

MASH, Referrals Assessment and Threshold

Children's Health, Social Care and Education

Overview and Scrutiny

Date: 21st March 18

Author:	Ceri Woszczyk – Service Manager Children's Social Work Team Children Families and Community Health
Wards:	ALL
Locality Affected:	ALL
Parishes Affected:	ALL

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report has been written to provide the committee with an update on progress of the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Thresholds decisions that are made to determine which children receive statutory services and at what level. The information presented draws on the findings and recommendations of a peer review of the MASH by Oxfordshire Local Authority and some work on demand management by Newton Europe. Additionally the report will provide a brief outline of what is known about the new children's OFSTED inspection framework: Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS).

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the key updates and progress contained within this report.
- Identify any areas that require further scrutiny and investigation by the Committee

3. Multiagency Safeguarding Hub - MASH

- 3.1 The MASH was established in 2015 and receives all new contacts into Children's Services. The function of the service is to screen all contacts and make a decision about appropriateness of progressing the contact to a referral for either social care or early help. The team is co-located with representatives from police and health as well as early help colleagues.
- 3.2 Between October 31st and November 1st managers and practitioners from Oxfordshire Local Authority Children's Services undertook a peer review of Swindon's MASH. A number of strengths were identified by the review team including;
- Clear management oversight of MASH cases.
 - Senior review and management over-sight clearly seen on electronic recording.

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- Good/clear chronologies evidenced on case recording and clear evidence that these were adding value to the triage decision making.
 - Some evidence of taking Early Help history/involvement into account to inform decision making.
 - Some evidence of positive multi agency work/ sharing of information that aided MASH decision making.
 - Passionate and committed staff with good morale
 - Good examples of multi-agency and partnership working were evidenced.

The peer review found good evidence of referrers receiving information relating to decision making of referrals

Cases of most concern received a timely service in the MASH and every effort was made to ensure those cases of a less serious nature were managed in a timely way.

Overall the review found that children and families received a service at the right time and at the right level of intervention.

The review recommended that for some children clearer exit plans were needed when cases required step-down services and particularly in the move to Early Help universal services. A recently established Early Help Hub will oversee and manage the step down process and ensure a more robust exit plan when children's cases need to step down from statutory services.

In addition to the peer review, Newton Europe completed a data diagnostic in November 2017 which gave further helpful insight into the demand and work flow within the MASH. The diagnostic helped to understand the pattern of demand, changes in the pattern of referrers and the impact of high and increasing demand on decision making.

Newton Europe identified an overall 14% increase in the number of contacts each month into the MASH over the past 2 years.

- 3.3 The MASH has a Team Improvement Plan in response to the recommendations and findings of both the Oxford Peer Review and the Newton Europe Diagnostic. This plan addresses a number of key priorities including practice development and staff training.

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The MASH Manager and Consultant Social Workers are actively reviewing and have developed a robust plan for improved oversight of the timeliness of contacts.

Multi-agency Threshold Document

- 4.1 The purpose of the multi-agency threshold document is to support Swindon's Early Help Strategy 2017 – 2022 which sets out the priorities for progressing the delivery of a more co-ordinated and targeted approach to Early Help across Swindon.

The threshold document sets out four levels of need and provides guidance to help practitioners assess a child's level of need and identify which if any additional services are required. It is not a rigid set of procedures as each child is unique and their needs will change over time. It outlines a graduated response to assessing need

- 4.2 The threshold document has recently been revised and up-dated by a multiagency group lead by the Head of Service Children and Families. The work of this group, which was supported by good participation and engagement from partners, resulted in a new threshold document. This document is called The Right Help at the Right Time. Guide To Assessing Levels of Need and Identifying the Most Appropriate Support. The document was launched at the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Conference at the end of last year. The implementation is being monitored through the Early Help Implementation Group chaired by Louise Campion the Service Manager for Early Help. The document sets out the shared responsibility for safeguarding across our multiagency partnership. By working together earlier and effectively will reduce the demand on children's statutory services and specialist provision.
- 4.3 In order to ensure a consistent application of thresholds the Early Help Implementation Group supports practitioners in their localities to use the document to ensure that help is offered to families at the right level.
- 4.4 The effectiveness of this work is monitored through the LSCB Performance Sub Group who use performance data to analyse the numbers of children that have received Early Help through the provision of an Early Help Record and Plan (EHRP)

5. OFSTED Framework

- 5.1 In January 2018 Ofsted commenced inspections using a new framework, the Inspections of Local Authority Children Services (ILACS). Under this framework

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Ofsted will use the intelligence and information they have to inform decisions about how best to inspect each Local Authority.¹

This system includes:

- Local Authorities sharing an annual self-evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice (see below for more details)
- an annual engagement meeting between Ofsted's regional representatives and the Local Authority to review the self-evaluation and to reflect on what is happening in the local authority and inform how they would engage with each other in future
- the Local Authority intelligence system (LAIS) (which brings data and information into a single record)
- focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children
- standard and short inspections where Ofsted make judgements using our four-point scale

The self-evaluation requires Local Authorities to answer the following three questions:

- What do you know about the quality and impact of social worker practice in your local authority?
- How do you know it?
- What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

Inspectors will look at this self - evaluation when preparing for the next inspection or focused visit. The self-evaluation is being completed currently in readiness for this meeting.

The standard inspection will be an unannounced inspection, with the DCS receiving a call on either the Monday or Tuesday of the week preceding the arrival of the inspection team on site. In the period of time between the call being received and the arrival of the team on site, local authorities are required to send over information about a number of areas as set out in Annex A of the inspection handbook.

¹ Local area special educational needs and disability (LA SEND) inspections are inspections of the local area that sit outside ILACS, but Ofsted will take them into account when they schedule inspections.

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The timing of the inspection will be dependent on the time of the last inspection and the grading from that inspection. Ofsted will be using different pathways to decide in which order local authorities will be inspected.

Swindon will be inspected under Pathway 2 as an authority having been judged to be requiring improvement to be good in 2014. As such Swindon will receive a standard inspection. In between inspections, Swindon will receive up to two focused visits. Given that Swindon had its last inspection over 3 years ago it is likely that it will be inspected early in the inspection cycle.

Inspectors will be on site in Swindon for just under two weeks, visiting social work teams and hearing directly from frontline staff about the work they are doing with children and families.

Staff are currently receiving team briefings to prepare them for the ILACS inspection and to offer them an opportunity to ask any questions they have.

The full details of how the inspection will be conducted under the ILACS can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018>

6 Alternative Options

There are no alternative options for consideration within the context of this report.

7 Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

For 2017/18, the budget for Children, Families and Community Health is £26.9m. Based on the January monitoring position, the service is reporting a projected overspend of £3.7m. The service has experienced significant demand pressures which is impacting on staffing budgets, placement budgets and legal costs.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) requires every Local Authority to establish an overview and scrutiny function to hold the Executive to account, undertake policy development and review, monitor and improve performance report.

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All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

There are no other direct implications arising as a result of this report. Any further implications will be identified when a topic is reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and in any recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Diversity Impact Assessment

No Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) is required at this stage as this report proposes no changes to services.

Risk Management

No risk management issues have been identified at this stage. Any risk management issues will be identified at the appropriate time when a topic is under review by the Scrutiny Committee and if it makes any recommendations.

8 Consultees

- 8.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 None.

10 Appendices

- 10.1 None.