

7 Minute Briefing

Professional Challenge

Things to remember

- Professional challenge can help find better ways to improve outcomes for children, adults and families
- Expect to be challenged; working together effectively depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies
- As a professional you are responsible for your own cases and actions in relation to case work
- Differences and disagreements should be resolved as simply and quickly as possible
- respect the views of others whatever the level of experience
- More information about escalation and resolving professional disagreements can be found in our [WSP Escalation Policy](#)

Introduction

Sometimes there are professional differences, concerns or disagreements in relation to safeguarding practice.

Professional challenge could arise in a number of areas of multi-agency working as well as within single agency working and are most likely to arise in relation to:

- criteria for referrals
- outcomes of assessments
- roles and responsibilities of workers
- service provision
- timeliness of interventions
- information sharing and communication

What is Professional Challenge?

- Having different professional perspectives within safeguarding practice is a sign of a healthy and well-functioning partnership.
- Being professionally challenged should not be seen as a criticism of the person's professional capabilities. Professional challenge is a fundamental professional responsibility. In this context it is about challenging decisions, practice or actions which may not effectively ensure the safety or well-being of a child, young person or adult.

What can I do?

- Be professionally braver!
- Be bold in your professional approach.
- Is there a clear rationale behind your thoughts /actions?
- Use assertion to ask the questions you are thinking of, no matter how silly or exaggerated you may think they are.
- Can you verify & validate the decisions that you & your organisation are making in line with a child centered approach?
- Enquire further if you are still unsure of how to manage a service users journey when in your care.



Professional Challenge should...

Professional challenge should be given or received in a constructive and positive way with a genuine belief in a partnership approach to safeguarding, therefore;

- Clearly identify your concerns and the impact on the case being discussed.

Effective Challenge is....

- Calm
- Diplomatic
- Respectful
- Negotiation
- Influencing
- Uses local tools e.g. Graded Care Profile
- Good communication with other professionals
- Considering the voice of the service user
- Not taking information on face value
- Gut Instinct – opportunity to unpick
- Reflective – for them to feel valued and empowered
- Confident
- Empowered to do it by agency
- Clear – role/consequences
- Polite
- Involves line manager i.e. supervision
- Be prepared to have difficult conversations.
- Share concerns with your line manager
- Factual
- Has good Recording
- Evidence based
- Objective

Responsibility

Professionals should always be prepared to review decisions and plans with an open mind and revise decisions in light of new information.

Decisions are fallible. To ensure correct outcomes, workers should constantly assess their decision making. It is especially important that workers are willing to admit they have made a wrong decision and feel they are in an environment where such an admission is supported. New evidence or changes to the circumstances of a case should lead to a re-evaluation of the decision rather than new information being ignored or reframed so that the original decision can stand