

MY OASIS

Therapeutic Alternative Provision

Challenge and Escalation Policy

2026/2027

Date of Last review: January 2026

Date of Next review: January 2027



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Policy Overview

At My Oasis Therapeutic Alternative Provision, safeguarding the welfare and safety of all young people is our highest priority. This policy sets out our approach to highlighting any professional challenges or escalating safeguarding concerns, whether these are internal or involving external agencies.

Safeguarding decisions may sometimes lead to disagreements that must be resolved promptly and constructively, ensuring the young person's safety and well-being remain central. This policy defines how staff can challenge any safeguarding decisions they do not agree with, as well as how staff can escalate these concerns, in line with statutory guidance and local authority protocols.

Professional challenge is not about conflict; it is about protecting children. By raising concerns and questioning decisions, staff help to prevent drift, delay, or unsafe practice. Constructive escalation ensures that safeguarding responses are timely, proportionate, and always in the best interests of the young person.

Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- Promote a culture whereby professional challenge is recognised as a key safeguarding responsibility.
- Ensure that staff understand how and when to raise any concerns they may have regarding safeguarding decisions being made for students attending My Oasis.
- Provide clear escalation routes for when there are disagreements involving multi-agency safeguarding processes.
- Align the internal procedures within My Oasis to be in line with the escalation frameworks of Wigan and Lancashire local authorities.
- Ensure all staff provide timely, coordinated responses that prioritise the young person's best interests.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all teaching, therapeutic, support and volunteers working on behalf of My Oasis. It also covers external professionals working with our young people and any external providers or alternative provisions our students attend.

Unless otherwise stated, references to 'staff' include all of the groups above.

Definitions

Professional Challenge: Refers to a respectful and constructive questioning of safeguarding decisions or actions believed to compromise a child's safety, welfare, or access to support.

Escalation: Refers to the process of raising unresolved safeguarding concerns to more senior staff or external leads to secure review, accountability, and action.

Examples of when challenge or escalation may be necessary:

- Disagreement over thresholds for referral or intervention for a student of concern.
- Concerns that safeguarding responses are delayed or inadequate.
- Insufficient multi-agency involvement.
- Disputes about roles and responsibilities for supporting a young person at My Oasis.
- Situations where a child remains at risk due to unresolved disagreements.

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy adheres to the following legislation, guidance and legal frameworks.

Primary Legislation

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Education Act 2002
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

Statutory Guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government)
- Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners (DfE)
- What to do if You're Worried a Child is Being Abused (HM Government)

Local Frameworks

My Oasis makes use of the following Local Authorities due to the students we have on roll often residing within these boroughs.

- Wigan Safeguarding Children Partnership Escalation Protocol
- Lancashire CSAP Resolving Professional Disagreements
- Thresholds of Need and Response (Wigan and Lancashire)

Related Policies and Procedures

This policy complements and should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- GDPR and Data Protection Policy
- Behaviour policy

Indicators for Challenging and Escalation

Staff should consider challenge or escalation when:

- A young person is believed to be at risk, yet a referral to social care is refused.
- There is an unacceptable delay in safeguarding partner response.
- They believe that the outcomes of multi-agency meetings are unsafe or inappropriate.
- Agencies withdraw involvement despite ongoing risks.
- Communication breakdowns or inaction persist.

Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

- Must raise safeguarding concerns promptly and follow escalation procedures.
- Will be supported when acting in good faith to challenge decisions.
- Be aware of the different policies and procedures to follow for the two different boroughs.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Leads on professional challenge and escalation internally and externally.
- Maintains confidential records of concerns and outcomes.
- Ensures escalation follows local authority protocols.
- Communicates outcomes to relevant staff and partners.
- Keep staff up to date on key contextual safeguarding issues and KCSIE updates.

Headteacher

- Holds strategic accountability for challenge and escalation processes.
- Supports staff and DSLs in managing concerns.
- Monitors patterns of disagreement to inform quality improvement.
- Oversees staff training and development around key contextual safeguarding issues and KCSIE updates.

Internal Challenge Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Discussion

- Raise concerns directly with the colleague or the DSL involved in either the internal or external services.
- Approach discussions respectfully, focusing on the young person's welfare.
- Aim for resolution through open dialogue.

