

18 December 2017**Agenda Item: 13****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL
WORK****INCREASE IN ESTABLISHMENT IN THE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to request approval for a permanent increase in establishment in the Children's Social Care Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) of an additional 4 full-time equivalent (FTE) Social Workers and 4 FTE MASH Officers.

Information and Advice

2. The MASH was set up by Nottinghamshire County Council in 2012. This is the front door for Children's Social Care and brings together representatives from Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Police and Health, co-located in one place to receive and respond to safeguarding concerns with virtual links to other services, such as the Probation Trust and District Councils. The MASH was considered to be well-established by Ofsted as part of their inspection in 2015.
3. Since the inspection, there has been an increase in demand to the Children's Social Care MASH, as shown in the table below. This is following a Serious Case Review in June 2015, which agreed that a record would be created for all contacts to the MASH about children, irrespective of whether consent for the referral had been obtained or the Level 4 threshold for Children's Social Care to intervene had been met.

| Financial Year | Average number of enquiries per month |
|-----------------------|--|
| 2014/15 | 1,408 |
| 2015/16 | 1,637 |
| 2016/17 | 2,066 |

4. In 2017/18, there has been an average of 2,065 enquiries per month (as at the end of October 2017).
5. The increase in demand has resulted in a backlog of work in the MASH, which has impacted on the achievement of timescales. In 2015/16, 82% of cases were progressed in timescales. In 2016/17, this fell by 7% to 75%. As at the end of October 2017, this had

fallen again with the 2017/18 average being 59%. This impacts on the safety of children and young people as cases are not being progressed as quickly as previously.

6. In order to manage the increase in demand, many staff regularly undertake additional hours at evenings and weekends, however, this is not sustainable in the long-term and the demand cannot be managed within the current establishment.
7. There have also been agency Social Workers employed to provide support in managing the demand. In 2016/17 the cost of this was £155, 824, the equivalent of 3.6 FTE Social Workers. It is projected that the 2017/18 cost will be £193, 446, the equivalent of 4.5 FTE Social Workers.
8. In 2016, Divisional Leadership Team commissioned a review of the Children's Social Care MASH to ensure that the right processes, systems and staffing are in place within Children's Social Care at the MASH to meet demand and the needs of service users in the most efficient way whilst ensuring effective safeguarding of children and young people.
9. The review included a pilot to trial an alternative process for telephone call handling. This process was found to be 49% more productive than the current way of working and was therefore rolled out across the Children's Social Care MASH in September 2017.
10. However, despite the increase in productivity, data analysis has identified that based on the number of enquiries received, paired with the work rate and capacity level, an additional 4 FTE Social Workers and 4 FTE MASH Officers are required to manage the level of demand and to mitigate against a future backlog.
11. The overall cost of the additional posts is £276, 896 per annum.

Supporting Changes

12. There are a number of supporting changes which have been introduced or are ongoing as part of the Children's Social Care MASH implementation plan which will support the MASH to manage demand, including:
 - Work with the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) and partner agencies to develop their understanding of the role of the MASH and when to make a safeguarding referral to ensure that only appropriate referrals and therefore, increase the MASH's ability to manage demand
 - Amending the telephone menu to ensure the right telephone calls are received by the MASH
 - The development of a new website and online referral form to support referrers in making a safeguarding referral and promoting the use of online referral options

Other Options Considered

13. There were two other options considered.

14. Do nothing – there are no additional costs associated with this option, however, this way of working has caused a long-term backlog of work which has resulted in children and young people not being progressed in a timely manner. In order to manage this, it is likely that further agency and overtime spend would be required.
15. Increase the establishment on a one-year basis – this would run parallel to an existing programme of work to reduce the number of inappropriate contacts to the MASH. Whilst this would support the MASH to manage demand in the short-term, it is not recommended as a sustainable long-term option as it relies too heavily on engagement of partner agencies to reduce the number of enquiries which do not meet the threshold for an assessment in order to remove the temporary resource. It is also likely to cause recruitment and retention issues due to the temporary nature of the posts, which would cause instability in the team.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

16. The proposed option is selected as it is evident that due to the increase in demand, the Children's Social Care MASH require additional resource in order to manage the volume of work and mitigate against a future backlog.
17. Work will continue to implement the recommendations of the Children's Social Care MASH review, including those listed in the supporting changes section of this report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

19. As part of their induction, staff in the MASH receive extensive training which includes the Protecting People's Information e-learning course.

Financial Implications

20. The total annual cost of 4 FTE Band B Social workers and 4 FTE Band 4 MASH Officers is £276,896. The additional cost of £101,200 in 2017-18 will be met by a request from contingency. The additional cost for 2018-19 will need to be taken into account in the Medium Term Financial Strategy when constructing the budget for 2018-19.

Human Resources Implications

21. Posts will be recruited to in line with the Nottinghamshire County Council's vacancy control procedure.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That a permanent increase in establishment in the Children's Social Care Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) of an additional 4 full-time equivalent (FTE) Social Workers and 4 FTE MASH Officers be approved.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 04/12/17)

22. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SS 05/12/17)

23. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 20 above.

HR Comments (BC 04/12/17)

24. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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