

8 October 2012

Agenda Item: 6

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND
CULTURAL SERVICES AND THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ADULT
SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND PUBLIC PROTECTION**

**UPDATE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MULTI-AGENCY
SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the establishment of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Nottinghamshire.

Information and Advice

2. On 11 January 2012, Cabinet endorsed the establishment of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as part of the new operating model for Children's Social Care. On 12 September 2012, Policy Committee approved the funding of the annual recurring costs for the MASH, established a number of posts and noted the final arrangements for the MASH.
3. The aim of the MASH is to significantly improve the sharing of information between agencies, improve decision-making by taking a more holistic view and therefore help to protect the most vulnerable children and adults from harm, neglect and abuse.

Overview of the MASH

4. Most MASHs nationally deal with safeguarding concerns about children but not adults. Research highlighted the clear advantages of taking a broader family approach and as a result, the Nottinghamshire MASH will deal with safeguarding concerns about both vulnerable children and adults, providing a faster, more co-ordinated and more consistent response from partner agencies and services to safeguarding concerns.
5. The MASH will act as the first point of contact for Children's Social Care and for safeguarding concerns about adults. It will involve representatives from Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Police and Health working together, co-located in one place. Virtual links will exist to other services and agencies which are not located in the MASH, such as preventative services, the Probation Trust and District Councils.
6. The MASH will receive safeguarding concerns from professionals such as teachers and doctors as well as members of the public and family members. For those concerns that meet the threshold for Adult or Children's Social Care involvement, representatives from

the different agencies in the MASH will collate information from their respective sources to build up a holistic picture of the circumstances of the case and the associated risks to the child or adult. As a result, better decisions will be made about what action to take and support will be targeted on the most urgent cases. Better co-ordination between agencies will lead to an improved service for children, adults and families.

7. The MASH will also provide advice and guidance for professionals with safeguarding concerns about a child or adult. This will help to enforce the application of need thresholds, improve the quality of information provided and ensure that the appropriate level of support is offered. For those concerns that do not meet the threshold for Adult or Children's Social Care involvement, the MASH will ensure that cases are passed to early intervention or other services as and when this is appropriate.
8. The MASH will be based at the Customer Services Centre at Mercury House and will build on the model and success of the Dedicated Adult Access Team which is already located there. It is anticipated that a significant number of contacts will be addressed at an early stage by a new team of MASH Officers; this represents a considerable change to how safeguarding concerns are currently handled. Working under the close supervision of qualified Adult and Children's social work professionals, MASH Officers will swiftly advise and signpost referrers to the most appropriate service, thereby filtering contacts and reducing the number of contacts being escalated to social work professionals inappropriately. In Adult Social Care having a single point of contact for social care enquiries staffed by a mix of Customer Service Advisors, Social Work and Occupational Therapy staff has resulted in over 60% of contacts being resolved directly by the Customer Service team with an overall reduction of 30% in referrals to dedicated Adult Social Care teams.
9. Implementation of the MASH will bring the following benefits:
 - a reduction in the number of children and adults inappropriately receiving costly services from social care, health, the police and others
 - closer partnership working and clearer accountability, with agencies providing a faster, more co-ordinated and consistent response to safeguarding concerns, ensuring that vulnerable children and adults are kept safe
 - an improved 'journey' for the child, adult and family with more preventative support and better informed services provided at the right time
 - a reduction in the number of inappropriate referrals and re-referrals
 - a more straightforward and responsive process for the professional or citizen raising a safeguarding concern, with clear guidance and support.

MASHs in Other Areas

10. The MASH model originated in Devon and this project is drawing extensively on their experience. Several other local authorities have successfully established MASHs: Staffordshire, Stoke City, Haringey, Hackney, Harrow, Norfolk, Birmingham City, Hull and York. MASHs are also being set up in every London Borough, in Northamptonshire and in Nottingham City. The design of the MASH in Nottinghamshire is actively building upon best practice elsewhere in the country.

