



London
Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs
(MASH)

Governance
Version 1.2

London Borough of
Insert borough name

Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme	
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Title	A purpose specific governance document for a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub in [Borough Name]
Version	[Enter Number]
Summary	An agreement to formalise governance arrangements for [Borough Name] MASH, between [list of signatories] for the purpose of identifying and assessing risks to children's wellbeing and welfare in the borough.
(B)OCU or Unit / Directorate	[Enter Details]
Author	[Enter Details]
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Generic guidance document:

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Author	Nigel Boulton on behalf of MPS
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Section 1. Purpose of the Agreement

This agreement has been developed to:

- Define the specific purposes for which the signatory agencies will work within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Describe the roles and structures that will support the working of agencies within the MASH.
- Set out the legal gateway through which the information is shared, including reference to the Human Rights Act 1998 and the common law duty of confidentiality.
- Describe the security procedures necessary to ensure that compliance with responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and agency specific security requirements.
- Describe how this arrangement will be monitored and reviewed. This should be after six months initially and annually thereafter.

The signatories to this agreement will represent the following agencies/bodies:

1. Director of Children’s Services, London Borough of *[Borough name]*
2. Police Commander *[Borough Name]* Metropolitan Police Service
3. *[List other relevant agencies and organisations]*
4.
5.

[List other organisations that will be involved in this agreement]

London Governance of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (Children)

(FOI classification – Open)

Introduction

This document relates solely to the governance issues and associated recommendations concerning the delivery of a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in relation to the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Additional issues arise should an adult safeguarding pathway be introduced within the process of the hub. Potential links with other statutory and non statutory public protection processes such as Missing people, MAPPA, MARAC and Integrated Offender Management (IOM) are also not covered in this document.

The introduction of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) concept was, designed to streamline the routes for referral and notifications of concern into a Local Authority and supports recommendations made in numerous Serious Case Reviews, associated academic literature and by the Lord Laming within his report 'The Protection of Children in England: A progress report' (HMSO, March 2009).

The model creates a secure environment where safeguarding partners share information in a dynamic way in order to identify and assess risk which in turn ensures social care decision makers are able to make necessary and proportionate intervention decisions based on the best possible information available at a given time.

The original MASH concept for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children was designed to:

Provide the highest level of knowledge and analysis of all known intelligence and information across the safeguarding partnership to ensure all safeguarding activity and intervention is timely, proportionate and necessary.

Once established it was intended to provide intelligence sharing within the safeguarding partnership in order for the following three key areas of activity using the combined knowledge to be able to be delivered:

- Early identification and understanding of risk (information based decision making with regard to risk)
- Victim identification and intervention (Identification of repeat low level concern and hidden victims)
- Harm identification and reduction concerning individuals, families and communities. (Based on analysis within the MASH)

The MASH model has five core elements which **must** be adhered to in order for the model to deliver the three intended outcomes. They also provide partners

with confidence in the environment and processes of the MASH to ensure they are able to exercise the tension sometimes present between confidentiality and the need to share information. This is imperative in terms of the revelation within a MASH of sensitive or confidential information, intelligence or data.

The five core elements are;

1. All notifications relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to go through the hub.

All concerns of whatever level must be routed through the hub to ensure that low level repeat concerns from a variety of partners can be identified in the MASH and prevent these from being masked through volume or lost in the bureaucracy of a partnership. This focuses on anything with regard to Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children. Having numerous pathways for entry to the decision making area of a Local Authority will create possibilities for harm to be missed completely or confusion for those trying to report concerns as to where their voice can be heard. Having one route in and one decision making process ensures a standard of risk assessment and decision making which can be regularly base-lined and audited.

2. Co-location of professionals from core agencies* to research, interpret and determine what is proportionate and relevant to share.

This is critical to ensuring all partners have the confidence and trust to fully engage in this new way of working. Each partner organisation needs to understand and agree that the working practices regarding duty of care for their information remain with the 'owner' at all times and that decisions to share information are made on a case by case basis within the statutory framework laid out within the Children Act 2004 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Sensitive and non sensitive information must be shared within the MASH to ensure the fullest information is available upon which to make the best decision with the agreement as to whether sensitive information leaves the MASH continuing to remain with the owning organisation.

