

Thurrock Early Offer of Help Service Design

The Early Offer of Help and the accompanying service design aims to provide support and challenge when needed at appropriate levels depending on the identified needs. Clear links through from universal to targeted and if needed statutory intervention will focus on two key areas:

- The provision of a single point of entry to multi agency services where there is concern of a risk of harm or where a multi-agency response is needed.
- Improved support for universal services to enable them to continue to support families.

The principles that underpin the service design are

- To identify needs earlier, especially for those at the edge of statutory intervention
- Support a coordinated package of support for children and their families
- To reduce the number of cases that escalate to require statutory intervention
- To support the de-escalation of cases so that families stay within statutory intervention for the time they need to but feel supported as needs de-escalate

There is a commitment to reduce the risk of harm to children by:

- Reducing overlaps and gaps between professional services and agencies
- Preventing multiple interventions in families and multiple exchanges
- Reducing complicated and extended information exchange chains

A Single Point of Entry to Multi Agency Services

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs co-locate safeguarding agencies and their data into a secure assessment, research and decision making unit that is inclusive of all notifications relating to safeguarding and child welfare in a Local Authority area. By MASH providing a fire walled environment, each partner agency can be assured of confidentiality of the process and any resultant dissemination of partner agency information in a safeguarding intervention (particularly important for police and health) being proportionate. The model also allows for processes regarding missing people, domestic abuse, child exploitation and others to be included.

Thurrock will establish a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub to provide information sharing across all agencies involved in safeguarding, the MASH will use this information to provide a coordinated response to inform safeguarding decisions. It will contribute to improved outcomes for children by being able to swiftly collate and share information across agencies to support a multi agency risk assessment of cases where there is a concern of a risk of harm.

Partners will work together to provide the relevant information they hold from within their own systems, this will be used to complete multi agency decision making within the required timescales.

The MASH will have three outcomes:

- 1. Early identification and understanding of risk-** All concerns are routed to the MASH ensuring the fullest partnership information and intelligence picture is available to assess the potential risk to a child. This enables decisions to be made based upon interpretation of the best possible information at a given time, supporting only necessary, proportionate and timely interventions.
- 2. Victim identification and intervention-** A MASH arrangement will provide more accurate understanding of the risk to individuals through the pooling of knowledge and resources from each agency. Concerns from any partner, professional, or member of the public will be evaluated and assessed, giving a fuller picture in each case than the represented agencies could achieve alone.
- 3. Harm identification and its reduction-** Within the MASH there is an analytical capability on two levels. The confidential environment encourages a greater level of information for each case being shared at an earlier stage, enhancing the opportunities to recognise harm to individuals. Once MASH is fully functioning a higher level of analytical capability can be

embedded that will allow the safeguarding partnership to identify more complex and wider levels of harm. This work is designed to coordinate safeguarding partners' activity, minimising duplications and promoting a problem solving approach and targeting services to address the root issues underlying the actual harm. This will benefit the partnership by reducing individual agency's immediate and long term commitments as well as the number of separate interventions.

Once an enquiry is made into the MASH it will:

- Manage the contact and referrals
- Assess initial information to categorise the level of response (as per below)
- Develop a document recording the information gathered to enable the duty manager to take appropriate action within the required timescales.
- Progress a social care referral if services are required under section 17 or 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- Liaise with the Locality Team for children, young people and their families who do not meet the statutory threshold.
- Where needed provide advice to referrer about thresholds and appropriate action to be taken.

Level of response:

Level 3 - Immediate and serious safeguarding concern requiring action to ensure the safety of the child, and possible necessity to secure and preserve physical evidence that might otherwise be lost. Investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 is required.

MASH information will be completed and Police and Social Care Team assessment team to receive immediate notification with further information to follow.

Level 2 - The referrer has significant concerns about a child's wellbeing, however there are no immediate or urgent concerns raised about the safeguarding of the child and the local authority will ascertain whether the child will be deemed as a child in need as defined by Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

MASH information package to be completed within 24 hours.

Level 1 – The needs of the child or young person can no longer be fully met by universal agencies alone but immediate urgent action is not required to safeguard the child.

MASH information package to be completed within 3 working days and referral made to Locality Team.

The 5 core elements of the MASH

1. All notifications relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to go through the hub.
2. Co-location of professionals from core agencies to research, interpret and determine what is proportionate and relevant to share.
3. The hub is fire walled, keeping MASH activity confidential and separate from operational activity and providing a confidential record system of activity to support this.
4. An agreed process for analysing and assessing risk, based on the fullest information picture and dissemination of a suitable information product to the most appropriate agency for necessary action.
5. A process to identify victims and emerging harm through research and analysis.

The MASH will be led by Social Care and will include the following agencies being based together:

- Social Care Duty Manager
- Locality Child and Family Coordinator Duty post
- Education Welfare Officer Duty post
- Health Visitor

There will also be named links with the following agencies:

- Police
- Youth Offending Service
- Probation
- Housing

The key purpose of the MASH will be to complete an initial multi agency information gathering and triage to better facilitate informed decision making in safeguarding cases.

The Locality Team

When the needs of the child or young person can no longer be fully met by universal agencies alone but immediate, urgent action is not required to safeguard the child a CAF would be completed as a part of an assessment framework to identify further specialist support that may be needed or where a multi agency response will support the needs identified.

Thurrock will develop the existing locality working to:

- Provide a clear route for multi agency assessment and identify needs earlier
- To provide an early offer of help in cases where needs are no longer fully met by universal services.
- To focus particularly on support for families at the edge of statutory intervention.
- To support a coordinated, multi agency de-escalation process that aims to prevent cases re-escalating and supports de-escalation through to universal services.
- To support lead professionals to ensure they can lead on the multi agency support offer required for individual families
- To develop a clear mechanism to manage commissioned resources, ensuring they are targeted at those families who need them most and that the required outcomes are being met.
- To provide underpinning support to families open to specialist teams such as the Troubled Families Team, Family Support Teams
- To develop more robust referral into specialist non-safeguarding services such as the Disabled Children's Team and Adolescent Team.

