

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Discussion document - Implementing a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for Brighton and Hove</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> March 2014</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director for Children's Services</b>		
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT**

This report is tabled to update Councillors with regards the programme development to establish a MASH in Brighton and Hove. The programme has aspirations for establishing a full MASH dealing with adults and children. Setting the MASH up will be through a staged process. The first stage will be to establish a children's MASH in the next few months. This report suggests the structure and process of the MASH alongside the governance arrangements and asks for comments and a commitment to the programme by Council members.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee support the establishment of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub as previously agreed by Brighton & Hove's Local Safeguarding Children's Board

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Serious Case Reviews continue to identify missed opportunities for information sharing and effective communication between agencies. This in turn translates to missed opportunities to implement appropriate safeguarding measures before the advent of some critical (sometimes fatal) outcome.
- 3.2 A new single inspection framework led by OFSTED began this year. Its remit is the joint inspection of multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children. The introduction of the proposal document makes regular reference to the recent Munro review of child protection, and states that "the inspectorates are agreed that child protection does not begin at the point at which a referral is made to children's social care". The focus of the inspections will be on "the effectiveness of... services for children who may be at risk of harm, including the effectiveness of early identification and early help".

- 3.3 In order to address these issues and make children safer, it is proposed that Brighton and Hove establishes a MASH which co-locates key agencies and their data into a secure assessment, research and referral unit for notifications regarding vulnerable children, young people and adults. The first stage of this process is to establish a children's hub.
- 3.4 This proposal has been discussed at the Brighton and Hove Local Safeguarding Children's Board and agencies have agreed that a MASH will improve outcomes for children and eventually adults and signed up to establishing the hub.
- 3.5 Over the last five years there has been movement nationally towards the creation of multi-agency safeguarding hubs for children and adults. Hub organisation varies across authorities in order to accommodate local needs. There are principals that are accepted as being central to a successful hub.

#### **4. The principles required:**

- Strategic commitment and ownership by all agencies
- Strong accountability and leadership within the MASH
- Rotating staff members in MASH to ensure in touch and connected to home agencies
- Effective referral and assessment point and outcome based interventions provided by Early Help services – an Early Help Hub is being developed across Children's Services to meet this need, which will be launched with the MASH
- Joint Information sharing protocol across adults and children's services.
- Ongoing joint training ensuring good practice shared
- Excellent communication strategy

#### **5. The Hub**

- 5.1 A hub consists of a team of people from core agencies eg Children's Social Work services (CSW), Police, Health, Mental Health, Education, Youth Offending Team working together jointly to assess and decide on appropriate levels of information sharing required for each case. The team members continue to be employed by their own agencies but are co-located in one office to offer an integrated service. The service works to an agreed process for analysing and assessing risk.
- 5.2 The hub deals with all notifications relating to safeguarding or the welfare of children. Therefore concerns at all levels of need are processed in the hub to ensure that all available information held by individual agencies is identified and assessed together.

## **6. The Benefits**

- 6.1 The benefits, as outlined in research results, are:
- a. A standard risk assessment and decision making process across a geographic area leads to consistency and clarity of decision making
  - b. Domestic abuse risk assessments are undertaken in the hub
  - c. Identifies victims and perpetrators of harm
  - d. Reduces the risk of information being overlooked as all agency information relevant to each child/family is identified and therefore needs fully assessed.
  - e. The most appropriate agency to meet the child's needs can be identified reducing unnecessary referrals
  - f. Effective interventions can be accessed at an early stage to prevent needs escalating
  - g. Information in the MASH is kept confidential and only disclosed on a 'need to know' basis.
  - h. MASH performance is research based and can be monitored and evaluated
  - i. A reduction in inappropriate referrals to Children's Social Work services

## **7. The Numbers**

- 7.1 The number of Initial Contacts (consisting of those requiring advice, sending information and making a referral for further action) that have been sent to Children's Social Work services from Nov 2012 to October 2013 are 10,006
- 7.2 41% of Initial Contacts (average over 12 months) become a referral (a situation requiring further action). Amounting to approximately 4100 referrals a year and 340 a month.

## **8. Structure and overall responsibility**

- 8.1 The Executive Director of Children's Services is appointed to fulfil the Local Authorities responsibilities regarding safeguarding. The London Model recommends that the DCS holds overall responsibility for the safeguarding activity of the MASH but that this does not remove partners own agency responsibilities. It suggests that a Local Strategic Group (LSG) is created chaired by the DCS, or answerable to the DCS. Once the MASH has been created it is suggested that this group reforms to be the Strategic Board.
- 8.2 The local Operational Steering Group develops local solutions and discusses partnership issues and solutions at the operational level. This Group should be chaired by a Senior MASH Manager and all partners operating within the MASH should attend. Issues requiring escalation will be taken to the LSG or the Strategic Board by the chair, who will be an adviser to the Strategic Forum.
- 8.3 The activities of the MASH will be reported to the LSCB who will monitor the outcomes and hold the MASH to account.

## **9. The Task**

9.1 Agencies are working together to finally agree the detailed model but it should include the following features:

- Co-location of safeguarding staff from relevant agencies
- Information to be shared *at the point of referral* based on an agreed information sharing protocol
- The inclusion of police and social work and other agencies, decision makers.
- Shared office space
- Access to agencies' relevant IT systems
- A process for assessing agencies' referrals and information (MOGP/1s, etc)
- A protocol for identifying the correct agencies and individuals to progress the referral and a method of allocating it to them.
- All referrals about children's welfare or those at risk of harm to be directed through MASH
- A joint risk assessment process

## **10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

There is full engagement with agencies represented at the LSCB and a plan of discussion and consultation with schools involving visits to school clusters.

## **11. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

The project plan is not at the point of confirming costs. The aim is to share costs across participating agencies

## **12. Legal Implications:**

There will be an information sharing protocol covering agencies work within the MASH and legal guidance is being sought on this document

## **13. Equalities Implications:**

The establishment of the MASH will improve service delivery to all sections of vulnerable children in Brighton and Hove and will improve access to preventative services at an earlier stage in the child's life

## **14. Crime & Disorder Implications:**

One of the aims of a MASH is to identify victims and perpetrators of harm. This will be the case for individuals and also groups and trends across Brighton and Hove. Therefore there will be improved intelligence and will enable early identification and response to issues as they arise.

**15. Public Health Implications:**

Information with families with regards health factors for vulnerable children at risk will be evidence based

**16. Corporate / Citywide Implications:**

The MASH will involve other departments co-operation and input to be effective and we are meeting with representatives of these departments to discuss/consult and develop a plan of action

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

None

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

**Background Documents**

None