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.

This provision is required to ensure sensitive information will remain in a highly confidential environment where only those who actually need to know get to see the information. Information being shared across wider social work and police operational teams is neither necessary nor desirable. This issue has prevented effective information sharing in the past and continues to do so.

This element of MASH is the piece a senior health professional in London described as 'the elegant solution which allows them to balance the tension between sharing information and confidentiality'.

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.

Essentially this is a partnership giving itself the best chance to make effective and efficient decisions through having the best and earliest information picture available.

5. A process to identify victims and emerging harm through research and analysis.

MASH provides a safe environment where information can be subjected to ongoing research and analysis. This will identify victims by understanding repeat notifications and the identification of individuals who will suffer increasing levels of harm in the future. The identification of these individuals and the families around them will enable services to intervene at a much earlier time thereby providing opportunities to reduce harm and long term costs. The provision of analysis within the MASH enables the commissioning of specific harm profiles and provides a greater depth of understanding for strategic harm and needs analysis.

A MASH does not replace established child safeguarding procedures for investigation and remedy. The MASH collates information from all available sources in order for the most informed decision to be made concerning any required intervention. All interventions are required to be necessary and proportionate.

The MASH undertakes research on a priority basis, with cases that present the highest potential risk being researched to produce a 'product' within a set time period as agreed locally within a borough. It is suggested that four hours is a reasonable period to deal with high risk cases and allow partners to identify and gather information from across practice areas. One day for a medium risk case and 3 days for a low risk is believed appropriate. If a serious risk to a child is apparent then action should be taken immediately. At any time risk can go up or down and action taken as appropriate. The product, being the sum of information collated from all systems that partners use to store personalised information, is placed onto an I.T. system as designated by the relevant safeguarding partnership.

The system needs to be able to store information that has been exchanged as well as what was redacted and restrict access to that information to only those within the MASH who 'Need to Know'.

All decisions, the rationale for those decisions and the full information made available upon which those decisions are made MUST be retained in a secure audit trail.

The duty of care for all information and intelligence remains with the originating organisation at all times whilst it is within the confidential arena of the MASH. This means that any organisation can agree for it to be revealed within the MASH to enable social care managers to make proportionate and necessary decisions

but can prevent the information from being shared outside the MASH if it is believed to be of such a sensitive or confidential nature. In these cases the 'owner' of the information is signposted to any professional who is tasked to deliver an intervention on the intelligence product or referral which leaves the MASH. Examples of this may be in relation to police informants or entries on a GP's notes. Both are important in the right circumstances in respect of decision making but it is not on occasions appropriate for the detail or knowledge of the detail to be circulated. A 'need to know' culture is essential in order to ensure the MASH works effectively and previous barriers to information sharing are broken down.

It may be useful to think in terms of 'revelation' within the MASH and 'sharing' when a product leaves the hub for an intervention.

Individual organisations alone have the right to withhold or allow the information to be disseminated out from the MASH. This duty also requires the originator to ensure that any redacting or sanitising of information is authorised by them prior to release.

This sensitive or confidential product can also be sanitised by the MASH staff, and an open access non-sensitive product placed on case notes as 'shared' information for general viewing. The content of this product needs to be accurate, necessary and proportionate to the level of risk and harm being addressed. Where sensitive information is held back within the MASH but activity at some level is likely to be required a note is made on the case notes 'signposting' any professional who needs to be party to it can contact the information holder direct. This protocol ensures no information and or risk is hidden to those who operationally have a requirement to know but ensures it is only seen by those who have a legitimate need to see it.

Governance

The Audit Commission (2003) defines governance to be 'The framework of accountability to users, stakeholders and the wider community, within which organisations take decisions, and lead and control their functions, to achieve their objectives.'

