and resources of individuals

Safety planning is a fundamental element of the pit stop as the goal of all work is always child safety and the model focuses on:

- Evaluation of working relationships between professionals and the family- considering how they can be more constructive
- Fostering an approach of respectful enquiry
- Appreciating the lived experience of the professionals and the family
- Focusing on the solutions to support change in the desired direction
- Recognising the positives that are present
- Recognising that change is constant and that small changes lead to larger changes
- Recognising that clients are always cooperating and that when an individual is not doing something suggested by a worker, they are communicating that the solution identified by the worker will not work for them
- People have the resources to resolve their problems

Referring and setting up Pit Stops

Pit stop meetings are facilitated by the PSW or a nominated independent manager from the Safeguarding and Practice service. Requests for meetings should be made by service managers or senior officers and can be made directly to one of the facilitators or via the LSCB business support officers. No referral form is needed but the referrer will need to be clear why a pit stop is being requested and what is hoped to be achieved. When a pit stop has been agreed and a facilitator has been identified, they will have a scoping conversation with the lead professional, set a time and date for the meeting (aiming for 2 weeks from the referral point) and then letters will be sent to professionals by the pit stop administrator. Cases may be identified as being appropriate for a pit stop in the following circumstances:

- following a multi-agency or internal audit
- following a complaint
- when a 'stuck case' has been identified in supervision, or by an independent reviewing officer/conference chair
- as a recommendation from an LSCB escalation process

Structure of the Meetings

During the first stage of the meeting, the facilitator uses a wall-mounted recording sheet:

- Signs of Safety assessment and planning table for professionals meetings
- Circle of Adults for reflective case reviews

The aim is not to agree on a new plan for a family, because the family are not present in the pit stop to contribute. The aim is to explore professional views about risk and strengths, and to provide an opportunity to critically reflect on the tasks and actions that they may be undertaking within the plan to help the team decide whether they then need to do anything differently. The expectation is that if any changes to the child's plan need to be made, that these will be discussed with the family and progressed as appropriate within normal procedures.

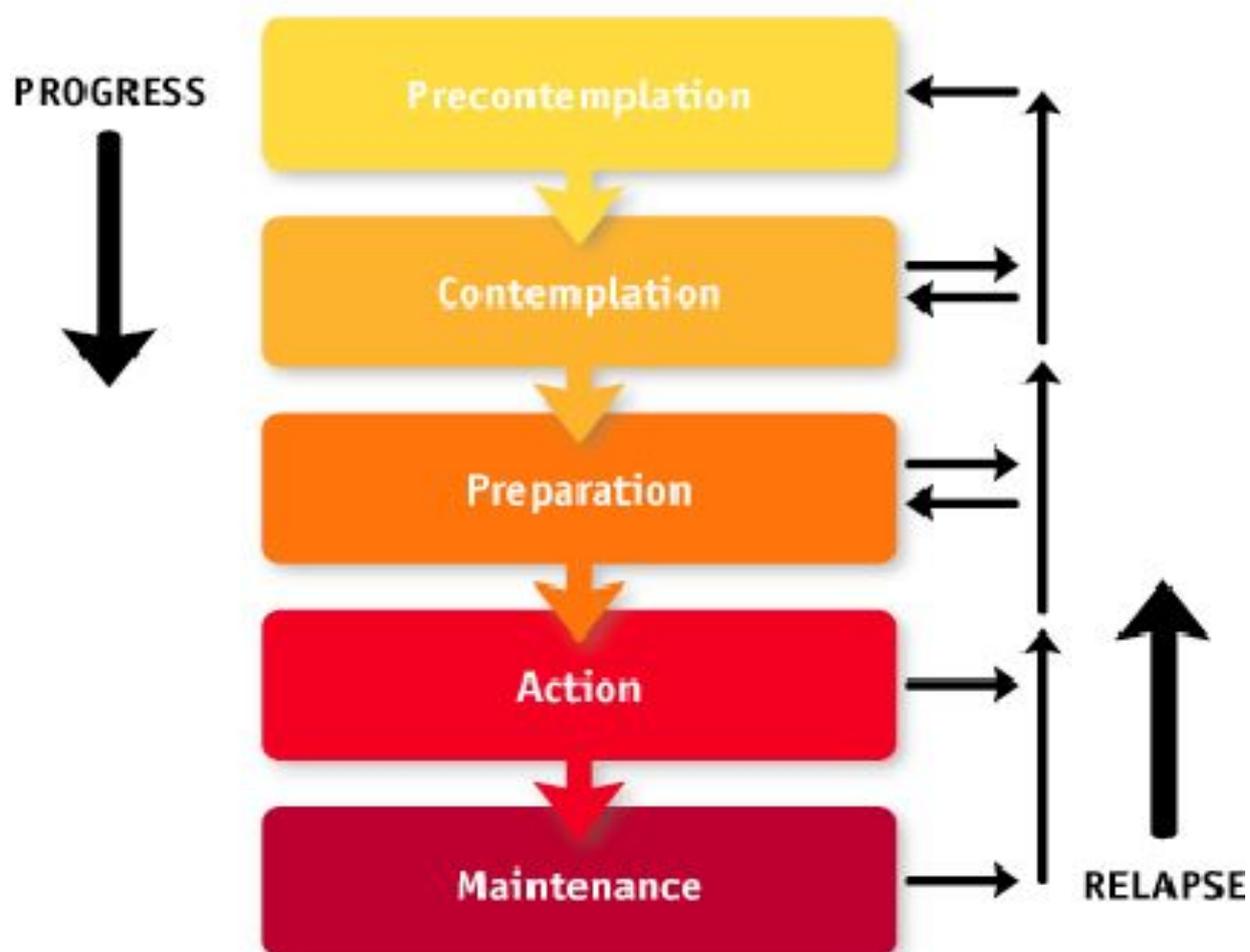
The second stage of the meeting relates to the functioning and effectiveness of the team in delivering the plan and achieving the required outcomes. This stage may naturally 'fall out' from stage 1, or it may require the facilitator to use additional questions such as:

