

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Operating Procedures





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Introduction

- 1.1. This document outlines the process by which safeguarding services are prioritised and allocated. The aim of this procedure is to ensure that all Portsmouth's children and families identified with additional needs, receive a timely response by appropriate services to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- 1.2. It is known that the best way to ensure that the needs of children and families are met is by providing the right support at the earliest opportunity. This is best achieved through collective action by all agencies.
- 1.3. The Portsmouth Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has been set up to manage all concerns (contacts) about a child's safety or wellbeing. The Portsmouth MASH will apply the locally agreed thresholds criteria to determine whether statutory services should be provided by Children's Social care or whether Early Help support should be offered to meet the level of identified need.

- 1.4. This document should be read alongside:

The PSCB Thresholds Document
The Early Help Strategy

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training

Portsmouth MASH will use information about agencies and their involvement in safeguarding processes across the Early Help and statutory spectrum to inform multi-agency safeguarding training events/activities.

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Information Sharing

- 2.1. Portsmouth City Council has an established information sharing framework which outlines responsibilities associated with information gathering, recording and sharing.
- 2.2. The data being shared within the MASH is likely to be sensitive and therefore underpinned by statutory principles. Good practice guidance highlights that informed consent should be obtained before sharing information. It will be expected that any professional making an enquiry to Portsmouth MASH about a child will have the consent from the person/s with parental responsibility to share information. Obtaining explicit consent for information sharing is best practice and can be expressed either verbally or in writing. Where it is appropriate to obtain parental consent written consent is always preferable as it reduces the scope for dispute - except where to do so would place a child at risk of harm.
- 2.3. Where information that indicates a child may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm can be shared without consent, the decision to disclose in those circumstances should be properly documented.
- 2.4. Specific Information Sharing Agreements have been completed by agencies contributing to the Portsmouth MASH. These agreements outline the detail of information management.
- 2.5. All personal information recorded by Portsmouth MASH must be recorded accurately. The data will be stored in accordance with agencies' procedures for children in need. Access to the records will be limited to Portsmouth MASH professionals.

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Principles Underpinning the Work

In Portsmouth we aim to create the best possible environment for families to care for themselves and their children, providing additional support where appropriate and to intervene where necessary to safeguard and protect children and young people. To do this we are committed to:

- Wherever possible all children's and families' needs will be met by universal services.
- As soon as any professional is aware that a family has additional needs that may impact adversely on a child, he/she will have a **starting conversation** with the child and their family and offer advice and support to meet that need.
- Professionals working with children and families will always seek to gain their consent to share information with others unless to do so would place the child at risk of harm.
- Families will be empowered to identify their own problems, needs and solutions. In most cases outcomes for children will only be improved by supporting and assisting parents/carers to make changes. Our aim is always to build resilience in children and families and their capacity to overcome their own difficulties for the remainder of their lives.
- We will offer support and services to help families find their own sustainable solutions. Once improvement is made services will reduce or end so as not to create dependence.

3.2. These principles support our restorative approach to practice in Portsmouth. Restorative practice is a way of behaving which helps to build and maintain healthy relationships, resolve difficulties and repair harm where there has been conflict. We will support the development of family capacity, resilience and independence by building on strengths and enabling them to find their own solutions - and take responsibility for their **stronger future**.

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The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

4.1. The Portsmouth MASH is a multi-agency team set up to assist the workforce in deciding the right response for a child who may have additional needs or about whom there may be concerns. The Portsmouth MASH is the initial contact point for all enquiries about a child's safety or wellbeing and applies the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB) threshold criteria to determine whether a response is required by Children's Social Care or the child's needs can be met by an Early Help response or universal services.

4.2. The MASH provides the first contact point for any enquiries about a child's wellbeing. The information provided is initially reviewed by a senior social-work practitioner who will determine the appropriate response:

- Universal services are appropriate to meet the needs of the child.
- The child needs a specific or single agency early help service.
- The child is suffering significant harm, thus a child protection enquiry should be undertaken under

S47 of the Children Act 1989.