The same report describes that:

Good corporate governance combines 'hard' factors, such as robust systems and processes, with 'softer' characteristics such as effective leadership and high standards of behaviour, in particular:

- leadership that establishes a vision, generates clarity and fosters professional relationships
- an open and honest culture in which decisions and behaviours can be challenged and accountability is clear
- supporting accountability through systems and processes,

such as financial management, performance management and internal controls

- an external focus on the needs of service users and the public

(Audit Commission 2003, p6)

This document makes reference to each of these areas, with accompanying recommendations.

Legal context (Children Act 2004)

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 created a requirement for children's services to make suitable arrangements for co-operation between the relevant partners in order to improve the wellbeing of children in the authority's area.

Statutory guidance for section 10 of the Act states good information sharing is key to successful collaborative working and arrangements under this section should ensure information is shared for strategic planning purposes and to support effective service delivery. It also states these arrangements should cover issues such as improving the understanding of the legal framework and developing better information sharing practice between and within organisations.

Section 11 of the Act identifies those statutory bodies who should co operate.

Section 13 of the Act stipulates that safeguarding boards must be created, with the objective under section 13 to:

- *co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority by which it is established; and*
- *ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.*

Under Section 10, the creation of the MASH can be seen as a suitable arrangement for co-operation.

Given the role of the safeguarding board under section 13(1) of the Act, it is clear that the board, whilst not having operational responsibility, has a role to play in ensuring the effectiveness of safeguarding practice.

It is therefore recommended that, in order to discharge the obligations under Section 13, the relevant Local Safeguarding Children's Board considers the issues and recommendations of this document in relation to its duty to ensure co-operation and effectiveness in safeguarding children. **(Recommendation 1)**

Statutory responsibility

The local authority has the general duty to safeguard children placed upon it by virtue of Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

It is therefore appropriate that the local authority should be seen as the lead agency for the development of joint partnership services within the MASH. **(Recommendation 2)**

Overall responsibility

Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities with social care responsibilities to appoint a Director of Children's Services. The Director of Children's services (DCS) is appointed to exercise the functions of the local authority specified in section 18(2) of the act.

Statutory guidance for this role outlines the responsibility of this post in relation to safeguarding activity. The guidance refers to the post being responsible for driving, leading and facilitating partnership working.

Given the responsibility the role holds, it is recommended the DCS holds overall responsibility for the quality of children's safeguarding activity exercised within the MASH. However there is a need for all partners to retain ownership and responsibility for their own safeguarding activity and processes which may be present and delivered within the MASH environment. **(Recommendation 3)**

Local Delivery Group

Given that the MASH will be a partnership model delivering a statutorily driven outcome the design and delivery of it requires strategic commitment from all partners involved in order to deal with a range of issues. It is therefore recommended that a MASH Local Delivery Group is created, with the Chair being the DCS or answerable to them.

Suggested terms of reference for the Local Delivery Group have been published by the Pan London MASH Operational Delivery Group and can be found on the London LSCB web site. <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/mash/>
(Recommendation 4)

Strategic Board

Once the project has delivered it is suggested Local Delivery Group reforms as an ongoing Strategic Board is established to oversee the delivery and evolution of the MASH.

Operational Steering Group

The design and delivery of a MASH at the local level can best be described as an evolutionary process. Local delivery will need local solutions and in turn local issues of a tactical nature will require partnership discussion and solutions at the operational level. These will in turn need to be designed with all MASH

stakeholders in mind to ensure a solution for one partner does not become a problem for another. To this end it is suggested that a local Operational Steering Group is created chaired by the Senior MASH manager and represented by a member of staff from all partners operating within the MASH. Any issues which require escalation to the Local Delivery Group or Strategic Board if in place can then be taken by the chair who should act as an advisor to the strategic forum.
(Recommendation 5)

Information sharing and management

Various acts contain expressed or implied powers to share information. The two which appertain to MASH and give the statutory framework within which a MASH operates are The Children Act 2004 and The Data Protection Act 1998.

The Information Commissioner's Office has stated that "All organisations can accomplish information sharing lawfully by adhering to governing legislation and the principles of the Data Protection Act whether an Information Sharing Protocol is in place or not. An Information Sharing Protocol is a useful tool in some circumstances. It is not a legal requirement."

