

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Date	17 January 2019
Report title	Supporting School referrals to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
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Summary

There is a need to enhance the operation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) through closer links with Educational Professionals. At present there are high numbers of referrals from schools and this proposal seeks to ensure that referrals receive the most appropriate response that supports families effectively.

This report proposes the introduction of an Education Professional post within the MASH in order to raise levels of understanding (of schools and education) within the MASH and to improve the accuracy and quality of referrals.

Decision

Members of the Schools' Forum are asked to:

1. Consider the proposal to establish an Education Professional position within the MASH
2. Agree to the post being funded through the Central School Services Block of the Dedicated Services Grant.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is an integrated team of professionals from a range of agencies, working together to safeguard vulnerable children and adults. The MASH facilitates the collection and analysis of all available and relevant information/intelligence in order to ensure that safeguarding responses are timely, proportionate and effective.
- 1.2 The MASH operates during working hours on weekdays; it receives referrals from multiple agencies with the highest proportions of children's referrals being made in a typical month by the following services:
 - Education (referrals from schools),
 - Police
 - Hospital (Royal Wolverhampton Trust)
 - Barnado's Screening Tool (Domestic Abuse Risk, Social Care and Police)
- 1.3 Most referrals made to the MASH are associated with children. When referrals are received they are assessed by MASH Screening Officers who check if the child is known to Children's Services. If there is a case open (or closed within the last 28 days) the allocated worker is assigned to follow up the referral.
- 1.4 If there is no allocated worker the information is collated and assessed by a Lead Professional for Social Care and Early Intervention who applies a threshold / Red Amber Green (RAG) rating based on the following:
 - **Red** - There is a potential child protection issue (e.g. serious injury to the child). To be dealt with in four hours (or immediate if required) – straight to Strategy Discussion. In some cases, information will still be collated from agencies within the MASH to inform future decisions/plans.
 - **Amber** - There are significant concerns but immediate action is not required. To be dealt with in 24 hours. – Referred into MASH for information gathering and a MASH discussion to inform action.
 - **Green** - There are concerns regarding a child's wellbeing but these do not meet statutory requirements (e.g. poor school attendance). To be dealt with in 72 hours – straight to Early Intervention for action.
- 1.5 For reds and ambers the Social Work Unit Manager will decide what agency information is required and then trigger an information request using the MASH Guardian System. This will include the referral information and the RAG rating that has been applied. The Social Work Unit Manager may change the RAG rating as new information comes to light. Similarly, where referrals have gone direct to Early intervention, if more information is received that indicates the risk may be higher, this will be stepped back up to the MASH to reassess the threshold.

2.0 Issues Arising

- 2.1 The MASH referral process is well embedded, however there are a large proportion of referrals being made that are rejected (due to not meeting Safeguarding thresholds) or RAG rated as green that result in no further action or Early Help Assessments being undertaken.

- 2.2 In the reporting period October 2017 to October 2018 a total of 4439 referrals for children were made to the MASH, of which 39% (1731 cases) resulted in a referral for an Early Help Assessment
- 2.3 The high level of referrals leading to no action necessary or Early Help Assessments indicates that there is a need for greater understanding by referring bodies of the thresholds for referring cases to the MASH. There is also a clear need to improve the accuracy and quality of referrals being made to the MASH
- 2.4 There is evidence of good practice within schools in Wolverhampton, however gaining consistency of practice across all schools in the city has proved difficult.
- 2.5 Support is currently offered to schools through a range of channels and this will continue to be the case. However, better use of the current support mechanisms, namely, locality surgeries and duty workers within Strengthening Families Hubs, needs to be improved. This will support schools in ensuring responses to identified issues are being dealt with appropriately from the outset.
- 2.6 The current makeup of staff in the MASH is detailed in the table below. There is no representative from the Education sector within the current staffing roster, whereas other referring agencies have professionals working within the MASH to provide their knowledge, skills and understanding of their organisations to the MASH process.

Post	Number FTE
Children's Social Care	10.5
Adult Social Care	9
Strengthening Families Delivery Manager	1
MASH Business Manage	1
West Midlands Police Officers	2
Joint Protocol Officer	1
MARAC Coordinator	1
Social Work Unit Administrators	4.5
Recovery Near You	1
West Midlands Probation Service	1
Wolverhampton Homes	1
Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust	1
Royal Wolverhampton Trust	1
Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group	1

3.0 Proposal

- 3.1 To further the current understanding within the MASH and to improve the accuracy and quality of referrals it is proposed to offer a 12-month secondment to an existing Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) to work within the MASH.
- 3.2 The purpose of the role will be to raise the level of understanding within the MASH of how schools operate and to bring an "Education context" to the operation of the MASH. This will be achieved through participation in MASH team meetings which provide the opportunity to feed into the MASH management group.

- 3.3 The postholder will be tasked with working with schools to promote greater understanding from all perspectives and to support consistent practice across schools in the city.
- 3.4 The post will be filled on the basis of a 37-hour working week working in term time **only**.
- 3.5 The secondment will be for 12 months and will act as a trial to establish if there is a need for a permanent Education role within the MASH.
- 3.6 There will be a need for administrative support for the role. This will be provided by the Local Authority.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Based on the cost of seconding a DSL (or deputy) it is expected that the post will be paid on the Leadership Scale with an indicative cost in the region of £50,000 and £75,000. The costs will be finalised upon establishment of the position and creation of a Job Description.
- 4.2 It is proposed that, with the approval of Schools' Forum, the post is funded for a period of 12 months through the Central Services Block of the Dedicated Services grant.
- 4.3 An assessment of the effectiveness of the role will be undertaken and presented to Schools' Forum prior to the 2020 round of school funding proposals. This will also include an assessment of future viability for the post and any associated funding proposals.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Section 10 of the Children's Act 2004 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners, and such other persons or bodies who exercise functions or are engaged in activities in relation to children in the local authority's area, as the authority considers appropriate. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area – which includes protection from harm and neglect alongside other outcomes.