

Leaflet for professionals - brief information on MASH

From 1 September 2014, the council's Children's Services and our partners are making significant change to how we organise and coordinate help to children and families, and offer advice and guidance to professionals who work with them.

The changes we are putting in place:

1. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

We are working with the police and other partners to change the way our social workers assess risk to children. The MASH is a first point of contact for concerns around Child Protection and Safeguarding. It replaces Advice, Contact & Assessment Service (ACAS). We are making this change so that our responses can be better joined up and we can target our interventions where they need to be and to the families that really need them.

Contact Details: 01273 290400 or mash@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

2. Early Help Hub (EHH)

We are restructuring how we co-ordinate support for children and families that don't meet the threshold for a social work intervention or where you feel intervention should happen at an earlier stage.

Until now we have had a range of different responses and teams and places you can go for advice and support. For the past year we have successfully run a Youth Early Help model that has meant professionals needed only to complete one referral form when they have been concerned about a child over the age of 11, and we have worked out who is best placed to offer support across the Youth Services, Youth Crime Prevention or the Integrated Team for Families. It has worked so well we want to make the same offer for all age groups. You'll complete the same referral form no matter what age the child, from early years to teens, and we will do the work of getting that information to the services we think is best placed to help.

Contact details: 01273 292632 or earlyhelp@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

3. Threshold document

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) have approved a new Threshold document that will help you to decide the level of need and if the concern you have for a family or a child is something that should be brought to the attention of the MASH or the Early Help Hub.

4. Replacing the Family CAF with an Early Help Family Assessment Form

We are replacing the Family CAF with a single Early Help Family Assessment. We have changed to a system where the Early Help Family Assessment is more usable for professionals, by splitting the assessment into two sections. The first section holds the basic information about the family, identifies some of the difficulties, the professionals supporting, the views of the family and professionals, and has the signed consent of a family member. To save on time it acts as both **part of the assessment and the referral form for the Early Help Hub.**

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the MASH?

The MASH brings together a team of multi-disciplinary professionals from partner agencies into the same room to deal with all safeguarding concerns, where someone is concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child.

Within the MASH, information from partner agencies will be collated to assess risk and decide what action to take. As a result, the agencies will be able to act quickly, in a coordinated and consistent way, ensuring that vulnerable children and families are kept safe.

What is the MASH process?

A screening team sitting in MASH will analyse contacts and decide whether the contact goes into the MASH information sharing process.

A MASH Practice manager will prioritise those contacts for MASH information sharing using a RAG rating (Red/Amber/Green).

Staff from every agency in MASH will gather and share information securely to enable an informed decision to be made.

The MASH Practice manager will use the collected information to decide the most appropriate interventions for the child's identified needs.

Information Sharing

All MASH partners have signed the 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. 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 will be held securely and confidentially. The MASH will have physical, electronic and managerial safeguards to ensure that sensitive information is only accessed by those who 'need to know' about it.

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

In some cases, a MASH worker may hold confidential information the MASH manager may need to know to make a decision, but which is too sensitive to be shared elsewhere (eg 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.

RAG ratings

Red: There is a potential child protection issue (eg serious injury to the child). **Requires immediate action, and information from MASH partners is expected within four hours.**

Amber: There are significant concerns but immediate action is not required (eg ongoing domestic violence issues in the household). **Requires information from MASH partners within 24 hours.**

Green: There are concerns regarding a child's wellbeing but these do not meet statutory requirements (eg poor school attendance). **Requires information from selected MASH partners within 72 hours.**

What if I am unsure if I should be going to the MASH or the EHH?

The threshold document will give you a clear idea of which is the best level of service to approach, but within both teams are professionals that you can consult with. If there are Safeguarding risks and immediate concerns then you should always go directly to the MASH for advice. For all other enquiries speak to the Early Help Engagement Team.