

**ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD**  
**MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB and**  
**EARLY HELP HUB**  
**DRAFT**

**MASH AND EARLY HELP HUB**

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Early Help Hub (EHH) is the single point of contact for all safeguarding and wellbeing concerns regarding children and young people in RBWM. It does this by:

- Acting as a “front door” to manage all safeguarding referrals including the undertaking of Child Protection investigations where required
- Acting as a “front door” to Early Help Hub

The MASH and Early Help Hub are designed to meet the two key principles of effective safeguarding as defined by Working Together 2015.

- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- A child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

*Working Together 2015 Department of Education*

**Early Help Assessments**

Early Help Assessments (EHA’s) identify what help a child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989 – Single Assessment or Child Protection Enquiries.

Working Together states:

*The Early Help Assessment should be undertaken by a lead professional who should provide support to the child and family, act as an advocate on their behalf and coordinate the delivery of support services.*

*The lead professional role could be undertaken by a General Practitioner (GP), family support worker, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs coordinator. Decisions about who should be the lead professional should be taken on a case by case basis and should be informed by the child and their family.*

### **HOW TO MAKE A REQUEST FOR MASH AND EARLY HELP HUB**

All requests for MASH and Early Help Hub will be made using the same request form. This form can be downloaded and attached to an email and sent to MASHandEHH@rbwm.gov.uk. If you have completed an Early Help Assessment part 1 and part 2 these completed forms should also be sent with the Request for MASH and Early Help form.

#### **Child Protection**

If the matter is of a child protection nature you should make urgent telephone contact with the MASH. Your information will be passed immediately to the MASH manager who will make a decision on the risk level and inform you of this within one hour. You must follow up your telephone call by sending a completed a Request for MASH and Early Help Hub to the MASH within 24 hours ticking the MASH box.

**Tel: Ph. 01628 685995 (Professionals Number)**

**Tel: Ph. 01628 683150 / 01628 683800 (Public Number)**

**Out of Hours Tel: 01344 786543**

**If a child is in immediate danger, please call 999.**

### **BEFORE MAKING CONTACT WITH MASH AND EARLY HELP HUB**

A Request for MASH and Early Help should be made when your assessment has identified needs, which can only be met through Targeted Services at level 2 or Specialist Services at level 3 of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Threshold Document (2016). You need to consider if the child or young person's needs can be met by services from within your own agency, or by other

professionals already involved with the family.

If you are not sure about the needs of the child, you can call the MASH and Early Help Hub using the contact details below to discuss the case with professionals in the MASH – see **CONSULTATION**.

Before making a contact you should always get the consent of the parents or carers, except where a child is considered to be at risk of harm and you believe that seeking parental consent may increase this risk.

### **Early Help Hub**

There will be an expectation that universal services and/or school support has already been put in place and measured for its effectiveness. Examples of universal support are ELSA, self-referral to school based counsellor, peer mentoring, universal parenting group.

In addition, if the child is eligible for pupil premium or has SEN support, it will be important to show how the interventions offered have been evaluated.

If the outcome measures produced suggest that the current support or intervention that was put in place is not meeting the needs of the child or family, it will then be appropriate to complete the Request for MASH and Early Help form ticking the Early Help Hub box, and where available, send a copy of the Early Help Assessment part 1 and part 2.

If you have discussed with the family or young person and they would like to refer directly (to services that take self referrals, (such as the youth counselling service), they can continue to do this.

### **EARLY HELP HUB**

#### **Early Help Function**

The function of the Early Help Hub is to identify what help a child and family require to prevent needs escalating and ensure the most appropriate plan and support is put in place in a timely manner. The Early Help Hub will have a shared set of priorities for the allocation of existing resources and as far as possible is a single point of access for the following additional services.

## Early Help Hub Services

The following services will form the Early Help Hub:

- Early Help Social Workers
- Youth Counselling Service
- Youth Service
- Youth Offending Service
- Intensive Family Support Service
- RISE Alternative Provision
- Education Welfare Service
- Wellbeing Team
- Early Help Advisors (Social Care)
- Children's Centres
- Shine (Autism outreach service)
- Health visitors and school nurses
- Voluntary services including Family Friends, Young Carers
- DASH
- DAAT

The Early Help Hub will also work closely with CAMHS to ensure that the child's needs are most effectively met. The Single Point of Entry for CAMHS will continue to operate for children and young people with significant mental health concerns.

A data base will be kept of requests to the hub and the services to be involved. This will enable a systematic review of the types of need for which additional resources are required and any patterns in the requests, to enable future planning to meet the needs of the community.