Government Guidance states that "a document that sets out principles and general procedures for sharing information" is "good practice".

With this in mind, a specific Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) for MASH in London has been prepared and is available on the London Safeguarding Children Board website. <http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/mash/>

Information Sharing Guidance:

This guidance should outline the principles and standards of expected conduct and practice of the organisation and the staff within the organisation. The Code of Practice establishes the organisation's intentions and commitment to information sharing and promotes good practice when sharing personal information.

(Recommendation 6)

Information Sharing Procedures:

This document should describe the chronological steps and considerations required after a decision to share information has been made, for example, the steps to be taken to ensure that information is shared securely. Information sharing procedures set out, in detail, good practice in sharing information.

All partners must ensure that the information sharing procedures take account of the requirements of the Criminal Procedure Investigation Act 1996 (CPIA) in relation to the disclosure of information.

Any MASH will need to use an existing I.T. system and data set to collate and record information appertaining to individual cases. These will likely be the

current Children's Service system being used within a particular Local Authority. Risks in relation to information held on these systems should therefore be managed by procedures in place within the authority as owners of the system. However, given that the MASH functions in a multi-agency environment it is recommended that the Senior Information Risk Owners (SIRO) for each partner agency represented within the MASH satisfy themselves that the recording and storing of information gleaned from their own systems accords with the standards that they require for information management. (**Recommendation 7**)

The MASH will be handling sensitive personal data and creating records to hold that data. Whilst the responsibility for the management of the system upon which that record sits is held by the owner of the system, it is critical that the partners contributing information have confidence that the information will be held in accordance with the standards that they require. Whilst it is suggested above that partners should satisfy themselves that the processing of data by the MASH is in accordance with the standards that they require, the MASH itself should also demonstrate to partners that information processing systems are robust and accountable. For this reason it is suggested an annual information audit should take place within any MASH to ensure compliance with legislation and the 8 principles of good practice within the Data Protection Act 1998. (**Recommendation 8**)

Financial governance:

There are differing potential funding models available to a safeguarding partnership in relation to the commissioning and running of a MASH. These fall into two main models;

- A joint funding model where partners involve themselves in an agreement to pool financial resources in relation to areas of delivery which lend themselves to such an agreement.
- A model where partners retain complete autonomy in relation to all financial issues relevant to their participation within the MASH.

There are issues which will require negotiation in relation to either of the models as well as any derivative of the two. As such it is essential that the Local Delivery Group identifies at the earliest opportunity the preferred model and the governance for it. It is also essential that an organisation is identified as the lead partner in relation to any pooled resourcing model and provides the necessary accounting processes for such. (**Recommendation 9**)

Risk management:

The aspect of risk management associated with the management of information has been addressed above. In addition, the functions of the proposed Local Delivery Group include the management of operational and organisational risk associated with the MASH.

In order to support the identification and reporting of risk, it is recommended that an agency takes responsibility on behalf of the partnership for the creation and population of a risk register that can be considered by the Operational Steering Group. Practitioners within the MASH should have access to the register, be aware of the content and have the opportunity to submit individual organisational or joint risks for consideration by the Operational Steering Group and the Local Delivery Group. **(Recommendation 10)**

Professional supervision:

The importance and role of professional supervision is well understood within social work and the medical profession. With staff deployed to a multi-agency environment, where they may be exposed to different pressures and influences, profession based supervision becomes even more important. Supervision in this environment will not only provide welfare and personal support for staff it will also be essential to ensure that their training and development needs are recognised, as well as to ensure and support objectivity in decision making. Maintaining independence within professions and the supervisory structures to support it is essential to prevent the risk of group dynamics and bias.

