

# The Nottinghamshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

## Frequently asked questions

### **Introduction**

In Nottinghamshire, a number of partner agencies are working together to establish a new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The MASH will deal with new safeguarding concerns, where someone is concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or adult, or think they might be at risk of harm. For example, a teacher may believe that one of their pupils is at risk of harm at home, or a doctor may think an elderly person is being neglected. Currently, in both cases, they would raise their concern with the local authority or the police.

Staff from the police, children's social care, adult safeguarding and health will be co-located at Mercury House in Annesley, which also accommodates the council's customer service centre, from November 2012.

Within the MASH, information from different agencies will be collated and used to decide what action to take. As a result, the agencies will be able to act quickly in a co-ordinated and consistent way, ensuring that vulnerable children and adults are kept safe.

## **Contacting the MASH with a new safeguarding concern**

### **(MASH number live from 10<sup>th</sup> December only)**

Professionals can contact the MASH by calling – 0300 500 8090 during the following core working hours:

8.30 am – 5.00 pm – Monday to Thursday  
8.30 am – 4.30 pm – Friday

Outside of these core hours, and in an emergency, contact the emergency duty team (EDT) on 0300 456 4546

Members of the public should contact the MASH by calling the Council's Customer Service Line on 0300 500 80 80

### **ONLINE REFERRALS (live from 10<sup>th</sup> December only)**

A new safeguarding concern can be submitted using an online form. To access this form, please visit [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/MASH](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/MASH)

#### **What is a MASH?**

The **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** is a central resource for the whole of Nottinghamshire receiving all new adult and child safeguarding enquiries that meet current thresholds.

The MASH is staffed by professionals from a range of agencies including, the Police, Health, County Council, Education and other agencies working together in the same location. Virtual links exist to other services and agencies such as probation, housing, mental health, early intervention and youth services.

#### **How does a MASH work?**

The MASH acts as the first point of contact for all new child or adult safeguarding concerns in Nottinghamshire which meet current thresholds. Once a concern is reported, the MASH team will assess whether it meets the threshold for Adult or Children's Social Care involvement. Those that do will be passed to a specialist who will collate information from a range of different sources swiftly, allowing better informed decisions to be made. As a result, agencies will be able to act quickly, in a more co-ordinated and consistent way, ensuring that vulnerable children and adults are kept safe.

Those concerns that don't meet the threshold will be signposted to specific early help services, ensuring they receive appropriate support.

### **Why is a MASH being introduced?**

The MASH is an excellent way for organisations to make improvements to the way they share information with each other.

In Nottinghamshire, the County Council has been making a number of improvements which are transforming Children's Social Care and enhancing links between services – the MASH is part of this initiative.

### **Where does the idea for a MASH come from?**

The MASH model originated in Devon, where the county council, police, health and education worked together to set up a MASH in 2010. Other areas have now replicated the approach including: Haringey, Norfolk and Birmingham, and there are plans to set up MASHs in every London borough. The project in Nottinghamshire will seek to build upon best practice elsewhere in the country.

### **What are the overall benefits of the MASH?**

Working together in this way ensures that the agencies are sharing information and are able to respond to a child or adult's needs quickly and efficiently.

Elsewhere in the country, the MASH method has resulted in more effective and earlier identification of vulnerable adults and children.

It has reduced the number of different professionals being involved, while keeping the most appropriate professional to deliver interventions to meet the needs identified in any particular case.

There are a number of benefits to having a MASH including:

- better co-ordination between agencies leading to an improved service for children, adults and their families
- Faster, more co-ordinated and consistent responses to safeguarding concerns about vulnerable children and adults
- An improved 'journey' for the child or adult with a greater emphasis on early intervention and better informed services provided at the right time
- Greater ability to identify potential vulnerability, enabling more

preventative action to be taken, dealing with cases before they escalate

- A more straightforward and responsive process for the professional or citizen raising a concern, with clear guidance and support
- Closer partnership working, clearer accountability and less duplication of effort
- A reduction in the number of children and adults inappropriately accessing costly services from social care, the Police and others
- A reduction in the number of inappropriate referrals and re-referrals.

The MASH will provide advice and guidance for professionals with concerns about a child or adult. This will help improve the quality of information provided and reduce the number of inappropriate referrals.

#### **What will change as a result of having a MASH?**

Having the MASH will change the way professionals and members of the public report any new concerns they may have about the safety of a child or adult. Currently, organisations deal with concerns in isolation so having this new service will enable organisations to work together in the same place and share information so they can understand the circumstances of the whole case.

#### **When will the MASH in Nottinghamshire be operational?**

The MASH will be partly operational by November 2012, fully operational for all concerns regarding children by 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and fully operational handling concerns regarding vulnerable adults by January 2013..

#### **Which agencies will work in the MASH and where will it be based?**

Staff from the police, children's social care, adult safeguarding and health will be co-located at Mercury House in Annesley, which also accommodates Nottinghamshire County Council's customer service centre.

Virtual links will exist to other services and agencies such as probation, housing, mental health, early intervention and young people's services.

### **Will there be a dedicated telephone number for the MASH?**

Yes, the MASH will have a dedicated telephone number for professionals. The number for the public to call will be separate.

### **Will the MASH be able to provide advice and guidance too?**

Yes, the specialist staff will be able to provide advice, guidance and contact information for professionals with new concerns about a child or adult.

### **I have an enquiry about a general safeguarding issue, can I call the MASH for some advice and guidance?**

Yes, the MASH will offer an advice and information service for professionals. The team of specialists will also be able to guide individuals through the referral process.

### **Where can I find the referral form?**

The referral form will be available from 10<sup>th</sup> December via a secure web link and can be found here:

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/MASH](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/MASH)

### **What will it mean for customers?**

Vulnerable children and adults will be protected and supported faster, with agencies providing more co-ordinated help. There will be a greater emphasis on early intervention, supporting children, families and adults before the situation deteriorates.

In addition, it will be easier for people to raise concerns about children or adults, with better guidance and support given to them, along with information about what action will be taken by the agencies.

### **How many staff will be work at the MASH?**

There will be 60 FTE working in the MASH. These will be from the County Council, Police and the NHS.

### **Who are the MASH staff employed by?**

Staff working in the MASH will continue to be employed by their own organisation. Many staff will maintain dual reporting lines (matrix management), reporting to one person for oversight of professional

decisions and a different person for day to day administrative purposes.

### **How long will the MASH hold onto cases?**

The MASH will not hold cases for long, but will pass them to operational teams within a matter of minutes or hours, as required, based upon assessed risk. Most cases will be dealt with in 24 hours – no case will be held for more than 3 days.

### **Will MASH staff carry out fieldwork?**

No, the MASH staff will not carry out any visits to children, adults or families as these will be carried out by the operational teams.

### **Can a member of the public telephone the MASH if they have a concern about a child or adult?**

Yes, the public can contact the MASH with concerns by telephoning Nottinghamshire County Council's customer service number which is 0300 500 80 80

### **What changes will there be for staff?**

Staff will be able to report new safeguarding concerns through a dedicated telephone number which will ensure that the most vulnerable in our society are kept safe.

Staff should ensure they are aware of the telephone number for the MASH, its operational hours and the out-of-hours emergency duty team number. These numbers can be found at the start of this briefing. Alternatively, information can be found on partner organisation intranet and internet pages.

### **Where can I get more information on the MASH?**

Information can be found by visiting [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/MASH](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/MASH)