Stage 2 – Escalation to DSL or Senior Leader

- Report to the Deputy DSL if the Lead DSL is not available.
- DSL reviews, takes appropriate action, and records concerns confidentially.

Stage 3 – Escalation to Headteacher

- If still unresolved, escalate to the Headteacher. If the Headteacher or the DSL, then escalate concerns to the Governing Body.
- Formal records will be made; further actions including external escalation may be taken.
- The Headteacher/Governing Body would need to report to the Local Authorities if they still don't get a response.

External Challenge and Escalation (Multi-Agency Disagreements)

Where disagreements involved external agencies (social care, police, health), My Oasis follows the local authority escalation protocols based on the young person's placing authority:

Wigan Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP):

1. Discuss with involved professionals.
2. Escalate to agency managers/safeguarding leads.
3. Refer to WSCP agency representatives.
Contact details for Monday – Friday (8:45 am-5 pm): 01942828300
Contact details for Out of Hours: 01942828777
4. Final escalation to WSCP Business Manager and Independent Chair.
Contact the WSCP Business Unit and request escalation to the Business Manager or Independent Chair.
Contact detail: 01942486025

Timeline: each stage completed within 1 working week.

Serious disagreement must be raised immediately if a young person is at imminent risk.

Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP):

1. Raise concerns with the MASH Practice Manager.

East Lancashire

Contact details: Email: ausra.pilitauskaite@lancashire.gov.uk

Number: 01772533504

Central Lancashire

Contact details: Email: patricia.louis@lancashire.gov.uk

Number: 01772539546

North Lancashire

Contact details: Email: lynne.southworth@lancashire.gov.uk

Number: 01772531526

2. Escalate to MASH Team or Senior Manager.

Contact details for Team Manager: Email: rachael.pickup@lancashire.gov.uk

Number: 01772531645

Contact details for Senior Manager: Email: andrea.duerden@lancashire.gov.uk

Number: 01772532581

3. Further escalation to Head of Service or Director.

Contact CSAP to request further escalation: LSBU@lancashire.gov.uk

4. Notify CSAP using the Resolving Professional Disagreements Form if unresolved.

https://panlancashirescb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_resolving_prof_disagree.html

Timeline: each stage completed within 5 working days, with a total of 15 working days maximum.

The DSL or Headteacher leads the external escalation and ensures records are maintained.

Urgent Concerns and Immediate Risk

If a young person is at immediate risk of significant harm, staff must:

- Alert the DSL immediately or follow relevant Safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Not delay safeguarding actions pending resolution of disagreements.
- Ensure protective measures and referrals are made without delay.
- Inform parents and carers where necessary.
- Inform relevant parties/Local Authorities, e.g. the police or Social care if it's a CLA.

The DSL will initiate safeguarding action and escalate concerns simultaneously as needed.

Learning and Continuous Improvement

Outcomes from escalations will be used to inform staff training, supervision, and policy updates. Learning points will be shared with staff during safeguarding briefings, ensuring transparency and reinforcing a culture of professional challenge.

Where disagreements highlight systemic issues with multi-agency partners, the Headteacher will raise these formally with the relevant local authority safeguarding partnership.

This feedback loop ensures that safeguarding practice at My Oasis continually evolves to protect the welfare of young people.

Training and Induction

This policy will be introduced to all new staff, volunteers, and external providers as part of their induction process.

Annual refresher training will be provided to ensure all staff remain confident in raising professional challenges and using escalation routes appropriately. Scenario-based workshops and case reviews will be used to support practical understanding of how to apply the policy in real situations.

The DSL will provide updates on any changes to local authority protocols or statutory guidance (e.g. KCSIE).

Recording Documentation and Monitoring

Records of the details regarding the nature of the disagreement, actions taken, outcomes, and learning points should be immediately recorded. All challenges and escalations are recorded in the school's safeguarding system, CPOMS, and in a designated file, which is securely stored with minimal access. Sensitive information is securely stored in compliance with the GDPR and other relevant data protection legislation, and in line with all other Safeguarding policies and procedures.

The DSL maintains a Challenge and Escalation Log for monitoring and quality assurance. The Headteacher and DSL review the log termly to monitor patterns, identify recurring issues, and ensure timely resolution. A summary of challenges and escalations (anonymised) will be reported to the Governing Body each term to provide oversight and accountability. Serious or repeated issues will trigger a policy review or staff training intervention.