Referrers will continue to follow existing processes for making a professional contact to Children’s Services.

The Customer Service Centre will filter all contacts and forward appropriate cases to the MASH or directly to the relevant teams e.g. Early Help/Targeted Teams, Joint Child Protection Investigation Team etc. The Hertfordshire MASH went live in July 2015 and is now well embedded. The team is based at Farnham House in Stevenage.

Agencies included in the MASH are Health, Police, National Probation Service, BeNCH (Bedfordshire, Norfolk, Cambridge and Hertfordshire Probation Service dealing with medium to low risk cases) and Children’s Services. MASH team members also work closely with partners who are not based in the MASH such as Housing/Schools/Education Providers/GPs etc.

About the MASH
The MASH brings together key agencies to work together as a team, to share information, assess risk and make decisions jointly about the best way to safeguard and meet the needs of vulnerable children ensuring that they: ‘receive the right response at the right time with the right service’

The Hertfordshire MASH will deal with contacts and referrals sent by members of the public and professionals to Children’s Services for a safeguarding response. Where the MASH team consider that the child’s welfare will be better met by Early Help services, they will ensure referrals get to the most appropriate teams and will inform referrers of the outcome of their request for a safeguarding assessment.

Before you make a referral please consider the points below:

- Have you shared your concerns with the family (if appropriate)? If not, why?
- Consider whether the family would benefit from a FFA (Families First Assessment) or Graded Care Profile. Do your concerns meet safeguarding threshold (refer to Continuum of Needs document))


- If your concerns meet safeguarding thresholds and you are making a referral, check the quality of your referral and ensure it has as much detail as possible about the concerns you have, what actions (if any) have previously been taken.
- Have you got consent from the family/those with parental responsibility? Having consent makes it much easier for partners in the MASH to gather and share information and prevents delay. **However, lack of consent should not be a barrier to referring if you have concerns about a child’s welfare**

What happens to my referral?
The Children’s Services Managers who are Qualified Social Workers within the team will rate the contacts as High (RED), Medium (AMBER) or Low (GREEN) to signify the level of risk.

If the Rag rating is Green the family will receive advice and guidance within MASH or get their contact passed to Early Help Services to consider a Families First Assessment.

For contacts Rag Rated AMBER or RED the multi-agency team will undertake checks within their own agency and share relevant and proportionate information to inform their risk assessment and decision making.
Once the information is received a final risk rating will be given; this may increase or lower the risk according to the information shared.

A multi-agency decision will then be made about what service will best meet the child’s needs.

The professional referrer will be informed of the outcome.

Information Sharing

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Consent to share must ideally be gained. Where this is not possible, consent is refused or where seeking it may undermine the prevention, detection, or prosecution of a crime, the practitioner must judge from the facts whether there is enough public interest for a justification to share; this must be decided on a case by case basis. It is important to note that a lack of information sharing is a consistent theme within Serious Case Reviews.

All partner agencies in the MASH have signed an information sharing agreement in line with Section 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.

You may be contacted by a Children’s Information and Advice Officer (CIAO) or your agency representative in the MASH. Depending on the rating of the case, information will have to be returned within a specified time frame and you will be told the rating of the referral when you are contacted.

Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose. If you decide not to share, then record why. If you are unsure about what to share speak with your agency representative in the MASH.

Timescales the MASH uses a RAG rating system to signify the level of risk. The level of risk denotes the time that the MASH has to process the case.
THE POLICE AND MASH

How does the MASH deal with Police Contacts?

Police contacts are created when a child or young person comes to the notice of the police with concerns about the child or young person’s welfare.

The Joint Child Protection Investigation Team (JCPIT) is based at HQ in Welwyn Garden City and will respond to the following: Contacts which involve reports of Physical Abuse in Children under 16 or sexual assault where the offender is a family member, a professional who works in a position of trust, Confirmed Cases of Fabricated Induced Illness, Female Genital Mutilation, Child on Child Sexual offences where the victim is under 13 years old are also referred to the JCPIT. All Children and Young People police referrals which fall outside of the above are referred to Children’s Services for further consideration and information sharing which may include MASH.

Information Sharing for Practitioners

You are asked to share information

1. Is there a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing information?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Does the information enable an individual to be identified?
   - Yes
   - No

3. Is the information confidential?
   - Yes
   - No

4. Do you have consent?
   - Yes
   - No

5. Is there another reason to share information such as to fulfil a public function or to protect the vital interests of the information subject?
   - Yes
   - No

6. Share information:
   - Identify how much information to share.
   - Distinguish fact from opinion.
   - Ensure that you are giving the right information to the right individual.
   - Ensure where possible, you are sharing the information securely.
   - Inform the individual that the information has been shared if they were not aware of this.

7. Record the information sharing decision and your reasons in line with your organisation’s local procedures.

If there are concerns that a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm then follow the relevant procedures without delay. Seek advice if unsure what to do at any stage and ensure that the outcome of the discussion is recorded.

Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people and carers (2015) supports frontline practitioners, working in child or adult services, who have to make decisions about sharing personal information on a case by case basis. [http://tinyurl.com/gsag2vm](http://tinyurl.com/gsag2vm)

MASH IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Safeguarding Children

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

In Hertfordshire’s MASH, Children’s Services and partner agencies work side by side to safeguard children, prevent delay for families and ensure they receive the right response and service at the right time.

Professionals making a referral please use the details below:

Complete a Contact - [https://eservices.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/child-protection-referral](https://eservices.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/child-protection-referral) or if Urgent Phone: 0300 123 4043. NB - If child is felt to be at risk of immediate danger or a crime is committed is call...