

London MASH Project

Consistency of the MASH process



The London MASH Project Board (LMPB) agreed five core elements that should be in place for each London MASH, so that there would be consistency and a recognisable arrangement in place for communities in the 33 London local authority areas.

The fourth core element

An agreed process for analysing and assessing risk, based upon 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 opportunity to make effective and efficient decisions through having the most complete information at the earliest stage.

By utilising a standardised risk assessment and threshold model a consistency and clarity of decision making will be achieved. MASH will provide proportionate and relevant information to the most appropriate agencies.

The MASH process

Essentially there are two equal streams for notifications of concerns relating to the welfare of children into MASH. The police route (Merlin) and the route for all other situations through the local authority. These streams are approximately equal in terms of volume and will vary in total numbers according to the circumstances and size of the local population. Historically, dealing with the volume without an agreed and tested screening mechanism has caused difficulties in effective risk assessment, prioritisation and management.

For MASH to fully realise its benefits, a recognisable process is required to screen and prioritise notifications. This process must cover the three MASH stages;

1. Pre-MASH assessment.
2. Priority and research to inform timely risk assessment.
3. Outcome decisions.

Evaluation and review of MASH cases also requires common processes for analysis of benefits and outcomes.

The need for a consistent approach

The LMPB are clear that a flexible approach to the implementation of MASH is essential to ensure that local areas are able to develop the most efficient system for their own local circumstances. However, the experience of the first two MASH live sites has shown that unless there is clarity and agreement to following a set process then MASH will develop evolutionarily and be influenced by factors such as previous local practice, personal decisions and practice set by local resource availability. The existence of a pre existing process adds additional potential for disjointed work if this is not followed closely. The risk to the benefits of MASH by not adopting and following an agreed process are significant as each new MASH will introduce a new variation. Each variation creates the potential for uncertainty and as a consequence safeguarding gaps appear and the product of each MASH loses value (The London Safeguarding Children Board agrees and publishes Joint London Child Protection Procedures to prevent this confusion in its remit).

Members of the Operational Delivery Group (ODG) have visited the early MASH sites and compared practice against the process developed for MASH in London. As a result, the two process maps have been amended and a MASH process graphic produced. This has also been informed with feedback

London MASH Project

Consistency of the MASH process



from the MPS evaluation team and discussed at a seminar on 2nd July where representatives of all the Phase 1 MASH present.

MASH Project Board decisions

At its meeting on 11 July 2012, the LMPB agreed to adopt the MASH process maps and graphic as supporting material to guide the development of the Phase 1 MASH sites.

The LMPB also agreed to receive reports from the ODG of progress and developments with the MASH process as implementation continues across London.

It was agreed that a more consistent process in London would bring a number of benefits:

- Supporting staff from constituent MASH agencies in an agreed MASH process
- Common standards and thresholds will enhance risk assessment
- Decision will be supported by rationale
- Volumes of notifications will be managed effectively
- Evaluation and review will benefit
- Any learning will be able to be implemented across all MASH
- MASH training and mentoring will be improved
- Confidence in product of MASH increased.

Support to early adopters

As a result of reviewing the first two live MASH sites and the ensuing variation from the process, the MASH ODG have agreed to provide additional support to each new MASH in three areas. Firstly, a training needs assessment will need to be undertaken by the Local Delivery Group (LDG) and necessary action taken to ensure capacity and capability. Next, and prior to 'go live', a dry run exercise should be undertaken. Finally, staff and resource from the ODG and the MPS Project Team will be on hand at each site as they go live to mentor and assist. This will give each site the best opportunity to develop in line with the model from implementation. It will also allow the ODG to learn and consider any lessons from actual practice and use this to support best practice in MASH across all London sites.

Escalation

Escalation of issues to the LMPB may be required to resolve issues concerning practice, process and resourcing. The LMPB is an executive, pan-London arrangement that can consider issues and advise with the benefit of the experience and resources available to it. The LMPB benefits from a membership representing both specific areas and agencies and also those with a pan-London responsibility.

Escalation may be necessary;

- When an area or agency is against or uncertain about introducing MASH.
- When an area or agency does not wish to adopt a part or the whole of the MASH process.
- When an area or agency does not wish to adopt a part or the whole of the MASH core elements.
- When there are significant delays in the implementation of MASH.