In all cases, the support provided by the Locality Team seeks to build on the universal service and only in exceptional cases will the Lead Professional not be from the universal service.

The Locality Teams will be led by the Learning and Universal Outcomes Service through the Early Years, Families and Communities team. A locality based approach to leadership and governance with clear links to the local community and universal services operating locally will be developed that aims to build on existing services based on the Asset Based Community Development and Local Area Coordination approach.

The Locality Teams will cover three geographical areas:

East: Covering the North East and Tilbury and Chadwell areas;

Central: Covering Grays, Stifford and Chafford Hundred areas;

West: Covering Ockendon, Belhus, Aveley and West Thurrock and South Stifford areas.

Leadership of these teams will be through matrix management with key disciplines such as social work and health forming a part of this leadership model. Within the teams, Senior Social Work Practitioners will be appointed and they will coordinate and track cases, provide support to Lead Professionals and coordinate Teams around the Family meetings. This will replace the current MAGs Panel and has the benefit of ensuring families are fully involved in discussions about them, ensuring that all relevant professionals working with a family are involved in the case and ensuring that professionals and families only attend when needed.

Lead Professionals will retain responsibility for ensuring the multi agency package of support is implemented and will be supported by the Senior Practitioners in doing this. Where needs are still not being met the case will be discussed with the linked Family Support Team Manager and Social Care Lead Locality Manager who will make a decision regarding escalation.

As cases de-escalate from Social Care they will be referred into the Locality Teams and the Lead Professional for continued support will be agreed, this will usually be the universal service with support from the Locality Team.

This model will ensure that support is embedded in the local universal and community based offer and that additional support for staff and volunteers in these organisations to oversee support for families is provided, where possible services will be provided locally including through children's centres and community hubs.

Each Locality Team will consist of the following services:

- Children's Centres
- Education Welfare Service
- Youth Offer
- Senior Practitioners

Linked support and co-location where possible will be provided by:

- Health Visitors
- Midwives
- School Nurses

Linked support on specific cases through named staff from the following disciplines will also be provided:

- Family Support Team Manager
- Educational Psychologist

Some staff will provide duty support to the MASH on a rota basis.

The key purpose of the Locality Teams will be to identify needs earlier, particularly for vulnerable groups and coordinate support where needs can no longer be fully met by the universal service. Support is always provided to build on what is already in place rather than replace it and with the aim of reducing any additional support once needs have been met.

Support for Universal Services to Enable Them to Continue to Support Families.

Support for families that are embedded in universal services or community based universal organisations ensures that when statutory or targeted services withdraw the family is not left isolated and unsupported.

By strengthening the support for universal services we aim to ensure that Lead Professionals from these services can provide the support needed to families and play an integral role in this even if needs escalate.

Universal services have indicated that in order to support families they need:

- Improved advice and consultative responses to enable them to discuss a case as a part of their assessment process.
- A clear outline of the resources available and how they can be accessed
- Better support for cases where needs are not being fully met but where the threshold for statutory intervention has not yet been met.

This support will be strengthened by the development of the work of the Locality Teams and by the introduction of the MASH.

Where there is a safeguarding concern the SET Procedures will automatically apply and contact with the MASH should be made, however where professionals are unsure, the links between the MASH and Locality Teams through the Child and Family Support Coordinator will provide supportive advice on how to proceed.

The service directory currently being provided by the Family Information Service will be strengthened to also include information on referral routes and how to access services. Information will be available through the internet but will also be promoted and where needed supported through local children's centres and community hubs.

Thurrock Mash Project
RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Ratings for
INCIDENTS AND REFFERALS

Levels of Need	Children with no additional needs (Not Safeguarding)	Low risk to vulnerable	Complex	Acute
Who:	Children whose developmental needs are met by universal services.	Children with low level additional needs that are likely to be short-term but are not being met Child's needs are not clear, not known or not being met	Complex needs likely to require longer term intervention from targeted, statutory and/or specialist services. High level of unmet needs may require targeted integrated response, including specialist or statutory services. More complex level 3 may meet threshold for Children's Social Care assessment for intervention.	Acute needs requiring statutory intensive support, including Youth Offending Service and Children's Social Care. This includes meeting the threshold for child protection which will require Children's Social Care intervention.
Features: children and young People	Child achieving expected outcomes No CAF assessment required	From households where parents/carers are under stress, possibly impacting their parenting capacity Whose health & development may adversely be affected without multi-agency intervention Family CAF assessment required; lead practitioner allocated, TAF process initiated	Who are unlikely to enjoy a reasonable standard of development or health and are at a risk of negative outcomes without the provision of Co-ordinated targeted services. At risk of offending and missing from education - Family CAF assessment required; lead practitioner and /or step up to Children's Social care as required	Who have suffered or are at risk of suffering significant harm. Where there are serious concerns about his/her health and development or deemed to be suffering neglect and /or abuse.
Possible Indicators: Children and young people	? Achieving key stages ? good physical health with age Appropriate developmental milestones including speech and language ? good quality early attachments	? slow in reaching development milestones ? families affected by low income or unemployment ? minor health problems which can be maintained in a mainstream school	? short term exclusions or at risk of permanent exclusion, persistent truanting ? physical and emotional development raising significant concerns ? chronic/recurring health problems	? chronic non- attendance, truanting ? no parental support for education ? high level disability which cannot be maintained in a mainstream setting ? serious physical harm