



**Diogelu Gwent**  
**Gwent Safeguarding**

Gwent Safeguarding Board

# Complaints Procedure

In relation to

Child Protection Conferences

Adult Protection Strategy Meetings &  
Conferences

Child & Adult Practice Reviews



|                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
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## **1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure a sensitive and professional multi-agency response to the management of complaints arising from the functioning of South East Wales Children Safeguarding Board and Gwent Adult Safeguarding Board's multi-agency child and adult protection processes.

The procedure reflects the statutory guidance in relation to Part 7 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and relates to the following aspects of the Board's multi-agency safeguarding functions:

- Child Protection Conferences
- Adult Protection Strategy Meetings and Conferences
- Child and Adult Practice Reviews

All complaints should, in the first instance, be referred to the responsible Agency or Local Authority for consideration under their own Complaints Procedures.

This procedure does not replace individual agencies' own complaints procedures and will not address complaints that include:

- Any concerns or complaints about a single agency's processes;
- Concerns in relation to services that are delivered by agencies to the child, young person or adult at risk;
- Complaints about an individual's professional practice or conduct
- Complaints in relation to the contents of the written record of the conference/practice review – any such concerns should be dealt with by the person who chaired the conference/practice review.

These complaints should be made via the relevant agencies complaints process.

## **2. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?**

Anyone directly involved in the Adult or Child Protection process can make a complaint which will be considered by the relevant Safeguarding Board. If the complaint is not deemed appropriate, then the reason for this decision will be communicated to the complainant in writing. In line with all public sector organisations a complaint will be considered as long as it is made within 12 months of the date the issue of complaint occurred. If a complaint is made to the Safeguarding Boards, it should relate to the most recent conference or review that has taken place. However, in some circumstances, the Complaint Panel can take into consideration earlier conferences or reviews, within the preceding 12 months, if it is believed that this will help to inform their decision-making. This will be considered on an individual case by case basis.

If a complaint is upheld by one of the Safeguarding Boards, and an additional conference/ review has been convened with a new independent Chair, it is not within the remit of this procedure to consider subsequent complaints by the complainant about the conference/ review process undertaken for the same child / adult case.

If, at the conclusion of the complaints process, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, there is no further recourse via this procedure.

### **3. CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES**

Parents, caregivers and children/young people who are involved in the conference process may wish to raise a complaint in respect of one or more of the following aspects of the functioning of the most recent Child Protection Conference:

- The process of the most recent conference in terms of adherence to procedures;
- The registration decision, including the category of registration;
- The decision not to register or to de-register.

#### **Stage 1 - Resolution by the Conference Chair**

The South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board is committed to resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity and at a local level where this is possible. Many issues can be resolved at this stage of the process by the Conference Chair, or where they are unavailable, by an appropriate Senior Manager.

A complaint should be made in writing, by email, by telephone or in person to the Conference Chair. The Chair will attempt to resolve the complaint within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. If the matter is resolved, the Conference Chair will send a response letter to the complainant confirming the agreed resolution. The Local Authority Safeguarding Service Manager will keep a log of all complaints and their outcomes. In order to avoid complaints being stored in more than one place the log of the complaint should be held centrally by the corporate complaints or equivalent department.

If the complaint is not resolved, the Chair of the Conference will inform the Local Authority Safeguarding Service Manager who will provide the complainant with an opportunity to proceed to the next stage of the procedure and, if necessary, support the complainant to make the referral to the interagency Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel.

Complaints will be accepted in any format, where this is by telephone or face to face, a transcript of that conversation will be typed and shared with the complainant for their agreement. The person making the complaint may need to be assisted e.g. they may need the support of an advocate or family member. Appendix 1 provides the minimum information required.

Families are expected to continue to engage with child protection arrangements as required for the duration of the inter-agency Gwent Safeguarding Board Complaints Panel (Stage 2) process.

#### **Stage 2 - Inter-agency Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel**

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 then the Safeguarding Service Manager will share all information about action taken to resolve the complaint with the Gwent Safeguarding Board Business Manager.

