

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Panel:	Child and Families Advisory Panel
Date:	4 February 2020
Title:	Children's Reception Team (CRT) and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Update
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update members on activity within the Children's Reception Team (CRT) and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This update will include information on the number of contacts and referrals received by Children's Services Department (CSD), as well as the findings of a recent review of the service.

Recommendation(s)

2. That the Children and Families Advisory Panel note the update provided in this report in respect of CRT and MASH and the role that this service undertakes for Children's Services.

Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to update members of CFAP on how CRT/MASH works and the role that it performs for Children's Services. This report will outline staffing levels and the level of activity in terms of contacts and referrals to the service. A comprehensive review of the service has recently been completed, which has led to a number of action points to further improve the service. In addition to this review CRT and MASH are always scrutinised as part of any OFSTED inspection, either for Hampshire or the Isle of Wight. CRT and MASH are considered by OFSTED to be strong and effective, ensuring that contacts and referrals are efficiently managed. It is imperative that there is a strong 'front door' to Children's Services as it is here that the direction of a child's case is determined.

Contextual Information

4. CRT and MASH make up the front door to Children's Services with all new contacts and referrals being managed by these two teams. CRT manage contacts and MASH manage referrals.
5. A contact is any piece of information that relates to a child or a family that comes into Children's Services. A contact can be in the form of an Inter-Agency Referral Form (IARF), a police notification, a telephone call or an email. In addition to these types of notifications there are child death notifications, requests for information for court reports, notifications of vulnerable children moving into Hampshire, or requests for information in relation to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) etc.
6. CRT is staffed by non-Social Work qualified Child and Family Support Workers (CFSW); these workers all have some experience of working with children and families. They receive the contact and where appropriate will offer advice to the person making the contact. CRT will undertake some research on the family from CSD records and where possible they will also check the records of any adults within the household. The worker will write a case summary onto CSD records identifying any strengths and risks for the family which is then sent electronically to a team manager or assistant team manager for oversight and a decision.
7. It can be seen from the performance information below that CRT work on between 7000 -9000 contacts each month, with the majority of these contacts being on unopened cases. CRT are able to deal with 60-70% of contacts, with the remaining 30%-40% being progressed to a referral by the team manager.
8. If a team manager identifies a particular level of risk or need within a contact, then it is progressed to a referral and allocated to a MASH social worker for further investigation and enquiry. The MASH social worker has two working days to complete a child in need referral. The social worker will contact the parents, school health, police and where known, any voluntary agency that are working with the family. The information obtained is then analysed and a recommendation about future intervention is made by the social worker. This intervention could be that the case is closed within MASH with some advice being offered, the case transferred to the Family Support Service for early help or the case is progressed to a district Child Assessment and Support Team (CAST) for an assessment to be completed.
9. All child protection cases are managed within 2-4 hours depending on the nature of the concern. The information gathering process and analysis is the same as all other cases, however within the 2-4-hour timescale a strategy meeting involving police, a MASH manager and safeguarding nurse will take place. This discussion determines whether a referral meets the threshold for a child protection investigation. There are usually 10-20 strategy discussions each day. Once the strategy discussion is held the case transfers to the relevant district for a Children's Assessment and Safeguarding Team (CAST)

to undertake the investigation. The investigation can be undertaken jointly i.e. police and social worker, or single agency i.e. by a social worker or a police officer alone.

10. Please see Appendix 1 which shows data which indicates the volumes of contacts and referrals for Hampshire Children's Services. CRT and MASH also provide the front door for Isle of Wight Children's Services as part of the partnership. There are usually an additional 1500 contact per month for the island.

High Risk Domestic Abuse Meetings (HRDA)

11. In January 2019, MASH along with partner agencies introduced a daily High-Risk Domestic Abuse (HRDA) meeting. This is a daily meeting that considers the most serious domestic violence incidents that have taken place within the last few days. Attending this meeting are police, health, Children's MASH, Adult MASH and domestic abuse workers. The aim of the meeting is to identify risk and to put into place immediate safeguarding plans for the victim and the family. These meetings have been very successful in identifying unknown risk, formulating safeguarding plans and ensuring that the victim's voice is heard at an early stage. Children's MASH is notified of the cases being discussed at HRDA and an Assistant Team Manager will undertake research in order to be able to share with other partners and contribute to the decision making at the meeting. The HRDA meeting will consider cases that are new contacts/referrals as well as cases that are already open to Children's Services and have an allocated social worker.

