

Parent's Guide to the MASH

Whenever anyone is worried about a child, for example a teacher or health visitor, they will make a referral to the team at the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The MASH team brings together staff and information from the following agencies within Northamptonshire:

- Children's Social Care
- Crime Reduction Initiative
- Domestic Abuse Advisor
- Early Help Team
- East Midlands Ambulance Service
- Education
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Health
- Police
- Probation Service
- Youth Offending Team

The MASH team are able to identify risks to and needs of children at the earliest possible point and respond with the most effective, joined up actions. The aim of the MASH is to make the right decisions for the right families at the right time.

Children and young people may come to the attention of the MASH team because:

- a parent or carer may have requested support directly
- a professional may feel that a family need help or support
- a child or their family come into contact with the police
- a child tells someone about abuse, either physical, sexual or emotional.

When a child is referred, the case is assigned to a professional group within the MASH who will gather any information about the child/family as quickly as possible.

A senior and experienced Social Work Practitioner will use a [guidance document called Thresholds and Pathways](#) to decide if the child's circumstances mean that the case should be dealt with by the MASH or if instead the Early Help Team should find a solution.

What happens next?

Once information is gathered, a decision is made by MASH Partners and a Social Care Manager about the referral. This will be one of the following:

- Case raises serious concerns or identifies complex needs and is passed to Children's Social Care.
- Case does not raise serious concerns but it is assessed the family would benefit from some support from the Early Help Team.
- Case has identified a child with additional needs which will be assessed and addressed through an Early Help Assessment.
- Case raises no concern and the child can be supported by universal services.

How will I find out what is happening?

In most cases you will be contacted by the MASH team or service you have been referred to, who can update you on what action has been taken.

You can also [contact the MASH](#) to find out about the referral. If the referral is progressed to Children's Social Care, the social worker will contact you for a discussion or to arrange a time to meet with you and your family.

Data Protection

The MASH team have a responsibility to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. By sharing your information we can ensure the best decision is made for your child and provide you with appropriate help and support when it is needed.

Information held by the MASH will be kept and processed securely, in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. It will only be shared with other practitioners and/or agencies on a 'need to know' basis, either:

- where there are believed to be child protection issues, or
- where information is required to ensure your child receives the appropriate assessment of services.

Permission

If professionals are referring your child to the MASH team for advice and support, they will need to ask your permission first. In cases where your child may require a social work assessment, this will be discussed with you. Your agreement to a referral will be actively sought, however professionals are able to refer your child without your permission if they have concerns that your child has suffered, or is likely to suffer harm.

Where professionals are referring your child to the MASH team because of child protection concerns, you will only be told about the referral beforehand if the professional is sure this would not increase the risk to your child.

What should I do if I'm not happy?

If you aren't happy with the way the MASH team deals with any referral about your family, please raise this first by [contacting the MASH team](#).

If you are still not happy, you can make a complaint by contacting the Customer Feedback Team on 01604 363436.

Download/print this information in leaflet format

The information provided on this page is also provided in a leaflet "[Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub: Information for Parents and Carers](#)", that you can download and print. It includes examples of different cases that have been referred to the MASH and will help you understand more about how the MASH works.

Contact the MASH team:

Call 0300 126 1000 to speak to the MASH team.