
People Services Scrutiny Committee – 10th March, 2016

Report of the Interim Chief Officer Children's Services

Update on the Development of the Dudley Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the People Services Scrutiny Committee members with an update on the development of the Dudley Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Background

2. In May 2015, professionals from across the safeguarding community in Dudley met and agreed to work together towards the development of a local MASH.
3. The aim of the MASH is to bring key professionals together to enable early, consistent and better quality information sharing, analysis and decision-making, to safeguard vulnerable children and young people. Information from different agencies will be collated within the MASH and used to decide what action to take, as a result, the agencies will be able to act quickly in a consistent and co-ordinated way, ensuring that vulnerable children and young people are kept safe and provided with the right level of support in a timely way.
4. The MASH Operations Group and Strategic Board have been meeting since 30th August 2015 and are leading on operationally and strategically co-ordinating the development and implementation of the MASH.

Update on Progress

5. In order to develop an effective and sustainable MASH, a number of key elements need to be in place. These include secure accommodation; robust information sharing protocols; a bespoke MASH ICT information management system; an effective communication and engagement strategy; a workforce development/training plan; and a set of revised policies and processes to inform how the MASH will operate. Local Authority officers from across Directorates have been actively involved in leading the work streams and the following information provides an update:
6. **Communications:** a communications plan has been produced in conjunction with communication leads from partner agencies. Whilst there is not a huge amount of information to share at this point in time, the focus has been on raising awareness that the MASH is a key development in Dudley's approach to safeguarding children. The MASH Board agreed to focus on publicising the development of the Single Point of Access which went live on 7th December. A set of Frequently Asked Questions has been developed and a page on the Council's Intranet has been set up.

7. **Accommodation:** the Single Point of Access and the MASH will be located within the same room in Corbyn Road. Therefore, work to date has focused on ensuring that the accommodation has been ready for the development of the Single Point of Access which went live on 7th December 2015. Discussions are now underway with corporate colleagues to ensure that plans are in place to ensure the space is ready for the MASH by April 2016. This will include moving a number of teams around the building and therefore logistically will require a great deal of planning. The CCG Safeguarding Team are also moving into Corbyn Road.
8. **Information Governance:** The IG work stream has good representation from all agencies. A joint ICT/IG workshop has taken place which considered the proposed MASH ICT System. The proposed system is an extension to the existing Children's Social Care System and therefore benefits from being an integrated package. Partner agencies were confident that the system would satisfy their ICT and IG requirements. A MASH Privacy Impact Assessment, Information Sharing Agreement and System Level Security Policy are being developed.
9. **ICT:** As outlined above, the Northgate MASH solution will be pursued to support the Dudley MASH. This is the most cost effective solution and integrates directly with the Children's Social Care System. Discussions have taken place with the London Borough of Havering who is using the Northgate system and whilst they are currently working with Northgate to update the way it operates, they are generally happy with the way it supports the work of their MASH. The majority of the work will take place in-house and it is anticipated that the system will be ready for go live in April.
10. **Agencies in the MASH:** The development of the Single Point of Access is the first stage of developing a successful MASH. The MASH will act as one of the exit routes from the Single Point of Access, where referrals have met or they are likely to meet the Social Care Threshold. Social Care and Early Help Staff in the Single Point of Access will also work as part of the MASH. In addition to this, there will be 2 Police Officers; 2 Housing Officers; a Probation Officer; and 2 representatives from Health. Representation from Education/schools is still to be determined. There is a risk that the timescales for recruitment and vetting of staff may mean that not all agencies will be in the MASH for April 2016.

Timescales

11. The target go live date for the MASH is April 2016. Following go live, Officers will work together to extend the MASH to vulnerable adults.

Finance

12. The funding of the MASH will need to be within existing Children's Services financial resources. The structure of the MASH may require existing budget to be re-aligned into a MASH service cost centre and this will be undertaken once the final operational details of the MASH are determined over the next few months.

Risks

13. There are a number of risks associated with the development and implementation of the MASH, these are regularly reviewed by the MASH Strategic Board. The main risks include:
- Agencies, in particular Health and Education, not agreeing to resource posts within the MASH.
 - Accommodation not being ready on time, due to the number of moves that are required to free up the space.
 - MASH ICT system not being built and ready in time for go live.
 - The timescales for the vetting process can take up to 12 weeks therefore this will impact on the go live date.

The MASH Operational Group meets fortnightly to ensure that action is in place to mitigate risks.

Law

14. Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 created a requirement for children's services to make suitable arrangements for co-operation between the relevant partners in order to improve the wellbeing of children in the authority's area. Statutory guidance for section 10 of the Act states good information sharing is key to successful collaborative working and arrangements under this section should ensure information is shared for strategic planning purposes and to support effective service delivery. To support this, a MASH Privacy Impact Assessment, Privacy Notice and Information Sharing Protocol have been produced.

Equality Impact

15. The MASH will ensure that there is a thorough and consistent approach to referral and assessment of safeguarding referrals, therefore it is not anticipated that the MASH will affect people differently or that the needs of certain groups will not be met.

Recommendations

16. Scrutiny are recommended to:
- Support the development and implementation of the MASH; and
 - Note progress to date and receive regular updates on implementation in order to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people in Dudley.



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List of Background Papers