Staffing

12. The staffing establishment for CRT is 20 CFSWs; it is generally not problematic to recruit to these posts. There is a wide range of experience within the current staff group including members of staff who have previously been police officers, youth workers and teachers. Given the volume of contacts and referrals the established staff team are currently supported by an extra five agency workers and some casual workers. There are some long-standing members of staff within the team however staff usually move onto other CSD posts after 2 -3 years for their own career development.
13. The staffing establishment for MASH is 17 qualified social workers, like other teams within Children's Services there is some reliance on agency social workers who cover for sickness absence, maternity leave, secondments and acting up and occasionally for vacancies until recruitment can take place. Currently there are 7 agency social workers within the MASH team with a recruitment campaign currently running.
14. All contacts and referrals managed by CRT/MASH are closely overseen by the management team which consists of 5.5 assistant team managers and 4 team managers.

15. Some of the factors that contribute to the challenges of retention of social workers in MASH are the lack of opportunities to undertake face to face work with children and families. During very busy periods it is also often difficult to enable staff to attend training courses and at times the flow of work is relentless.

OFSTED/Quality Assurance

16. In recognition of the fact that all Children's Services work commences in CRT/MASH, the service benefits from regular quality assurance through the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) who support with 4 multi agency MASH audits per year on specific themes. The audit panel always involves staff and managers from CRT/MASH and provide valuable learning opportunities. As well as learning opportunities the audits assist with OFSTED preparation. CRT/MASH are inspected by OFSTED both for the services provided for Hampshire and for the Isle of Wight. In the recent inspections for both local authorities OFSTED considered CRT/MASH to be strong, safe and efficient, providing a timely response to concerns and risks about children and families.

Front Door Review

17. As part of the wider transformation of Children's Services, the transformation team have undertaken a comprehensive review of CRT/MASH. This review was completed over several months considering contact/referral volumes, performance, staffing and processes within the service. The review was extremely useful and made a number of recommendations in respect of improving the service. Managers within CRT/MASH are working with the Service Development Team in order to implement these recommendations. This included initiatives such as automating referral feedback, working with police to reduce the number of 'unnecessary' police notifications, improving the interagency referral form and information on the website.

Conclusions

18. CRT/MASH are strong established teams forming the front door to Children's Services. All new Children's Services work starts within CRT/MASH and the team are managing high volumes of contacts and referrals.
19. Police and Health are co-located alongside MASH social workers and there is good interagency working with partners. It does however have to be acknowledged that pressure on partner resources does at times have a negative impact on Children's MASH. This is raised and challenged through appropriate channels such as Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.
20. Like other social work teams in Children's Services MASH does have some reliance on agency workers however there are current recruitment campaigns to try to reduce the number of agency workers.

21. CRT/MASH is considered to be a strong, safe and efficient service by OFSTED and this is supported by findings from multi agency audits.
22. The introduction of HRDA has been successful in providing a prompt and efficient safeguarding response to victims of high-risk domestic violence.
23. The recent review of the service has identified a number of improvements that could be made and managers within the service are working on these recommendations.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2 Equalities Impact Assessment

An equalities impact assessment was completed at the start of the service

Appendix 1 - Contact, Referral, Sources and Outcomes

January 2018 – November 2019

Contacts 2018	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of contacts on open cases	356	274	341	276	335	356	420	312	344	446	364	373
Number of contacts on new cases	6743	6279	7244	7109	7366	7410	8291	6597	7101	8308	8502	6572
Total	7099	6553	7585	7385	7701	7766	8711	6909	7445	8754	8866	6945

Contacts 2019	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Number of contacts on open cases	415	401	525	363	355	337	401	383	409	438	530
Number of contacts on new cases	7411	6782	7891	6932	7831	6893	8293	6368	7262	8803	7548
Total	7826	7183	8416	7295	8186	7230	8694	6751	7671	9241	8078