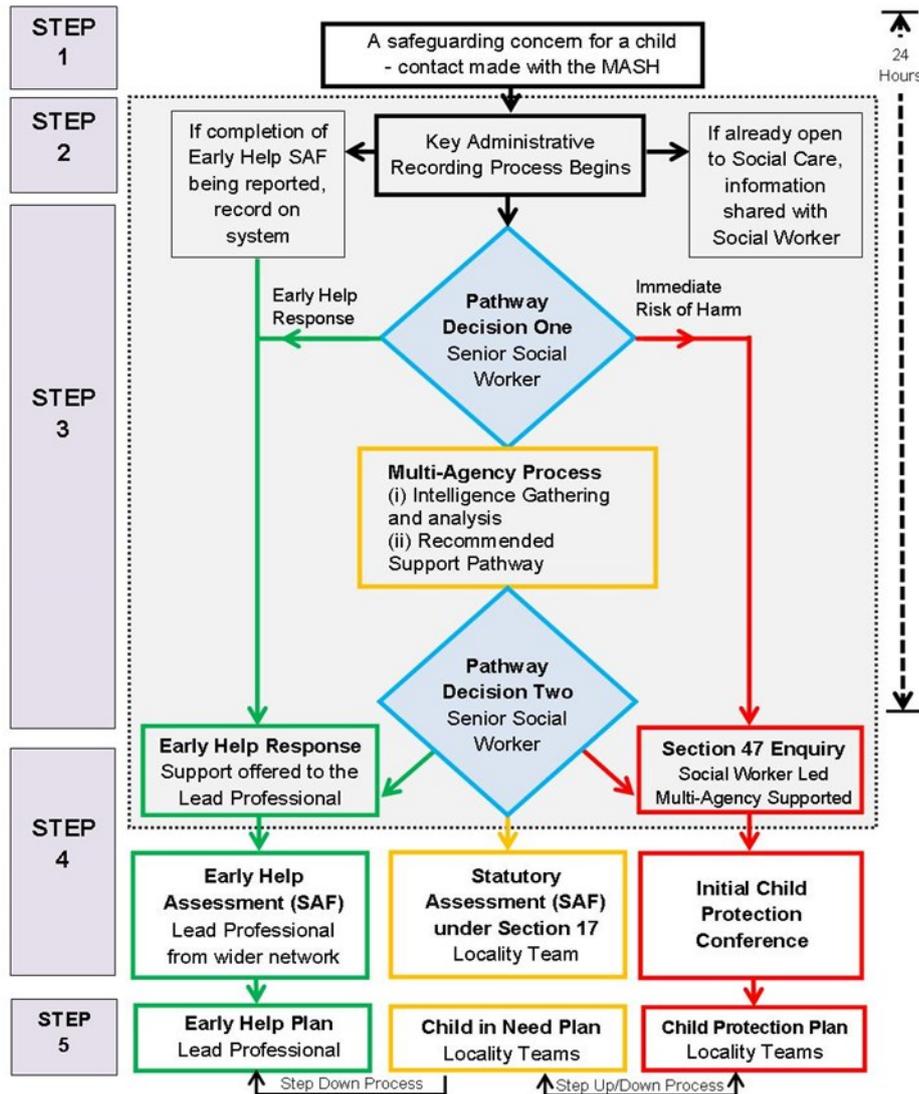
- The information provided requires more detailed analysis by key professionals in the MASH.

4.3. Where the information provided to the MASH indicates that multi-agency intervention or the child/family may need statutory support provided under the Children Act 1989, then key professionals in the multi-agency safeguarding hub will check what is known about the child/family by their agency and will share all that is reasonable within the context of the contact information/concerns.

4.4. Multi-agency information sharing supports good and proportionate decision making so that the right children and families are able to access the right services at the right time.

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The diagram below details the MASH process:



The potential outcomes from the MASH are:

- That multi-agency early help coordinated by a lead professional is required (green pathway).
- That a statutory assessment is required by children's social care to determine services under S17 of the Children Act 1989 (amber pathway).
- That the information indicates the child may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm and an enquiry under S47 needs to be initiated (red pathway).

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The Early Help Pathway

- 5.1. Where the MASH process indicates that a child needs an early help response, the information collated will be passed to the Early Help Hub located within the MASH.
- 5.2. The Early Help Hub will review the information provided and consider whether the family meets the criteria to be attached to the Troubled Families programme. Eligibility for the programme is based on the family having at least two of the six headline problems:
- Crime and anti-social behaviour;
 - Education;
 - Children who need help;
 - Worklessness/NEET;
 - Domestic abuse;
 - Health.
- 5.3. The Early Help Hub will communicate with the professional who contacted the MASH to discuss potential outcomes - who might be the most appropriate professional to talk with the family about possible support services; who within the network is best positioned to complete an early help SAF with the family; and who will be the lead professional co-ordinating the Early Help offer with the family.
- 5.4. It is expected that all professionals contacting the MASH will have had a **starting conversation** with the family to ascertain their views about their needs and any support that may be helpful to them.
- 5.5. Where it is appropriate for the Early Help Hub to make direct contact with the family, they will discuss the level of support the family is requesting, who the family would identify/request as their lead professional and whether they meet the criteria to be attached to the Troubled Families programme.
- 5.6. Where a family meets the Troubled Families criteria, the Early Help Hub will identify them for attachment to the programme (except where a claim for Payment by Results has already been made for the family in either phase of the programme).