The Business Manager will convene a meeting of the Inter-agency Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel. The Panel should consist of a minimum of three representatives from the relevant Board, one of whom will act as chair. One Panel member will be a qualified social worker with relevant experience. The Panel shall not include any agency that has had direct involvement in the case being heard and therefore will ensure maximum independence within this process.

The Business Manager will circulate all relevant documentation to members of the Panel including the original complaint, any action already taken to resolve the complaint under Stage1, any relevant reports and the written record(s) of the meeting in question. This may include information around decision making which took place pre-conference.

The complainant will be advised of the meeting and be provided with an opportunity to attend. They will be entitled to be accompanied by a person of their choice to support them but not represent them. The panel will offer a choice of two dates for the complaint hearing, and this will be offered a maximum of twice (i.e. 4 dates in total). Any dates offered will have to align to any ongoing conferences. If it is identified that all reasonable steps have been taken to secure a reasonable date and it has been unsuccessful then the Safeguarding Board reserves the right to conclude the process at that point.

At the Panel meeting, the chair will be responsible for:

- Introducing the meeting and explaining its purpose;
- Explaining what the Panel will and will not consider;
- Outlining any previous measures that have attempted to resolve the complaint and any background issues;
- Providing the complainant with an opportunity to make a statement in person or in writing to the panel and call evidence relating to his/her complaint; (If the complainant wishes to submit information in writing, this must be received by the Panel at least 10 working days prior to the Panel hearing date).
- Supplementary information requested.

Both the Panel and the complainant may call witnesses (which could include the Conference Chair).

The Panel has 8 weeks from the date that the complaint was **signed and received** to inform the complainant of their findings.

### Decision of the Panel

The Complaints Panel will determine:

- Whether the process followed adhered to the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures
- Whether the decision that is being complained about followed reasonably from the proper observation of the procedures;
- Whether the decision that is being complained about followed reasonably from the information available to the original conference.

The Complaints Panel cannot change the decision of the conference but can request that the Local Authority reconvenes the child protection conference to take account of the Panel's findings.

The Panel Chair will write to the complainant informing them of the panel decision and provide a rationale for this. Copies of the letter will be sent to:

- The child, if appropriate to their age and understanding;
- Any other parent or caregiver with parental responsibility;
- The Child Protection Conference chair and members;
- The Local Authority Head of Children's Services;
- Any other relevant person involved in the case that is identified by the Panel.

If any part of the complaint is upheld, the Complaints Panel may make recommendations for future learning, including raising the matter in the Gwent Safeguarding Case Review Group, or about specific issues to be addressed in subsequent conferences.

Where a part of the complaint is upheld but the Complaints Panel is of the view that this has not affected the decision of the conference, the conference decision will stand.

If the Complaints Panel is of the view that the decision of the Conference was affected, the Complaints Panel will recommend that the Conference be reconvened. Agency representation should be the same as the original meeting, but a different independent chair must be nominated, and the Conference reconvened within 15 working days of the panel decision. The original Conference decision will remain in place until the reconvened Conference has taken place.

In some cases, complainants may raise concerns about individual agencies during the course of the Panel meeting. Should this happen and the information provided raises concerns about the quality of practice within that agency, the Chair of the Panel will discuss these with the designated senior manager of the agency concerned immediately following the Panel meeting.

All complaints about conferences will be reported to Gwent Safeguarding Business Planning Sub-Group.