## Location

The Early Help Hub will meet twice a week, on a Wednesday, in Maidenhead Town Hall.

## MASH – MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB

### MASH function

MASH brings together expert professionals, called “navigators”, from services that have contact with children, young people and families, and makes the best possible use of their combined knowledge to keep children safe from harm.

- Researching information held on professional databases
- Providing a secure and confidential environment for professionals to share information
- Identifying low-level repeat referrals which taken in isolation may not appear concerning
- Prioritising referrals using a **BRAG** (Blue/Red/Amber/Green) rating
- Referring cases to other agencies
- Activating ‘First Response/Child Protection’ social work services to provide immediate protection for a child

### Mash Workforce

The MASH comprises a Team Manager, Access Officers, social workers and a number of staff, known as Navigators, from different core teams and agencies. The Navigators are employed and supervised by their own agencies, but the MASH Manager coordinates their contributions to MASH and oversees the day to day activity within the MASH.

In RBWM we will also be locating our CSE coordinator within the MASH to ensure the effective management of the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.

The Home Office protocol is clear that accountability for a MASH ultimately lies with Children's Services (DCS) in the local authority. The MASH Manager has the final say in all safeguarding decisions.

The core partners represent the following agencies/bodies:

- RBWM – Children's and Adults Services
- Thames Valley Police
- Berkshire Health Foundation Trust
- Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead CCG
- National Probation Service
- Voluntary Services
- DASH

### **Core Partners**

- Children's Social Care
- Police
- Health
- Education
- Early Help
- Domestic Abuse Services
- Adult Services
- Probation

All core partner agencies have signed an Information Sharing Agreement

### **Location**

The MASH team will be co-located in a secure office on Floor 2 of Maidenhead Town Hall. Arrangements will be in place for additional members to be connected remotely through telephone and IT channels and attend the MASH office on a part time basis as required.

## **GOVERNANCE OF THE MASH AND EARLY HELP HUB**

Children's Social Care are core members in the MASH. The MASH Team Manager, who has the final say in all safeguarding decisions, reports to the Service Lead, Early Help and First Response. The Early Help Hub is led by the Psychology, Wellbeing and Schools Support Service Lead, who has the final say in all decisions made in the Early Help Hub. Both Service Leads report to the Deputy Director of Early Help and Safeguarding. A multi-agency Strategic Board meets monthly to oversee the operation and performance of the MASH and Early Help Hub. The MASH and Early Help Hub Data Set will be presented to the board every 3 months. The MASH and early help Hub Service Leads will report to LSCB every 6 months.

## **DATA SHARING AND FAIR PROCESSING**

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on key people and bodies to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. This includes the proportionate sharing of information, where appropriate, to make the best decisions for children and young people at risk.

All partners will have signed up to an Information Sharing Agreement that specifies what data can be shared within the MASH, and what happens to that data once the MASH manager makes a decision about the case. The Information Sharing Agreement is published below.

Each agency will assess whether it is appropriate for their information to be shared in line with the Information Sharing Agreement on a case-by-case basis.

The data is held securely and confidentially. The MASH has physical, electronic and managerial safeguards to ensure that sensitive information is only accessed by those who 'need to know' about it.

Only appropriate and relevant parts of the information disclosed during the MASH process will be passed to the non-MASH professionals receiving the case.

In some cases, a MASH navigator may hold confidential information which the MASH manager needs to know to make a decision, but which is too sensitive to be shared elsewhere (for example, when an ongoing police investigation is taking place). In

these cases the MASH system will indicate that there is confidential information held, but will not reveal the information itself.

### Consent

Consent is the key to successful information sharing. For all assessment, it is important that consent is obtained where it is sensible, in the child's best interest, and practical. Even where the Data Protection Act does not demand it, operating with consent is good practice.

To give informed consent, a child/young person and/or their parent/carer must be entirely clear about the purpose of the information; how it will be used; who it may be shared with and how it will be shared; how long it will be held and in what form. *This must include making them aware of circumstances where information may be shared without consent and where confidentiality cannot be maintained.*

Consent can be withdrawn at any time: giving of consent is not a one-off event. It is a continuous and ongoing issue which needs to be revisited at regular and reasonable intervals. The child/young person and/or their parent/carer should be informed that they can withdraw consent at any time.



## **MASH AND EARLY HELP HUB WORK FLOW**

### **Contact**

All Requests for Help come to MASH and Early Help Hub as the single point of contact. When the MASH and Early Help Hub receives a contact, the Access Officers will first check if the child already has a social worker. If there is an allocated social worker, they are considered the best person to support the child, so the contact is passed directly to them. If there is no social worker the Access Officer then assesses the nature of the request i.e. **1. Request for Early Help Hub 2. Request for MASH.**

### **1. EARLY HELP HUB**

If the Request Form is for Early Help and consent has been given, then this is directed straight to the Early Help Hub.

