



General FAQs

What is the MASH?

The MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) is a co-located team, made up of professionals from the following organisations, working together to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- Dudley Council's social care, early help, housing and education teams
- Probation
- Police
- Health care providers:
 - Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust (health visitors)
 - Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Trust (mental health)
 - Dudley Hospital Group NHS Foundation Trust (acute/emergency care)
 - Shropshire Community Health Trust (school nurses)

Why has the MASH been introduced?

A recurring learning point from serious case reviews across the country has been the importance of having effective information sharing and close working arrangements between relevant agencies. The MASH is an effective way for organisations to make improvements to information sharing in a confidential environment.

The MASH model has been strongly endorsed by the OFSTED report 'Good Practice by Local Safeguarding Boards' and 'The Munro Review of Child Protection'. The Care Act 2014 guidance also highlighted a MASH which includes adult safeguarding as best practice.

MASHs have been established in a number of other authorities across the country.

What are the benefits of a MASH?

Working together and sharing information ensures agencies are able to respond to a child's or adult's needs quickly and efficiently. There is:

- better coordination between agencies, leading to an improved service and outcomes for children, adults and their families
- a faster and more consistent response to concerns

- greater ability to identify potentially vulnerable children or adults, offering the opportunity to provide early intervention

How many staff are in the MASH?

There are staff representing a range of agencies based in the MASH as outlined above. There will also be a number of virtual links into the MASH, including the fire service and other sources of information from the voluntary sector.

The MASH will continue to extend representation to improve safeguarding work across Dudley.

Are these new resources?

All the partner agencies involved in the MASH have a role in safeguarding children and adults. The MASH brings together these resources into a single unit to more effectively share relevant information and to co-ordinate a timely response.

In some cases, agencies have accessed additional resources to support these posts. All staff will continue to be employed by their own organisation.

Where is the MASH located?

The MASH is based in Corbyn Road, Russells Hall, Dudley

When did the MASH go live?

The MASH went live on 16 May 2016 and be extended to include vulnerable adults by December 2016.

How will personal and sensitive information be kept secure?

All agencies involved are very conscious that information sharing must be proportionate, secure and kept confidential. An information sharing agreement will be produced and agreed between agencies to support this.

The MASH itself is separate from operational social care teams. The staff in the MASH will all have had appropriate vetting and training.

A secure information system will be used to draw together relevant information from the MASH partners and also from other relevant organisations. Sensitive information will remain in the confidential environment of the MASH, where only those who actually need to know get to see the information.

What happens when an enquiry is made about a child?

Partners in the MASH will share information to decide if:

- the child or young person has been harmed or could be harmed in the future

- if the child or young person or the family would benefit from support from other people who help children and families.

If the child or young person is thought to have been harmed or could be harmed in the future, we will refer them to Dudley Council's social care team. Information will also be given to the police if it is necessary to help stop or solve a crime.

If the child or young person has not been harmed but we think they or the family would benefit from extra help, then their name, address, reason for the enquiry and outcome will be passed onto the most appropriate service so the appropriate support can be provided. We will also write to the family and, where appropriate, the child or young person, explaining the outcome of the safeguarding concern within 10 working days.

How will information be used?

Information will only be used to decide whether someone is being harmed or may be harmed in the future, if they or their family would benefit from help and support, or if a crime has been committed or could be committed in the future.

Existing information held by organisations will only be shared where it is relevant. All information will be held in a safe place and will not be shared with other people unless they have a legal power to see it.

How long will the MASH take to make a decision?

The Mash will not hold on to cases for very long. Each referral will be assessed and passed onto operational teams within a matter of minutes, or hours, depending on the assessed risks.

The senior social worker in the MASH is responsible for all decisions.