### ***Complaints about the Conference Chair***

*If the complaint is about the conduct of the Conference Chair it should be addressed in writing, by email, by telephone or in person to the responsible Local Authority Safeguarding Service Manager, who will attempt to resolve the complaint within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint.*

*If the matter is resolved, the Manager concerned will send a response letter to the complainant confirming the agreed resolution and inform the relevant Complaints Department, if appropriate.*

## **4. ADULT PROTECTION CONFERENCES**

An adult at risk, their carer or someone acting on behalf of the adult at risk (an attorney, court-appointed deputy, professional advocate or nominated individual) who is involved in the adult protection process may wish to raise a complaint in respect of one or more of the following aspects of the most recent multi-agency Adult Protection Strategy Meeting or Conference. If the adult has capacity to bring a complaint then no one is able to bring this complaint without their consent. If the adult lacks capacity to bring a complaint, this needs to be assessed and documented and a subsequent best interest decision made as to whether or not it is in the person's best interests for a complaint to be made. An advocate will be able to support in these circumstances

- The process of the most recent Strategy Meeting/ Conference in terms of adherence to procedures;
- The decision/outcome of the Strategy Meeting/ Conference

## **Stage 1 - Resolution by the Chair**

The Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board is committed to resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity and at a local level where this is possible. Many issues can be resolved at this stage of the process by the Strategy Meeting / Conference Chair.

A complaint should be made in writing, by email, by telephone or in person to the Chair or where they are unavailable, by an appropriate Senior Manager. The Chair will attempt to resolve the complaint within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. If the matter is resolved, the Chair will send a response letter to the complainant confirming the agreed resolution and inform the Local Authority Safeguarding Service Manager.

If the complaint is not resolved, the Chair of the Conference will inform the Local Authority Safeguarding Service Manager who will provide the complainant with an opportunity to proceed to the next stage of the procedure and, if necessary, support the complainant to make the referral to the interagency Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel.

The complaint at this stage will need to be in a written format. The person making the complaint may need to be assisted in putting their complaint in a written format (see Appendix 1).

Families are expected to engage with the current adult protection arrangements as required for the duration of the inter-agency Gwent Safeguarding Board Complaints Panel (Stage 2) process.

## **Stage 2 - Inter-agency Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel**

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 then the Local Authority Safeguarding Service Manager will share all information in relation to the complaint with the Gwent Safeguarding Business Manager.

The Business Manager will convene a meeting of the Inter-agency Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel. The Panel should consist of a minimum of three representatives from the relevant Board, one of whom will act as chair. One Panel member will be a qualified social worker with relevant experience. The Panel shall not include any agency that has had direct involvement in the case being heard and therefore will ensure maximum independence within this process.

The Business Manager will circulate all relevant documentation to members of the panel including the original complaint and any relevant reports.

The complainant will be advised of the meeting and be provided with an opportunity to attend. They will be entitled to be accompanied by a person of their choice to support them but not represent them. The panel will offer a choice of 2 dates for panel meeting, and this will be offered a maximum of twice (4 dates in total) and these dates must be aligned to any ongoing conferences. If it is identified that all reasonable steps have been taken to secure a reasonable date and it has been unsuccessful then the Safeguarding Board reserves the right to conclude the process at that point.

At the Panel meeting the chair will be responsible for:

- Introducing the meeting and explaining its purpose;
- Explaining what the Panel will and will not consider;

- Outlining any previous measures that have attempted to resolve the complaint and any background issues;
- Providing the complainant with an opportunity to make a statement in person or in writing to the panel and call evidence relating to his/her complaint. (If the complainant wishes to submit information in writing, this must be received by the Panel at least 10 working days prior to the Panel hearing date).
- Supplementary information requested

Both the panel and the complainant may call witnesses.

The Panel has 8 weeks from the date that the complaint was **signed and received** to inform the complainant of their findings.

### Decision of the Panel

The Complaints Panel will determine:

- Whether the process followed adhered to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures;
- Whether the decision that is being complained about followed reasonably from the proper observation of the procedures;
- Whether the decision that is being complained about followed reasonably from the information available to the original conference.

The Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel cannot change the decision of the Strategy Meeting/ Conference but can reconvene the Conference to take account of the Panel's findings.

The Panel Chair will write to the complainant informing them of the panel decision and provide a rationale for this. Copies of the letter will be sent to:

- The adult, if they have capacity;
- Any other person with care-giving responsibility (if the adult lacks mental capacity to consent to this information-sharing and it is in their best interests to share);
- The Chair and members of the Adult Protection Strategy Meeting/ Conference, subject to the complaint;
- The Local Authority Head of Adult Services;
- Any other relevant person involved in the case that is identified by the Panel.