All Requests Forms for Early Help Hub, will be discussed at the Early Help Hub Allocation Meeting, which occurs once a week on a Wednesday.

#### **Membership of Early Help Hub Allocation Meeting:**

- Chair: Service lead for Psychology, Wellbeing and Schools Support
- Early Help Hub Project Officer
- IFS manager (linking with YOS)
- RISE manager
- Youth Counselling manager
- Youth Service manager
- Children's Centres/Early Years manager
- Manager Duty POD Team

The Early Help Hub Allocation Meeting includes representatives of all core services offering Early Help and the Duty POD Team Manager to manage the transfers of

children stepping up from Early Help to children's social care and the children who are stepping down to Early Help.

### **Early Help Hub Allocation Meeting**

A Request form to the Early Help Hub, will result in one the following:

- Early Help Service(s) to be offered which may include further assessment by Early Help Adviser or Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners (Mental Health and Wellbeing)
- Signpost to service/intervention outside of the Early Help Hub (e.g. Daisy's Dream, Berkshire Autistic Society). A member of the Early Help Hub will offer to liaise if required.

The Early Help Hub allocation meeting will also facilitate the smooth transition for families either Stepping Up to Children's Social Care or Stepping Down to Early Help.

If there is insufficient information to make a decision, the Early Help Hub Project Officer will contact the person making the Request for MASH and Early Help to gather additional information.

Where it is agreed that Early Help Services will be offered, a decision will be made as to who will be the Lead Professional and which services will be offered within the framework of an Early Help Assessment, Plan and Review. Within one week of the Early Help Hub allocation meeting, the Early Help Hub Project Officer will confirm the role of Lead professional with the relevant person and notify the family, child (where appropriate) referrer and relevant agencies in writing, of the name of the Lead Professional and provide information about what will happen next. The Lead Professional will arrange a meeting with the family and agreed Early Help Services to develop the Early Help Plan, which will be reviewed within 8 weeks of start date.

### **Early Help Plan Review Process**

The Lead Professional is the active link with the family through to review of the Early Help Plan, which will take place within 8 weeks of the start date. All reviews will be recorded on the RBWM Early Help Plan Review form and the Early Help Plan will be updated.

The completed Early Help Plan and Review form must be shared by the Lead Professional with all involved and a copy sent to the Early Help Hub Project Officer. The Early Help Hub Project Officer will ensure that the child's Early Help record in the Early Help Hub is updated and will notify the Lead Professional of the date by which the next review should be completed.

### **Closure of Early Help Episode.**

When the child or young person's additional needs have been met, their Early Help episode must be closed, and this must be clearly recorded on the final Early Help Review form and updated Action Plan. The Lead Professional will ensure that the completed Early Help Plan and Review is shared with the family and all involved and that a copy is sent to the Early Help Hub Project Officer, who will update the child's Early Help record and notify the family, child (where appropriate) in writing that this has been completed.

## 2. MASH

If the Request Form is for MASH then the Access Officers consider the immediate level of risk and ensures that sufficient information is available to provide a recommendation for the MASH Manager to apply BRAG rating. The MASH Manager confirms the risk level with a BRAG rating:

| BRAG rating  | Assessment   | Action  | Time scale for MASH information  |
|--------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Red</b>   | There is a potential child protection issue (e.g. serious injury to the child) | Requires immediate action   | 4 hours  |
| <b>Amber</b> | There are significant concerns   | Immediate action is not required (e.g. ongoing domestic violence issues in the household)                               | 6 hours  |
| <b>Green</b> | There are concerns regarding a child's wellbeing                               | This is not a referral to children's social care. Services are likely to be delivered via Early Help Hub to meet needs. | 24 hours   |
| <b>Blue</b>  | There is no safeguarding concern   | The needs can be met by a Universal service.  | No MASH response required. Advice or referral to a Universal service may be provided |

### 3. Following the BRAG rating

- **Blue:** If the rating is Blue then the contact is directed to a Universal service, or information and advice is provided.
- **Green:** If the rating is Green and consent has been given, the contact is passed to specific navigators. At this stage, this is not a referral to Children's Social Care.
- **Amber:** If the rating is Amber, this means there are significant concerns and the contact has met the threshold to become a referral to Children's Social Care and is passed to all relevant MASH navigators.
- **Red:** If the rating is Red, this means there are potential child protection concerns and therefore the contact has met the threshold to become a referral to Children's Social Care and is passed to all relevant MASH navigators and the First Response Team are notified, so they can start a child protection assessment immediately.