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5.7. The purpose of the Early Help Hub is to:

- a) Establish the level of priority for intensive family support.
- b) Identify families that meet the Troubled Families eligibility criteria and highlight that they can be attached to the programme.
- c) Agree who is best placed within the professional network to complete an Early Help SAF and coordinate the early help offer (by the lead professional).

5.8. The Early Help Hub will maintain a record of all children and families receiving early help (including information on the service allocated to them, their lead professional and whether they can be attached to the Troubled Families programme).

5.9. The Early Help Hub allocation decision, made in collaboration with the professional who contacted the MASH and the family may be:

- a) To allocate for intensive family support within a locality multi-agency team.
- b) To allocate a health visitor, family nurse or children's centre worker within the locality multi-agency team.

- c) To allocate to a professional working with the child/family, but located outside of a locality multi-agency team (see section 5 below).

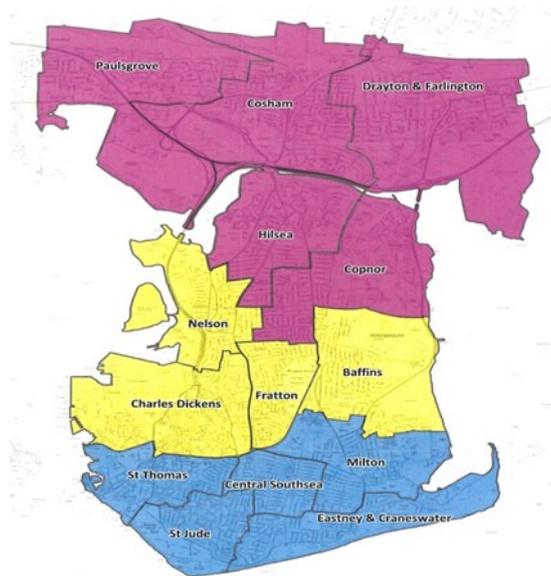
5.10. The Early Help Hub will generate a weekly report detailing allocation decisions (lead agency/professional) and noting the children and families who can be attached to the Troubled Families programme. These reports will be shared with the managers in each of the three multi-agency teams to ensure that early help is progressed in a timely way.

5.11. All decisions made by the Early Help Hub will be endorsed by a senior social work practitioner and recorded in the Capita IT system.

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The Multi-Agency Teams (MATs)

Multi-Agency Teams (MATs) have been established in three localities across Portsmouth, in the North, Centre and South of the city, co-locating services for children and families (see the map below).



6.1. The locality areas are coterminous with school cluster areas, primary health groups and neighbourhood policing.

6.2. The locality multi-agency teams have been established to promote integrated working practices across different agencies so that families receive seamless and timely support that is appropriate to need.

6.3. Each multi-agency team is made up of a range of professionals including:

- Children's Centre Staff
- Health Visitors
- Nurses
- Public Health Professionals
- Family Support Workers
- Social Workers

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The Multi-Agency Teams (MATs)

6.5. Services within the locality, but outside the MATs include:

- Voluntary Services
- Nurseries
- Schools
- GP practices
- Police

6.6. The Early Help Hub will identify which professional within the locality network is best placed to lead the early help work with a family. The managers within the multi-agency teams will receive regular reports (see example below) to review these arrangements, monitor progress and make any revisions to the support offered.

ID	AGE AT CON	CONTACT DATE	CON SOURCE	CON REASON	CON OUTCOME DATE	CON OUTCOME	Locality
202398	15	19/09/2016	C Police	C Cyp/R Youth At Risk Report	19/09/2016	C Universal Services Involved. No Additional Needs Identified At This Time.	Central
203102	14	19/09/2016	C Police	C Cyp/R Youth At Risk Report	19/09/2016	C Tac Fip Barnardos Lead	North
203750	16	27/09/2016	C Health Services - Gp	C Concern For Welfare	27/09/2016	C Tac Think Family Lead	South
204095	16	15/09/2016	C Health Services - Other Primary Health Services	C Concern For Emotional Wellbeing	19/09/2016	C Tac Camhs Lead	North
204096	15	15/09/2016	C Health Services - Other Primary Health Services	C Concern For Emotional Wellbeing	19/09/2016	C Tac HV Lead	North
205049	12	26/09/2016	C Schools	C Information/ Advice	26/09/2016	C Tac Education Lead	South

6.7. It is expected that there will be a monthly meeting between the MATs managers in each locality to review the allocation of early help work, the completion of Early Help SAFs and the progress of the intervention with the family.