Contact Sources 2018	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Education	1397	1150	1680	1003	1287	1545	1249	96	1393	1515	1930	1424
Health	724	622	663	787	696	702	746	799	694	842	818	600
Police	3132	3011	3192	3397	3641	3288	3994	3328	2947	3534	3333	2667
Other	1490	1496	1709	1922	1742	1875	2302	2374	2067	2417	2421	1881
Total	6743	6279	7244	7109	7366	7410	8291	6597	7101	8308	8502	6572

Contact Sources 2019	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Education	1474	1333	1991	939	1607	1493	1232	82	1177	1744	1575
Health	778	700	797	1198	1205	1125	1547	1378	1324	1650	1331
Police	2911	2715	2866	3103	3067	2735	3433	3000	2997	3427	2984
Other	2248	2034	2237	1692	1952	1540	2081	1908	1764	1982	1658
Total	7411	6782	7891	6932	7831	6893	8293	6368	7262	8803	7548

Contact Outcomes 2018	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Closed	3514	3318	3765	3762	3886	3937	4280	3442	3786	4465	4317	3180
Progress to Referral	2120	2074	2423	2151	2441	2436	2883	2154	2269	2679	2820	2303
Other	1109	887	1056	1196	1039	1037	1128	1001	1046	1164	1365	1089
Percentage Resolved	69%	67%	67%	70%	67%	67%	65%	67%	68%	68%	67%	65%

Contacts Outcomes 2019	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Closed	3755	3082	3460	3358	3438	3302	4317	3790	4077	5257	4087
Progress to Referral	2238	2156	2507	2341	2660	2418	2946	2079	2295	2723	2570
Other	1418	1544	1924	1233	1733	1173	1030	499	890	823	891

Percentage Resolved	70%	68%	68%	66%	66%	65%	64%	67%	68%	69%	66%
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Referral Sources 2018	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Education	601	591	777	396	680	815	654	35	580	639	925	714
Health	418	318	381	399	425	351	399	372	316	402	394	325
Police	822	785	664	909	827	821	1032	886	686	928	762	721
Other	933	886	1050	998	1101	1272	1460	1372	1156	1278	1199	1002
Total	2774	2580	2872	2702	3033	3259	3545	2665	2738	3247	3280	2762

Referral Sources 2019	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Education	669	673	914	494	880	567	634	37	702	992	950
Health	317	301	351	559	541	414	722	686	654	677	586
Police	714	651	633	937	709	576	772	921	644	696	664
Other	1082	1037	1267	1015	1085	863	1317	1154	1076	1142	1115
Total	2782	2662	3165	3005	3215	2420	3445	2798	3076	3507	3315

Referral Outcomes 2018	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Closed	1542	1366	1520	1404	1498	1569	1722	1389	1368	1785	1560	1386
Other	77	86	107	83	113	113	198	162	291	187	182	139
Progressed to Assessment	1155	1128	1245	1215	1422	1577	1625	1114	1079	1275	1538	1237
S47	224	217	170	188	209	242	300	113	218	166	308	169
C&F	915	899	1049	995	1195	1301	1305	970	844	1089	1215	1055
Timeliness	85%	88%	93%	94%	83%	80%	74%	90%	75%	88%	87%	94%
Percentage Progressed to Assessment	42%	44%	43%	45%	47%	48%	46%	42%	39%	39%	47%	45%

Referral Outcomes 2019	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Closed	1416	1236	1585	1406	1580	1174	1678	1396	1561	1945	1626
Other	151	158	210	276	105	74	118	104	178	150	204
Progressed to Assessment	1215	1268	1370	1323	1530	1172	1649	1298	1337	1412	1485
S47	148	147	219	183	245	210	266	199	223	254	273
C&F	1058	1095	1123	1356	1088	1099	1132	1192	1114	1253	923
Timeliness	96%	95%	95%	93%	93%	87%	88%	93%	84%	91%	94%
Percentage Progressed to Assessment	44%	48%	43%	44%	48%	48%	48%	46%	43%	40%	45%