If any part of the complaint is upheld, the Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel may make recommendations for future learning, including raising the matter in the Gwent Safeguarding Case Review Group, or about specific issues to be addressed in subsequent conferences.

Where a part of the complaint is upheld but the panel is of the view that this has not affected the decision of the Strategy Meeting/ Conference, the Strategy Meeting/ Conference decision will stand.

If the Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel is of the view that the decision of the Strategy Meeting/ Conference was affected, the Complaints Panel will recommend that the Strategy Meeting/ Conference be reconvened. Agency representatives should be the same as the original meeting, but a different independent chair must be nominated, and the Strategy Meeting/ Conference reconvened within 15 working days of the panel decision. The original Strategy Meeting/ Conference decision will remain in place until the reconvened Conference has taken place.



In some cases, complainants may raise concerns about individual agencies during the course of the Panel meeting. Should this happen and the information provided raises concerns about the quality of practice within that agency, the Chair of the Panel will discuss these with the designated Senior Manager of the agency concerned immediately following the Panel meeting.

All complaints about conferences will be reported to Gwent Safeguarding Business Planning Sub-Group.

### ***Complaints about the Chair***

If the complaint is about the conduct of the Chair it should be addressed either in writing, by telephone or in person to the local authority Safeguarding Service Manager, who will attempt to resolve the complaint within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint. If the conference chair and the Safeguarding Service Manager is the same person, the complaint would need to be addressed by another senior manager.

If the matter is resolved, the senior manager concerned will send a response letter to the complainant confirming the agreed resolution and inform the relevant Complaints Department, if appropriate.

## **5. CHILD AND ADULT PRACTICE REVIEWS**

The Welsh Government statutory guidance (Volumes 2 & 3 of 'Working Together to Safeguard People'), issued in accordance with the Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 requires Safeguarding Boards to have a process in place to manage complaints in relation to Child and Adult Practice Reviews. This process needs to take into account the multi-agency nature of Practice Reviews.

### **What can be Complained About?**

Any person directly involved or affected in the Adult or Child Practice Review process can make a complaint that will be considered by the Board. Complaints will be considered in respect of one or more of the following aspects of the process:

- The decision on whether or not to proceed with a Child or Adult Practice Review;
- The process followed in terms of adherence to the statutory guidance
- The content of the report

### **Stage 1 - Resolution by Gwent Safeguarding Board Chairs**

Gwent Safeguarding Board is committed to resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity and at a local level where this is possible.

A complaint should be made in writing, email or by telephone to the Co-Chairs of either the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board or Gwent Safeguarding Adult Board via Gwent Safeguarding Business Manager. The Co-Chairs will attempt to resolve the complaint within 10 working days of agreeing the complaint. If the matter is resolved, the Business Manager will send a response letter to the complainant confirming the agreed resolution and inform the Chair of Gwent Safeguarding Case Review Group and the Chair of the Review Panel, if appropriate.

If the complaint is not resolved, the Business Manager should inform the Chair of Gwent Safeguarding Case Review Group that the complainant wishes to go to next stage of the procedure, the Interagency Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel.

The complaint at this stage will need to be in a written format. The person making the complaint may need to be assisted in putting their complaint in a written format (see Appendix 1).

## **Stage 2 - Inter-agency Complaints Panel**

The Business Manager will convene an Inter-agency Gwent Safeguarding Complaints Panel. The panel should consist of a minimum of three representatives from the relevant Board, one of whom will act as chair. The Panel shall not include any agency that has had direct involvement in the case/review and therefore will ensure maximum independence within this process.

The Business Manager will circulate all relevant documentation to members of the Panel including the original complaint and any relevant reports.

The complainant will be advised of the meeting and be provided with an opportunity to attend. They will be entitled to be accompanied by a person of their choice to support them as appropriate but not represent them.