- What is life like for the child? How do you know?
- Who does the child trust? Who is their preferred person to talk to? How does the plan and the work of professionals support opportunities for the child to talk about what's going on for them?
- What are relationships like between professionals and family members? Is there a shared view about the role and capacity of parents? How have these been arrived at? What is the evidence?
- How do members of the team communicate? Are the expectations on each other clear? What is the impact of this? Could communication be improved?
- Is everyone clear what their role is and what they are aiming for?
- How have decisions been arrived at? Does everyone understand and agree with the assessment of risk?

Next Steps

At the end of the meeting, the facilitator will support the team to agree on the list of next steps that they think need to be taken (if any). This list, along with a record of attendees, will be the only formal record of the meeting, and will be written onto a word document and emailed to the lead professional and their manager. A copy will also be recorded on the child's care first record as a case note by the facilitator. The next steps are not instructions from the facilitator, and they do not represent changes to the child's plan. Any changes that the team wish to make to the child's plan need to be agreed within the relevant early help / child in need / child protection / looked after children processes.

Appendix 3 - 5 Stage Model of Change



Appendix 4 Multi-agency de-brief meeting

The multi-agency de-brief meeting can be used as one of the ways that multi agencies can come together to reflect on cases, particularly where they have been complex or stuck. The multi-agency de-brief meeting enables managers, social workers and other practitioners to explore the concerns for the child or young person, to review the challenges and creatively find new approaches and/or solutions with clear timescales for change.

The cases heard at a this meeting are those where the case has been considered in other inter-agency planning forums such as Core Groups, Child Protection Conferences, Children Looked After Reviews, Complex Care Meetings.

The meeting uses a particular methodology based on a framework called Circles of Adults. The meeting will be facilitated by two trained practitioners. One facilitator will lead the meeting with a second graphic facilitator whose role is to record ideas and key elements of the discussion.

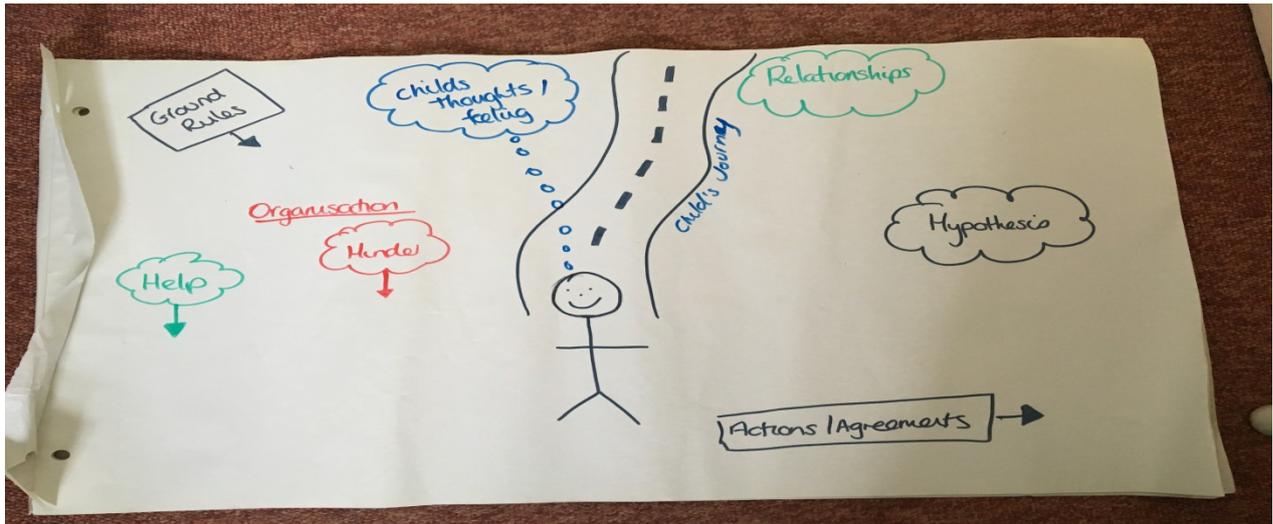
The social worker or team manager will present the case and the ongoing concerns.

One member of the group will undertake the role of the child and will be asked to listen to the presentation and subsequent discussions from the perspective of the child or young person. From time to time the facilitator will address this person to ask that person how they are feeling (from the child's perspective) about what they have heard.

Additional questions are put to the group about the child and their circumstances. This will include the child's relationships, the organisational factors such as professional involvement, resources currently being used and their effectiveness.

The graphic facilitator will record emerging themes. The group then go on to discuss their understanding of the situation and propose hypotheses to draw out from the emerging story. This will then be led into a discussion about alternative strategies or interventions. Actions and timescales are agreed. The facilitator summarises the outcomes.

The graphic illustrator will record the discussion on a flip chart



Notes will then be made of the flip chart and circulated to attendees

Preparation

Attendees are asked to prepare for the meeting by completing a brief chronology so that they can refer to it in the discussion. No reports will be written for the meeting. The person presenting the case (normally the allocated social worker) must be familiar with the case and able to verbally present to the group. It is hoped that other professionals who attend will know the child / young person and family, this however is not necessary.

For meetings to be successful it is important that as many people attend as possible.

After the Session

All participants in the Problem Solving Meeting will receive a copy of the graphic. Any changes that the team wish to make to the child's plan need to be agreed within the relevant early help / child in need / child protection / looked after children processes.