

7 Minute Briefing: Professional Challenge

7

Things to Remember

- Professional challenge can help find better ways to improve outcomes for children, adults and families.
- Expect to be challenged.
- As a professional you are responsible for your own cases and actions.
- Differences should be resolved swiftly, respect the views of others.
- More information about escalation and resolving professional disagreements can be found in the WSP [Finding a Solution Together \(FaST\) Policy and Procedure](#).
- Other resources are on the [WSP Professionals](#) webpages.



1

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.

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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, no matter how silly or exaggerated you may think they are.
- Can you verify and validate the decisions of you and your organisation?
- Enquire further if you are still unsure.



2

What is Professional Challenge?

Professional Challenge means having different professional perspectives within safeguarding practice and 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 wellbeing of a child, young person or adult.

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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.

4

Effective Challenge is...

Effective Challenge is calm, diplomatic, respectful, negotiation and influencing. It uses local tools e.g., Graded Care Profile, and requires good communication with other professionals, and considering the voice of the service user, not taking information on face value. Utilise your gut instinct and be reflective. Be confident, clear, factual and polite.

3

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. Be prepared to have difficult conversations, and share concerns with your line manager.