



London MASH Project

FAQs - multi-agency safeguarding hubs

What is MASH?

MASH co-locates safeguarding agencies and their data, into a secure assessment, research, and referral unit for notifications of vulnerable children. By providing a fire walled facility (confidential unit), each partner can exercise the tension between privacy and sharing information for safety. This is particularly important for Police and Health. By doing this, MASH aims to identify unknown risk by building a full picture on the child of concern and their family, a consistent criticism of Serious Case Reviews. MASH will develop to consider vulnerable adults, as well as children.

What benefits will MASH provide?

1. Better informed assessments of risk and promoting the welfare of children
2. Improved early identification of need.
3. Enhanced partnership strategic assessment and problem solving

Who is responsible for MASH?

The Local Authority has a general duty to safeguard children by virtue of Section 17 Children Act 1989. Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 details the requirements for the Local Authority to make suitable arrangements for co-operation between relevant partners in order to improve the well being of children in the local authority area. Section 11 of the same Act creates a duty for the key agencies that work with children to put in place arrangements to ensure that they take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when undertaking their duty.

What's the difference between MASH and other multi-agency safeguarding arrangements?

MASH has five core elements that were agreed by the London MASH Project Board;

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 upon 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.

What are the arrangements for MASH in London?

The MASH project is supported by the London MASH Project Board. It is endorsed by the GLA and London Councils, and is supported by the London Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS). The project has created a London network and is informed by innovative practice from a number of London boroughs. Corporate Pan London MASH supporting materials can be referenced from the LSCB web site via this link:

<http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/mash/>

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Are there links with other multi-agency initiatives?

There are links with other initiatives and the information sharing activity that is currently taking place in relation to vulnerable children should benefit from MASH. Some scoping and mapping of inter-dependencies with Gangs and Integrated Offender Management (IOM) is underway. There appear to be some synergies with these multi-agency initiatives; as there are with other schemes such as 'family recovery' and 'troubled families'. The intention is to identify arrangements to make these partnerships more efficient and effective and to add value between their outputs/interventions and intelligence products and those of MASH.

When will MASH be extended to include vulnerable adults?

Experience and research has cautioned against widening the remit to vulnerable adults until the MASH process in a local area has developed and imbedded. Safeguarding process in the multi-agency arena is a complex matter and it is considered that unnecessary risks will be introduced if it is extended too quickly into adult safeguarding. These risks are in terms of volumes and thresholds of adult referrals, competency and capacity of staff and their managers to deal with the anticipated additional workload. Also information sharing pathways and processes in relation to adults are less well defined in legislation. This does not mean that all stakeholders involved in adult safeguarding should do nothing. The time can be usefully used to scope the partnerships arrangements and preparedness and identify the right time to extend the remit of MASH.

Will strategy meetings and discussions take place in MASH?

MASH is a confidential arrangement that allows concerns held by a single agency to be disclosed and shared with other professionals to enhance the understanding of risks and issues at an earlier stage so that the safeguarding partnership is more likely to identify significant harm before the stage this becomes critical. The MASH will provide proportionate and relevant information to the most appropriate agencies to deal with the case. Strategy meetings will take place outside the MASH following existing procedures and guidance.

Who can make a notification or referral to MASH?

All notifications from any person or agency relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children should be referred to MASH. Local Authorities are making arrangements for a single point of entry for ALL notifications of concern to come through. In some areas these are known as Single Point of Entry (SPOE) or Single Point of Access (SPA).

Is there any additional training for MASH?

Training material and courses are being developed by specific agencies such as the MPS. The London Safeguarding Children Board Training Sub-group has undertaken to produce a syllabus for Multi-agency MASH training and this should be available early 2013. As each MASH site goes live the MASH Project Team mentors are in attendance to assist local practitioners.

When will my area be covered by a MASH?

MASH has a 5 stage rollout plan. Stage 1 includes 6 boroughs that should have a MASH during the summer of 2012 (Harrow, Haringey, Enfield, Westminster, Havering & Lambeth). The next cohort of 9 LA's is projected by the end of 2012. Most LA's are progressing MASH within the borough boundary but a tri-borough arrangement is currently being scoped between Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham.

When will MASH cover the whole of London?

MASH has the ambition to establish effective MASH's serving all London by March 2014.