

Warwickshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub



MASH

Information for professionals

Please note:

- Children's MASH goes live 3rd May 2016
- Adults MASH goes live 1st September 2016

Until these dates, normal referral processes should be followed.



About the MASH?

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a partnership between Warwickshire County Council, Warwickshire Police, Warwickshire NHS health services and other key partner agencies working together to safeguard children, young people and adults.

The MASH will deal with new safeguarding concerns, where someone is concerned about the safety or well-being of a child or adult, or thinks they might be at risk of harm. For example, a teacher may believe that one of their pupils is at risk of harm at home, or a doctor may think an older person is being neglected.

Within the MASH, information from different agencies will be collated and used to decide what action to take. As a result, the agencies will be able to act quickly in a co-ordinated and consistent way, ensuring that children and adults are kept safe.

The MASH will involve representatives from the County Council, Police, Health, Probation and other key agencies working together in the same location. Virtual links will exist to other services and agencies.

How does it work?

The MASH acts as the first point of contact, receiving NEW safeguarding concerns or enquiries and collating information from different agencies to build up a holistic picture of the circumstances of a case.

The agencies involved quickly share information on a case and make a swift decision on the most appropriate action needed. Better co-ordination between agencies will also lead to an improved service for children, adults and their families.

The MASH also incorporates the CAF/Early Help Duty telephone hotline and the Social Care Consultation telephone hotline providing advice and guidance for professionals with concerns about a child or young person. This will help improve the quality of information provided and reduce the number of inappropriate referrals.

The MASH will replace a range of existing referral points and allow agencies to work together more closely – an approach which is already working elsewhere in the country.

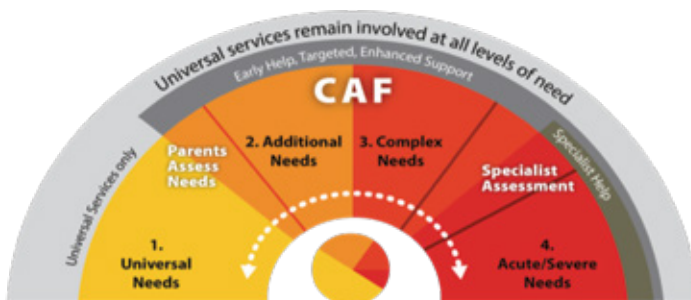
What benefits will it bring?

The MASH will bring the following benefits:

- Faster, more co-ordinated and consistent responses to new safeguarding concerns about vulnerable children and young people.
- An improved 'journey' for the child or adult with a greater emphasis on early intervention and better informed services provided at the right time.
- Greater ability to identify potential vulnerability, enabling more preventative action to be taken, dealing with cases before they escalate.
- A more straightforward and responsive process for the professional or citizen raising a concern, with clear guidance and support.
- Closer partnership working, clearer accountability and less duplication of effort.
- A reduction in the number of children and adults inappropriately accessing services from social care, the Police and others.
- A reduction in the number of inappropriate referrals and re-referrals.

What to consider before a professional makes a referral to MASH?

The Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) has developed a Thresholds Document on determining levels of need when making assessments. This provides advice and guidance regarding the level of support children may require. Professional staff should consider before making a referral to the MASH, whether the needs of the person subject of the concern can be met by services from within their own agency, or by other professionals already involved with the family. This is usually relevant for children who have universal or additional needs, this is often referred to as Level 1 or 2 support as demonstrated in the WSCB Threshold Document.



Do I need to inform parents or carers that I have concerns and I am making a referral?

Usually yes. Professionals should seek to discuss any concerns they have with the people who have parental responsibility for the child and inform them they are making a referral to the MASH. This should only not be done when such discussions will place the child at increased risk of significant harm or cause further significant harm.

Can I get further advice about a situation I am concerned about?

Yes. Each agency will have its own safeguarding procedures which will detail how to identify and assess safeguarding concerns. However, further advice about thresholds and when to make a referral can be obtained from professionals own agency safeguarding leads.

Information, advice and guidance can be accessed in relation to Early Help Assessments (CAF) via the CAF duty system, which is located within the MASH. This can be accessed by contacting the MASH on 01926 414144.

