

Suffolk MASH launches consultation line for professionals

In 2014 Suffolk County Council and partners established a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Suffolk.

The MASH is a team of professionals from a range of agencies including Social care (children and adults), Police and health brought together to ensure all safeguarding concerns in Suffolk are dealt with in the most effective way.

To help professionals make the most informed decisions the Suffolk MASH has created a professional's advice line.

In the case of it being clear that there are safeguarding concerns, please do not hesitate to make a referral in the normal way – namely through completing a MAR form, or, if in the case of a child at imminent risk of significant harm. By telephoning Customer First on 03456 066167.

However experienced there may be times where a professional is unsure what action to take, or they may just need support and guidance to ensure they make the most informed decision.

The MASH consultation line is there for professionals to discuss the most appropriate and effective way of providing or obtaining help and support for a child who does not already have an allocated social worker, who they believe may be in need of a service or a vulnerable adult they feel is at risk of abuse.

Where the child may need help and protection they will be given advice and guidance about making a referral, including how to involve parents.

The person offering advice on the consultation line will ordinarily be a Social Worker from within MASH. Professionals can choose to speak to an adult or children's social worker.

Advice and guidance will be given without recording the name of the child or adult so consent is not required.

During Consultation professionals should:

- Be clear about their concern and what is needed from the consultation
- Clearly identify what their organisation has already done about the concern and the impact of this
- Seek clarification where there are any uncertainties about what is involved
- In the case of the outcome of consultation being to make a referral, discuss the appropriateness of not seeking, or overriding parental permission

The MASH will:

- Discuss concerns, and offer advice and guidance and record detail of the discussions and decisions made.
- Record detail of the discussions and decisions made but will not record the persons name.

When discussing an adult

The consultation line is there to discuss whether a referral should be made or not.

For enquiries about ongoing cases professionals should continue to call the Adult Protection Team Duty Line on 01449 724593. Alternatively, if they have an immediate safeguarding concern, or wish to make a referral, they should visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support/safeguarding/ or call Customer First on 03456 066167.

Please note: The advice line does not replace an individual organisations safeguarding processes, these should be followed first.

If following consultation more information comes to light or the situation changes, a professional can seek further clarity by calling the consultation line again.

Alternatively, if they feel that the response that have received does not meet the needs of the child/family or leaves a child at risk of harm, they can still make a referral in the usual way or escalate their concerns through their organisations safeguarding process.

The consultation line number is 03456 061499 and is open at the following times:

Monday – Thursday: 9:00am to 5:00pm

Friday: 9:00am to 4:25pm

For more information on the MASH visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/MASH