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## Background

**Professional Challenge** is an integral part of safeguarding.

It is a positive activity, good professional practice & effective multi-agency working. It leads to better outcomes for the child & their family.

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## Why does Professional Challenge Matter?

Having different professional perspectives within safeguarding practice is a sign of a healthy and well-functioning partnership. Being Professional Challenged should not be seen as a criticism of a person's professional capabilities. It should lead to better outcomes for the child & their family, it is healthy & shows confidence in multi-agency practice.

Learning from Serious Case Reviews has identified a reluctance to challenge inter-agency decision making and concerns not being followed up with robust challenge.

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## Respectful (assertive)

**Challenge** can stimulate and motivate others. It can be evidenced-based, child focused & based on the desire for positive outcomes.

Use the escalation process where necessary and refer to your organisations policies on Complaints, Whistle-blowing, record keeping, Information Governance etc.



[Safeguarding Children](#)

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## Professional Challenge

All agencies and services should promote a culture which encourages constructive challenge within and between organisations; acknowledging the important role that challenge can play in safeguarding children. Effective 'working together' depends on a culture of open & honest relationships between agencies. Where different professional perspectives are welcomed & given serious consideration by professionals who want the best outcomes for children young people.

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**Escalation** of concerns should be carried out in the spirit of achieving better outcomes for children. Where possible, all efforts should be made to address disagreements as they happen rather than after the matter has been dealt with. SOTSCP procedures multi-agency [Escalation Policy](#), (provides guidance on the stepped process involved including initial professional discussions through to SOTSCP involvement.

When using the procedure at Step 3, you are asked to escalate to your Safeguarding Partnership representatives. These are detailed on the SOTSCP website; <https://safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/>

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## Disagreement & Dispute Resolution

Differences of opinion, concerns & issues can arise for practitioners at work & it is important they are resolved as effectively and swiftly as possible. Having different professional perspectives within safeguarding practice is a sign of a healthy & well-functioning partnership. These differences of opinion are usually resolved by discussion & negotiation between the practitioners concerned. It is essential that where differences of opinion arise they do not adversely affect the outcomes for families & are resolved in a constructive and timely manner.

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## Barriers to Professional Challenge

- Communication skills
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of experience
- Lack of knowledge of process/ procedures
- Types of Bias
- Time constraints
- Fear/ worry