

1st July 2013**Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR JOINT COMMISSIONING,
QUALITY AND BUSINESS CHANGE****MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Adult Social Care and Health Committee about the progress made since the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) went live and provide information about demand and the subsequent staffing requirements.
2. To request approval to extend one of the Advanced Social Work Practitioner (ASWP) posts for a nine month period.

Information and Advice**Progress to Date**

3. The MASH is based at the Customer Services Centre at Mercury House and acts as the first point of contact for Children's social care and for safeguarding concerns about both children and adults. The purpose of the MASH is to improve information sharing between partner agencies to allow better and more timely decisions to be made about safeguarding thresholds and better signposting to other available services. It involves over 60 representatives from the County Council's adult social care, children's social care and education services, the Police and Health partners co-located and working together. Virtual links have also been developed with other services and agencies which are not located in the MASH, these include the Probation Service.
4. The MASH commenced operations in December 2012 for children's social care and safeguarding enquiries and following a phased roll-out, it became fully operational in January 2013 with adult safeguarding enquiries and it has continued to evolve over the past six months with representatives of other agencies being incorporated at the site or through virtual links.
5. MASHs are being developed nationally but in the main they only address children's safeguarding concerns. Research highlights the clear benefits of taking a broader family approach and, as a result, the Nottinghamshire MASH deals with safeguarding concerns about vulnerable adults as well as children. The benefits of the MASH include providing a faster, more co-ordinated and more consistent response from partner agencies and services in relation to safeguarding concerns.

6. The MASH receives safeguarding concerns from members of the public and from professionals about children and vulnerable adults who have allegedly been abused or neglected and also acts as the referral point for all children's social care. Concerns are risk assessed and information is gathered from partner agencies to better inform social care decisions. As and where required the referrals are then passed to operational teams with the appropriate urgency. Where the concern does not meet the threshold for social care involvement, callers are signposted to appropriate services.
7. The benefits of the MASH are being seen on a daily basis. Those reporting safeguarding concerns are receiving a more consistent, professional response, with advice from social care professionals and feedback on the outcome of their concern. Risks are being assessed more consistently, and in a timely manner. Collating information from different sources is enabling better decisions to be made about cases. Operational teams are receiving more intelligence about the circumstances of a case, and are able to tailor their response accordingly.
8. As outlined above, one of the key benefits of the MASH is to enable information to be shared at an early stage in order to inform decision making on specific children's and adults social care and safeguarding cases. However, over the first few months of implementation, it became evident that there were some barriers preventing information being shared between the different statutory agencies within the MASH. In seeking to address this, Nottinghamshire County Council was successful in being selected as one of eight authorities to be involved in a joint project between the Department of Health and the Department of Communities and Local Government focusing on system leadership. Through this initiative, the Office for Public Management has been working with the Council and partner agencies to help to address and overcome the barriers in information sharing within the MASH.

Issues Arising

9. The MASH started to address safeguarding concerns about vulnerable adults in January 2013 and since this date there has been a 73% rise in the number of telephone calls to the MASH. This increase relates to enquiries about children as well as about adult safeguarding. The number of adult safeguarding concerns being reported was considerably higher in the first few weeks than had been anticipated.
10. Regular monitoring of the number of calls shows that they have been reducing over the past three months, and while it looks like the numbers of enquiries will continue to be higher than initially anticipated, it is still too early to determine the levels of calls relating to vulnerable adults over the longer term.
11. All the partner agencies involved in the MASH continue to review their staffing levels and in light of the high volume of calls additional staff have been recruited by both health partners and the Police. Over the next couple of months at least eight additional staff will move into the MASH. In addition, children's services have recruited additional call takers and a service manager to manage the amount of work coming into the MASH.
12. There is limited capacity at Mercury House and the additional staff now being recruited and located in the MASH is creating pressure in terms of adequate desk space. This matter is currently being considered by the Council and the relevant partner agencies.