6.8. In addition to monthly performance meetings within the MATs there will be a monthly network meeting with relevant professionals working outside the MATs to offer supervision, review processes and track progress. A relevant manager within the MATs will be identified to facilitate this meeting.

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Step-Up Arrangements

7.1 If it becomes apparent that the child's needs have not been met, it may be appropriate to consider a social work intervention. These situations highlight a **conversation opportunity** with the family and with the MASH

7.2 Problems may arise that require an immediate response, such as a child protection issue. In these circumstances contact must be made with the MASH to ensure the matter is fully investigated. It may be as a result of assessment further support to the child will be provided under the child in need framework in children's social care or stepped down to other agencies that are more appropriate to support the family based on the identified level of risk or need.

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The Pathway to Children's Social Care

8.1. Where a professional is concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child they should have a discussion with the MASH. The MASH will consider what is known about the family and apply the threshold criteria to determine the right level of response.

8.2. If the MASH determines that a social work assessment should be completed to determine whether a child/family should be provided with services under S17 Children Act 1989, the MASH will allocate to the relevant locality social work manager.

Section 17 Children Act 1989 defines a child in need as:

- A child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity to achieve or maintain, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by the local authority
- A child whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired without the provision of services
- A child who has a substantial and permanent disability

8.3. Children's Social Care will be the lead agency for all children identified as 'in need' under S17 Children Act 1989. Social work support will be provided for only as long as required by the family and the lead role may be 'stepped down' to early help services as appropriate.

8.4. Professionals in all agencies have a responsibility to contact the MASH when it is believed or suspected that a child:

- Has suffered significant harm, is suffering, or
- Is at risk of suffering, significant harm

8.5. A child protection enquiry will be initiated under S47 Children Act 1989 where there is reason to believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm as a result of the care they are receiving. Children's Social Care will take the lead role in safeguarding the wellbeing of the child/ children and ensure that the 4LSCB Child Protection Procedures are followed.

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Step-Down Arrangements from Children's Social Care

- 9.1. Stepping down responsibility from children's social care to an early help agency should happen through a multi-agency team around the child meeting and with the explicit consent of the family and the agreement of other professionals involved.
- 9.2. All children/families stepped down to early help services should be reported by the locality social work manager to the Early Help Hub and the monthly MATs managers meeting so that progress can be monitored and services can be ended when improvement can be sustained so as not to create dependence.
- 9.3. Where a family is stepped down from Children's Social Care to an early help service, the social worker should get consent from the family to share the single assessment framework so as to provide seamless service delivery.

10

Performance Management and Payment by Results Claims

Each agency within the MATs will have an Early Help scorecard detailing:

- The number of children they are leading the early help offer with
- The number of SAFs they have completed
- The number of contacts they have made to the MASH
- The number of new children in a month they have been allocated
- The number of children attached to the troubled families program they are working with
- The number of children they have ended early help services in a month
- The number of payments by results claims they have made

10.1 The early help report will be available on a city-wide basis to assist understanding about need in the city and the impact of early help on workflow across the wider children's system.

10.2. Each locality Children's Social Care team will have a scorecard detailing:

- The number of children receiving a service as a child in need, subject to a protection plan and looked after
- The average duration for intervention with Children in Need, children subject to protection plans and looked after children
- The number of children allocated for assessment to determine need for statutory social work intervention
- The number of children closed to children's social care
- The number of children stepped-down from children's social care to early help
- The number of children re referred

*There are additional performance indicators in Children's Social Care



Out of Hours Concerns

The Portsmouth MASH is open at the following times:

Monday
08:30 - 17:00

Tuesday
08:30 - 17:00

Wednesday
08:30 - 17:00

Thursday
08:30 - 17:00

Friday
08:30 - 16:30

To deal with concerns outside of these core hours there is an out of hours' service that can be contacted on: **0300 555 1373**

Any contacts made out of hours will be reviewed on the next working day by the Portsmouth MASH manager.