The MASH Consultation Service offers professionals the opportunity to talk through situations that they are concerned about, to help determine what an appropriate response might be. It provides quick access via the telephone to Children's Safeguarding and Social Care advice. It allows for advice to be given on Children's Safeguarding and Social Care thresholds.

Professionals contacting the MASH cannot remain anonymous when seeking advice and children discussed should be identified to ensure effective advice is provided.

How the Consultation Service works:

- Consultation will be offered by MASH members of staff for all professionals seeking advice about children who they are concerned about.
- To undertake a consultation professionals should telephone the MASH on 01926 414144.
- The MASH will record the consultation against the child's details. The contacting professional is expected to follow the record keeping and information guidelines for their own agency, to record they have held a consultation.
- The MASH will not contact the family discussed but do expect professionals to discuss any concerns they have with the people who have parental responsibility for the child.
- Professionals and their agencies are not obliged to follow the advice offered, however staff within the MASH will escalate concerns in line with Warwickshire's Safeguarding Children Procedures where they feel Safeguarding activity is required and advice is not followed.
- This is not a short cut or referral route into the MASH. If a referral is required, the procedures below will be followed.



How do professionals make a safeguarding referral?

Professionals should make referrals to the MASH by downloading and completing the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF). The MARF can be accessed via the MASH website at www.warwickshireMASH.org.uk

Upon completion the MARF, with any other relevant information should be securely emailed to mash@warwickshire.gcsx.gov.uk

If a child is at immediate risk of serious harm requiring immediate action and where a delay caused by the completion of this document would cause further harm, then the professional should contact the MASH directly on 01926 414144 during office hours (08:30am - 17:30pm Monday - Thursday, 08:30am - 17:00pm Friday).

Outside of these times where there is an immediate concern about the safety of a child, the police should be contacted. In an emergency out of hours, which can not wait until the MASH re-opens please contact the Emergency Duty Service on 01926 886922. In these cases the telephone contact must always be followed by completion and urgent submission of the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) to the MASH.

Additional information or other queries can be made via secure email by contacting mash@warwickshire.gcsx.gov.uk but this is not to be used as an alternative method of referral, as this must always be completed by sending the MARF. There are no fax facilities in the MASH.

If professionals have any difficulties sending a referral and need assistance do not hesitate to call the MASH on 01926 414144.

What happens after the safeguarding referral is made?

Following receipt of the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) the MASH, Children's Social Care will review the referral and complete an initial review and checking process. This will include checking if the child is currently open to Children's Social Care or to Early Help for a CAF. If the child is currently open to Children's Social Care or has been closed by them within the last twelve weeks the referral will be forwarded directly to the Children's Team for them to follow up. This will usually be via the Duty Social Worker within that team and the Operations Manager. The MASH will ensure that the information is received by either party by following up with a telephone call and recording this passing of information has occurred.

Unless the child was stepped down to Early Help within the last twelve weeks, in which case depending on the concerns raised the information will be shared and discussed with the lead practitioner, where possible to decide if the concerns are such that Early Help can address the concerns or whether there are new or additional concerns which need a different response.

If the referral is raising a new concern about a child not known to Children's Social Care or Early Help, then the referral will be loaded into the MASH system and passed to staff to complete initial screening. Depending on the nature of the concern the referral may progress to triage where information from a number of agencies within the MASH and those with virtual links to the MASH is gathered. If there are immediate concerns for the welfare of a child a MASH Meeting may take place which professionals will be invited to attend virtually or via conference telephone.

Professionals will be informed of the outcome of the referral, detailing what action was taken by the MASH and the decisions made. This will be provided in writing, usually via secure email.

If professionals remain concerned or are unhappy with the decision made by the MASH they are able to use the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) escalation process. More information regarding this is available at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wscb

More Information

To find out more about the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) visit:
www.warwickshireMASH.org.uk

For further information about local support services visit the Family Information Service online at **www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis** or call **01926 742274**.

Remember

If you have a safeguarding concern about a child or young person and want to speak to someone, contact the Warwickshire MASH on **01926 414144** and give as much information as you can.

The MASH Operating Times are:

8.30am - 5.30pm Monday - Friday

8.30am - 5.00pm on a Friday

Outside of office hours for an immediate concern about a child in danger dial 999 and contact the Emergency Duty Team on telephone number 01926 886922.

