



Guidance Document for Primary Care

The MASH in Suffolk significantly improves the sharing of information between agencies, helping to protect the most vulnerable children and adults from harm, neglect and abuse. It deals with all new safeguarding referrals about vulnerable children and adults, where someone is concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or adult, or think they might be being abused.

Within the MASH, information from different agencies is collated and risk assessed to decide what action to take. As a result, the agencies are able to act quickly in a co-ordinated and consistent way, ensuring that vulnerable children and adults are kept safe.

The MASH involves representatives from Suffolk County Council, Police and Health working together in the same location (Landmark House, Ipswich). Virtual links exist to other services and agencies outside of the MASH such as Education, Housing, and Probation etc.

Making a Referral: delay should be avoided. Referrals to the MASH should be made via Customer First on 0808 800 4005 and followed up in writing within 48 hours.

The referral process is as follows:

- Referral made into MASH through Customer First.
- Senior Social Worker makes decision as to what agency information is required to help inform decision-making. Health input is provided by the MASH Health Team; a specialist team of Health staff who are collocated in the MASH office.
- A request for Health information is always made to the MASH Health Team when a Health professional makes a referral.
- MASH Health Team register the child on S1 with a statement going onto the safeguarding children template to inform that a referral has been made into the MASH.
- The Health information request may include a health search, a call to another professional to get additional information, a call to the child's GP if they are not a S1 user, a search of mental health records, contact with family, contact to referrer.
- Health information provided by the MASH Health Team is proportionate to the referral details.
- Consent to share health information is judged on each individual case; for some cases where there are concerns that the child maybe at significant risk of harm, consent from parent/carer will not be asked for.

- In the case of referrals where there are significant concerns, S1 records will be accessed by the MASH health Team using the consent override facility as it allows more information to be seen on the S1 record. The MASH Health Practitioner accessing records with this facility will complete the S1 consent override box with a rationale for doing this.
- If, when a child is being discussed at a threshold strategy meeting within the MASH, the GP does not use S1 and health information is scant, they will be called by the MASH Health Team and asked to provide relevant health information. This information needs to be provided in a timely manner. GP surgery staff should take the message and arrange for the duty Dr to call the MASH Health Team back and provide the MASH Nurse Specialist with any information.
- Senior Social Worker makes a decision regarding the outcome of the enquiry and if any intervention/service is required.
- If the outcome is that the family needs specialist intervention from a Social Work team, i.e. meets threshold for a section 47 enquiry (child protection investigation) or a statutory assessment, S1 record will be updated with an entry on the safeguarding children template and the GP will be tasked to look at the safeguarding template for update. The Health Visitor and/or School Nurse will also be tasked (even if they were not the referrer).
- If the GP is not a S1 user, a letter will be sent with the outcome. It would be useful to have all GP's secure nhs.net email accounts as this is a more secure, timely way of communicating to those not on S1.
- If the referrer is a health professional and the outcome is no further action, information and advice, signposting or CAF, the health referrer will be informed of this decision. This will be done via a S1 task or letter. *Referrals from Health professionals always generate feedback from the MASH Health Team via S1 or a letter.*

However experienced you are, there may be times where you are not sure what action you should take, or you just need support and guidance to ensure you make the most informed decision. The **MASH Professional Consultation Line** is for you to discuss the most appropriate and effective way of providing or obtaining help and support for a child or adult you feel is at risk of abuse. Where the child may need help and protection you will be given advice and guidance about making a referral, including how to involve parents. *Where a child and family already have an allocated Social Worker, you will need to contact the Social Worker directly to discuss any concerns.*