Whilst each agency deploying staff to the MASH should have processes in place to ensure that their staff have access to supervision, it is recommended that the Local Delivery Group satisfies themselves as part of the overall performance monitoring within the MASH that arrangements to provide supervision are robust and that staff are receiving appropriate levels of professional based supervision on a regular basis. **(Recommendation 11)**

Professional difference:

Each Local Safeguarding Children's Board should have in place a policy for resolving professional differences between partners within the safeguarding partnership. Given the fact that the work performed in the MASH can be seen as a gateway to decisions regarding future action, it is vital that staff have access to an accepted escalation process that enables them to resolve professional difference. **(Recommendation 12)**

Performance monitoring:

Previous guidance in relation to the Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services states:

'Every year, as part of the Children's Trust annual report, the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council should make an assessment of the effectiveness of local governance and partnership arrangements for improving outcomes for children and supporting the best possible standards for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.'

(DCSF 2009 p.23)

In order to support that assessment, there should be performance measures in place that monitor the critical areas where the MASH makes a significant contribution to outcomes for children and the standards of safeguarding.

The Local Authority should, through the Local Delivery Group, design a performance monitoring regime which can monitor ongoing performance within the MASH. (**Recommendation 13**)

Secure environment

The Local Delivery Group should ensure the physical design and security of the hub is of a standard to ensure the confidential aspects of the MASH concept are met. This is essential to ensure each individual partner has the confidence to share their information whilst maintaining the duty of care and responsibility over it. The MASH concept creates a joined up working environment without barriers to ensure communication and dialogue but only between those who 'need to know'. Therefore it follows that any person who does not 'need to know' is not permitted into the hub. (**Recommendation 14**)

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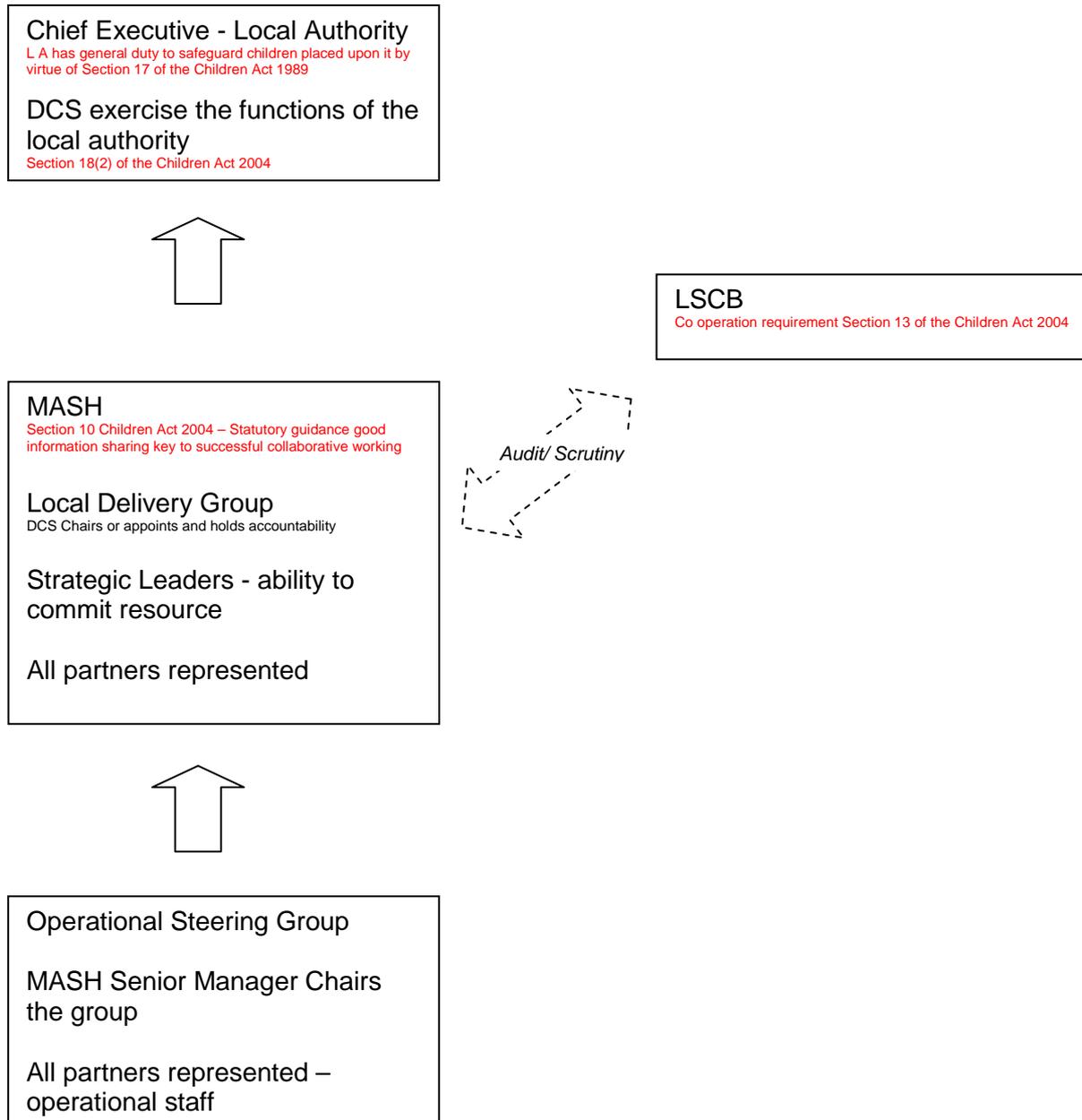
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MASH governance model



Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The local Safeguarding Children Board considers all the issues and recommendations in relation to the delivery of a MASH.

Recommendation 2:

That the local authority should be the lead agency for the development and delivery of services within the MASH.

Recommendation 3:

The DCS holds overall responsibility for the quality of children's safeguarding activity delivered within the MASH.

Individual partner organisations retain responsibility for their own safeguarding activity and processes which may be present and delivered within the MASH environment.

Recommendation 4:

A Local Delivery Group is created, with the Chair answerable to the Director of Children's Service. *(This should then evolve to a Strategic Board after project delivery is completed)*

Recommendation 5:

An Operational Steering Group is created with the chair responsible for taking issues to the Strategic Board.

Recommendation 6:

An information sharing protocol should be signed by all partners covering the processes for information sharing within the MASH.

Recommendation 7:

Each agency SIRO satisfies themselves regarding the storing and processing of information gleaned from their own systems.

Recommendation 8:

The Local Delivery Group should conduct annual information audits within the MASH.

Recommendation 9:

The Local Delivery Group agrees the financial model for local delivery of the MASH. A lead agency should also be identified to manage any pooled budget arrangement.

Recommendation 10:

That an agency accepts responsibility on behalf of the partnership for the identification, recording and reporting of risk associated with the MASH.

Recommendation 11:

The Local Delivery Group satisfies themselves in relation to the regularity, access to and standards of professional supervision.

Recommendation 12:

The Local Delivery Group ensures a professional difference policy is in place for all partners operating within the MASH and gains strategic sign off from each organisation.

Recommendation 13:

The Local Delivery Group identifies the data required to be collected to support a performance monitoring regime.

The performance monitoring regime should monitor MASH partnership arrangements for improving outcomes for children and supporting the best possible standards for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The Local Delivery Group identifies a range of joint partnership performance monitoring data sets and performance improvement targets.

Recommendation 14:

The Local Delivery Group creates a security protocol for all staff working within the MASH environment.

Agreement to abide by this arrangement

The agencies signing this agreement accept that the procedures laid down in this document provide a secure framework for governance between their agencies within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, in a manner compliant with their statutory and professional responsibilities.

As such they undertake to:

- Implement and adhere to the procedures and structures set out in this agreement.
- Ensure that where these procedures are complied with, then no restriction will be placed on the sharing of information other than those specified within this agreement.
- Engage in a review of this agreement with partners initially after 6 months from signature then at least annually.

We the undersigned agree that each agency/organisation that we represent will adopt and adhere to this Governance Document:

Agency	Post Held	Name	Signature	Date
London Borough of [Borough name - Children Services]				
Metropolitan Police Service, [BOCU Name] borough				
[Insert the names of other signatories to this agreement]				