### 4. MASH gathering episode

Next, the navigators research and share information about the child, using the RBWM Threshold Document to establish the level of need. RBWM Threshold Document is based on three levels of need:

**Level 1:** Universal/Preventative

**Level 2:** Targeted

**Level 3:** Specialist - Acute/Complex

The MASH Manager may change the **BRAG** rating as new information comes to light.

### 5. Outcome of MASH gathering episode

The MASH Manager uses the collected information to decide the best response to meet the child's needs. The MASH manager may:

- Pass the case to First Response Team for completion of a child Protection Investigation, s47 CA 1989.
- Pass the case to Pods for a single assessment, s17 CA 1989
- With consent, pass the case to the Early Help Hub for Early Help Assessment/Plan
- Provide advice and information and close.

The service that receives the case will receive a summary of any appropriate information gathered by the MASH and the referrer is notified in writing within 1 working day of the outcome of the Request for MASH and Early help Hub.

### **CONSULTATION with MASH or Early Help Hub**

Practitioners are encouraged to consult with the MASH and Early Help Hub where they require support in determining a course of action for children and young people with additional needs.

Consultation is a sharing of information between workers in order to gain the perspectives of another service. It is not a Request for MASH and Early Help Hub, unless that is explicitly agreed during the consultation. 'Ownership' of the case remains with the agency initiating the consultation. Following internal line-management consultations, practitioners can discuss their safeguarding or well being concerns with agency navigators in MASH. Any existing agency involvement at lower levels of concern may be identified by contacting the Early Help Advisers who will be able to provide existing or previous contact details of practitioner/agencies leading on Early Help Assessments, which have come through the MASH and Early Help Hub.

The RBWM Threshold Document 2016 relies upon willingness for positive consultation between all agencies working with a child or young person. Consultation will provide an opportunity for those working with a child, young person and/or family to access additional knowledge and expertise from suitably qualified and experienced staff from a range of agencies in order to explore a concern, and decide how best to respond to it. An awareness and appreciation of the roles of others is essential for effective collaboration.

### Principles

- Agencies must have a genuine desire to work together in the best interests of the child or young person.
- Consultation is a two way process and demonstrates an acknowledgement of different but equally valuable knowledge and expertise.
- Consultation should be with the person in each agency who has the most recent knowledge of the family and/or the most relevant knowledge or skills.
- Information should be shared in a spirit of openness but with due regard for confidentiality.
- Consultation may be used in any situation where there are genuine grounds for concern for the well being of a child and family.
- Consultation should not be seen as a way of transferring ownership of a 'problem' unless this is the agreed outcome of discussions, at which stage a formal Request for MASH and Early Help Hub will be made or an agreement regarding on-going joint working will be recorded.
- Communications with other professionals should be followed up in writing to ensure clarity of agreement and as part of audit trail provision.

### During Consultation

The person asking for advice should:

- be clear about what the concern is and what is needed from the consultation
- offer evidence to support the concern and its possible impact on the child or other children
- outline what the agency has already done about the concern
- indicate what the impact of this has been
- share ONLY such other knowledge of the child and family as may be necessary to clarify whether the child or other children may be in need of support or safeguarding services
- initial consultation may be anonymised where appropriate
- be open to suggestions made for the way forward
- make notes of agreed decisions (as outlined in next sub-section)

The professional giving advice should:

- seek clarification where there are any uncertainties about what is involved
- determine whether consent has been obtained to share information
- determine the appropriateness of not seeking, or overriding, parental permission.

### **After Consultation**

- Consider Request for MASH and Early Help Hub.
- Where the child or other children have been identified as in need of support or safeguarding services, record detail of the discussion and of decisions made within the contact record on PARIS.
- Collect appropriate information, in accordance with procedures.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION - MASH**

### **Dissent and disagreement**

Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- thresholds
- roles and responsibilities
- the need for action
- communication

Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard and promote the well-being of children/young people. While often a positive sign of developing thinking within a dynamic process this can therefore, however, be reflected in the immediate term as a lack of clarity in procedures or approaches.

Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion.

Disputes where necessary should be escalated to the MASH manager or in the case of a dispute with the MASH manager's decision the Service Leader for Early Help and Safeguarding.



Attempts at problem resolution may leave one worker or agency believing that the child remains at risk of significant harm. This person or agency has responsibility for communicating such concerns through agreed channels. (Refer to WAMLSCB Child Protection Procedures)