Adult Care Staffing in the MASH

13. At the point at which the MASH was being established it was not clear what the staffing requirements would be for each of the partner agencies. As a new way of working for all those involved, it was necessary to review and evaluate volumes of activity and workflow over a period of time.
14. With regards to adult safeguarding, the decision was to start with a complement of three full time Advanced Social Work Practitioners (ASWPs) to risk assess and triage the adult safeguarding referrals. Line management of these three posts is through the older adults services. It was originally envisaged that this line management could be 'long arm' support from a team manager based in an operational team who would be able to undertake this role alongside their existing responsibilities. However, given the nature and volume of the work during the implementation phase, it was necessary to review this and to have some dedicated team manager resource within the MASH. As such, a team manager is now seconded into the MASH for 30 hours a week for a temporary period.
15. As part of the bedding in of this new service, there are a number of areas of work for the team manager to complete in relation to adult safeguarding in the MASH over the next six months, including:
 - work with the 'call-handlers' who receive safeguarding enquiries to help them to fully understand the complexities of safeguarding of vulnerable adults and the importance of correct and complete information gathering
 - work with operational teams and ASWPs to ensure clearly understood and consistent decision making processes
 - represent adult services in the internal MASH management structure and address any multi-agency issues
 - provide strong leadership to create a cohesive and effective team
16. It is now evident that there is a need for three full time equivalent ASWPs required at any one time in order to deliver an efficient and effective service. Whilst there are three ASWPs at the MASH, this leaves the service especially vulnerable if one or more of the staff are away due to annual leave, sickness, or planned training.
17. Given the high volume of work being undertaken within the MASH, the Corporate Director for Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection has, under delegated authority, approved recruitment of an additional ASWP post for a temporary three month period. The recruitment to this temporary position is underway. It is envisaged that the post holder will work in the MASH at times of need and at other times will work in the district operational teams, thereby operating peripatetically. This will also enable all the ASWPs to rotate and move into operational teams for a set period of time, returning to provide cover at the MASH as and where required including during times of increased demand. This has the added benefit of ensuring the ASWPs retain their skills and knowledge and services to connect the front end of safeguarding with operational teams.

18. This report seeks Members approval to extend this three month post for a further nine months to gain a better understanding of the volume of work and establish the best means of ensuring sufficient staffing levels including cover arrangements for adult safeguarding concerns within the MASH.

Other Options Considered

19. Consideration has been given to utilising staff from existing operational teams at times of need, this is not thought to be feasible because:

- a) Staff in the district operational teams are already very busy and there is a high risk that staff would be able to be released at short notice without negatively impacting on the delivery of care and support services provided by the operational team.
- b) The time taken to train the member of staff to use the bespoke IT system and be confident in the decisions that need to be taken would be considerable. Unless these skills were practiced on a regular basis they would not be retained.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

20. It is recommended that the temporary ASWP post is extended for a further nine months, beyond the initial three month period, in order to ensure there is sufficient and robust business continuity within the MASH to address adult safeguarding enquiries and to provide an efficient and effective service to meet needs.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

22. The primary function of the MASH is to ensure that service users receive a fast and effective response arising from safeguarding enquiries and to ensure that risks are reduced through information sharing processes which enable concerns to be addressed promptly.

Financial Implications

23. To request approval to extend one of the Advanced Social Work Practitioner (ASWP) posts, Pay Band C, scp 39-44 (£41,434-£47,106 per annum), for a nine month period to be funded from the NHS Support to Social Care monies.

Human Resources Implications

24. This report proposes to extend the following post on a temporary basis for nine months:

- 1 fte (37 hours) Advanced Social Work Practitioner, Pay Band C, scp 39-44 (£41,434-£47,106 per annum).

25. The post will offer support and resilience at times of high demand for staff within the MASH as well as creating strong links between the point of referral and the work that follows a safeguarding referral with staff in district teams.

Ways of Working Implications

26. The proposal is that the post will be based at Mercury House. The issues regarding accommodation for all MASH staff have been considered by the strategic governance group and alternative options to accommodate the growing numbers of staff are being explored. In the short term it is anticipated this post can be accommodated via flexible working within the MASH and when working peripatetically can utilise accommodation within the district. The post holder will need to be provided with a secure email account and given appropriate access and training to the MASH IT systems. Business support staff are situated within the MASH and there are clear protocols regarding the role they undertake regarding MASH functions.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Adult Social Care and Health Committee:

- 1) Notes the contents of this report.
- 2) Approves the extension of the temporary 1 fte Advanced Social Work Practitioner post, Pay Band C, scp 39-44 (£41,434-£47,106 per annum) within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub for a period of nine months.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 21/06/13)

27. The Adult Social Care and Health Committee has delegated authority within the constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

Financial Comments (CLK 10/06/13)

28. The financial implications are contained in the financial implications paragraph.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.