Progress to Date

11. A Strategic Steering Group for the project has been established since December 2011, with senior representatives from the Police, Health, Probation Trust, District Councils and Fire & Rescue Service, as well as NCC services. The Group is chaired by the Corporate Director for Children, Families and Cultural Services. Robust governance arrangements are in place, with progress reported to the Children's Social Care Transformation Programme Board and Adult Social Care Business Improvement Board and then via the Programme Director's Board to the Corporate Leadership Team. In addition, members of the Strategic Steering Group have been keeping relevant stakeholder boards updated e.g. Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board, Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board, Police Command, PCT Board etc.
12. An Operational Group has also been working to design and implement the MASH, jointly chaired by a Superintendent from Nottinghamshire Police and the Service Director for Children's Social Care. Five workstreams have been working since February 2012, each focusing on a different element of the MASH: Organisation Structure, Business Process, Technology, Information-Sharing Agreement and Volume & Performance Analysis. Each has a workstream lead and a multi-agency working group that has collectively designed and refined their element, ensuring that stakeholders have been fully engaged in developing the model in Nottinghamshire.
13. Progress to date has been good, thanks to the hard work of operational staff and senior representatives involved in the project. Partner agencies and NCC services have given and maintained a very strong commitment to the project, and this has been backed up by resources.
14. Significant elements of progress are noted below:
 - best practice research has been completed, highlighting lessons learnt, useful documents and contacts from existing and emerging MASHs across the country
 - a detailed volume analysis has estimated the likely demand upon the MASH, using this to inform the number of posts within the organisation structure and the design of the business process
 - the organisation structure for the MASH has been agreed by the Strategic Steering Group for final approval by Policy Committee. This incorporate roles, job descriptions and staff funding arrangements
 - business processes, describing how the MASH will operate in detail, have been agreed
 - an Information Sharing Agreement has been developed and is being widely consulted upon, in preparation for sign-off by the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board and Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board in the Autumn
 - technology requirements have been gathered from partner agencies and services, informing the design of technical solutions and associated cost estimates
 - the office layout for the MASH at Mercury House has been agreed, with minor building work due to start in early September
 - draft performance measures for the MASH have been developed

- existing posts have been filled through enabling and preference processes. New posts have been advertised, at the discretion of the relevant Corporate Director, to ensure that post holders are in place in time to undertake induction training prior to go-live at the end of November
- extensive communication activity has taken place since the start of the project, with presentations, face-to-face briefings, electronic bulletins and web pages all being used to engage stakeholders. An ongoing more detailed communication plan is being developed for the run-up to go live to ensure that key parties and the public are aware of the existence of the MASH, its function and how to access it.

Timescales

15. The MASH is on track to go live in the week commencing 26 November 2012, with strong commitment from the partner agencies and services to achieve this. Support for implementation is being provided by ICT, Property, Ways of Working, HR, Communications and the Improvement Programme.

Gateway Review

16. A Gateway Review, involving an independent external consultant, was conducted in May 2012, examining project progress through interviews with a range of stakeholders, assessing confidence in project delivery and project management. The review graded the project as 'Amber/Green' overall and made a number of recommendations, which have all been addressed. The Gateway Review report is available as a background paper. A second Gateway Review is scheduled for early October 2012.

Other Committees

17. An update report about the MASH was also received by the Adult Social Care and Health Committee on the 1 October and Policy Committee will receive a progress report on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub six months after it opens.

Other Options Considered

18. As this is a report for noting, it is not necessary to consider other options.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, 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

20. Service users will receive faster, more co-ordinated assistance from operational teams as a result of the swifter, better informed decisions being taken in the MASH. In addition, a

greater number of children and families will receive support from preventative services, dealing with problems before they escalate.

Financial Implications

21. Policy Committee approved on 12 September 2012 that recurring annual costs for the MASH of £552,000, including some staffing costs, are to be met from County Council contingencies.
22. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between partner agencies located at the MASH will include consideration of the ongoing funding arrangements.

Crime and Disorder Implications

23. Co-locating social care professionals with Police colleagues will improve the sharing of information and hence the handling of crimes related to safeguarding and domestic violence. As more data is gathered, analysis will help identify risk factors and enable better prediction of potential vulnerability, so that support can be targeted accordingly.

Safeguarding Implications

24. The MASH will significantly improve the safeguarding of children and adults, helping partner agencies to make faster, more informed decisions that mean children, adults and families receive appropriate, co-ordinated support more quickly.

Human Resources Implications

25. The relevant trade unions have been consulted on the establishment of the MASH through regular ongoing meetings with the Service Director, Childrens Social Care, as part of the wider transformation programme. A number of existing posts have been provisionally allocated to existing employees through the programme's enabling process. Approval to advertise new posts in advance of Policy Committee on 12 September 2012 was also obtained due to the need to recruit staff in advance of the implementation date for training and induction purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That the update on the establishment of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Nottinghamshire be noted.

Anthony May
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and Cultural Services

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Constitutional Comments

26. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (NDR xx/09/12)

27. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 21 and 22 of the report.

Background Papers

MASH Gateway Review – May 2012

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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