At the Panel meeting the chair will be responsible for:

- Introducing the meeting and explaining its purpose;
- Explaining what the Panel will and will not consider;
- Outlining any previous measures that have attempted to resolve the complaint and any background issues;
- Providing the complainant with an opportunity to make a statement in person or in writing to the panel and call evidence relating to his/her complaint. (If the complainant wishes to submit information in writing, this must be received by the Panel at least 10 working days prior to the Panel hearing date).

Both the Panel and the complainant may call witnesses.

The Panel has 8 weeks from the date that the complaint was **signed and received** to inform the complainant of their findings.

### Decision of the Panel

The Complaints Panel will determine:

- Whether the process followed adhered to the statutory guidance under Part 7 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Volumes 2 and 3 on Child and Adult Practice Reviews;
- Whether the decision that is being complained about followed reasonably from the proper observation of the statutory guidance;
- Whether the decision that is being complained about followed reasonably from the information available to the original Sub Group meeting or CPR/APR Panel.

The Panel Chair will write to the complainant informing them of the panel decision and provide a rationale for this. Copies of the letter will be sent to:

- The child/adult at risk, if appropriate;
- Any other person with care-giving responsibility if appropriate;
- The Co-Chairs of either the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board or Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board;
- The Chair of Gwent Safeguarding Case Review Group;
- The Chair of the CPR/APR panel, if appropriate;
- Any other relevant person involved in the case that is identified by the Panel.

The Complaints Panel can recommend that the original Case Review Group meeting or CPR/APR Panel is reconvened to take account of the Complaint Panel's findings. A different independent Chair must be nominated, and the meeting reconvened within 15 working days of the Panel decision.

If any part of the complaint is upheld the Complaints Panel will refer their recommendations to the reconvened meeting. The original decision will remain in place until the reconvened meeting has taken place.

In some cases, complainants may raise concerns about individual agencies during the course of the Panel meeting. Should this happen and the information provided raises concerns about the quality of practice within that agency, the Chair of the Panel will discuss these with the designated Senior Manager of the agency concerned immediately following the Panel meeting.

## **6. UNRESOLVED COMPLAINTS**

The Inter-Agency Gwent Safeguarding Board Complaints Panel is the final stage of the Safeguarding Complaints Procedure. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the actions of an individual agency, then he/she may pursue a complaint via an individual Agency's complaints procedure or contact the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ  
Tel: 0300 790 0203 Fax: (01656) 641199

## **7. REPORTING**

The number of complaints resolved at Stage 1 of the Complaints Process will be reported by the Local Authority Safeguarding Service Manager to the Gwent Safeguarding Business Manager who will notify the Gwent Safeguarding Business Planning Group (and Case Review Group where it relates to a Child or Adult Practice Review).

Information regarding complaints made under Stage 2 of the Complaints Process will also be reported to Gwent Safeguarding Business Planning Group (and Case Review Group where it relates to a Child or Adult Practice Review).

All complaints relating to the Adult or Child Practice Review process will be anonymously reported to the Gwent Safeguarding Case Review Group by the Gwent Safeguarding Business Manager, for the purpose of thematic learning.

## Appendix 1 - Gwent Safeguarding Board Complaint Form

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Name of person involved:</b>             |  |
| <b>Address:</b>                             |  |
| <b>Date of meeting (if applicable):</b>     |  |
| <b>Chair of meeting (if applicable):</b>    |  |
| <b>Name of person making the complaint:</b> |  |
| <b>Relationship to the person above:</b>    |  |
| <b>Address:</b>                             |  |
| <b>Telephone number:</b>                    |  |
| <b>Email address:</b>                       |  |

Please provide details of your complaint below

Signed:

Date:

Please return to:

Gwent Safeguarding Board Business Unit,  
Floor 2, Social Services  
Ty Penallta,  
Parc Tredomen,  
Ystrad Mynach,  
CF82 7PG

Email: [GWENTSAFEGUARDING@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:GWENTSAFEGUARDING@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Tel: 01443 864373