

One team in one place

What is Northamptonshire MASH?

A Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a co-located (county-wide) team which brings together agencies and their information, in order to identify risks to and needs of children at the earliest possible point and respond with the most effective and joined up actions.

The MASH allows professionals to carry out joint, confidential screening so that vulnerable children are identified and are properly cared for and protected.

Children and young people come to our attention in a variety of ways.

This may be because:

- a parent or carer may want to request support directly
- a professional may feel a family need help or support
- a child or their family come into contact with the police
- a child tells someone about abuse either emotional, physical or sexual.

What is the aim of MASH?

The purpose of MASH is to make the right decisions for the right families at the right time. This in turn will ensure timely and necessary actions will improve the outcomes for vulnerable children.

Which agencies are part of MASH?

Children's Social Care	East Midlands Ambulance Service
Police	Fire and Rescue Service
Health	Domestic Abuse Advisor
Education	Early Help Team
Probation	Crime Reduction Initiative

How does it work?

Whenever anyone is worried about a child, for example a teacher or health visitor, they will make a referral to the MASH team.

Each case is assigned to a professional group within the MASH who will gather any information about the child/family as soon as possible.

A senior and experienced Social Work Practitioner will use the guidance of Thresholds and Pathways <https://www.northamptonshirecab.org.uk/social-care/how-to-make-an-online-referral/> to decide if the child's circumstances require transfer into the MASH or whether solutions could be identified with the Early Help provision and (the family) assigned to the Early Help Team.

What Happens Next?

Once information is gathered, a decision is made by MASH Partners and a Social Care Manager about the referral.

These will include one of the following:

- Case raises serious concerns or identifies complex needs and is passed to Children's Social Care
- Case does not raise serious concerns but it is assessed the family would benefit from some support from the Early Help Team
- The case has identified a child with additional needs which will be assessed and addressed through an Early Help Assessment.
- Case raises no concern and the child can be supported by universal services.

We will write to you and inform you about this referral.

Case Study: Self-referral

A self-referral was made by a parent expressing concerns about her own and her younger children's safety due to her eldest child 'kicking off' in the home. MASH police revealed that there had been many calls out to the home. School information showed that all of the children within the household are presenting with behavioural difficulties and on occasions had turned up to school with injuries.

The multi-agency approach enabled children's Social Care to immediately address the safeguarding issues.

Case Study: School referral

A school contacted MASH because they were concerned about a pupil who had poor school attendance. This has not been a problem in the past but the pupil's parents have just separated. Information gathered in the MASH showed that up until recently, the child had attended school regularly. He had recently been referred by the doctor to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as he has been having severe temper tantrums at home.

The MASH were able to ascertain quickly that there were no immediate safeguarding concerns and the family were passed onto the Early Help team to support the school in putting together a plan for the family.

Data Protection

The MASH team have a responsibility to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. By sharing your information we can ensure the best decision is made for your child and provide you with appropriate help and support when it is needed.

Information held by the MASH will be kept and processed securely, in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. It will only be shared with other practitioners and/or other agencies on a 'need to know' basis, either:

- Where there are believed to be child protection issues or
- Where information is required to ensure your child receives the appropriate assessment of services

If professionals are referring your child to the MASH team for advice and support, they will need to ask your permission first.

In cases where it is felt your child may require a social work assessment, this will be discussed with you. Your agreement to a referral will be actively sought, however professionals are able to refer your child without your permission if they have concerns that your child has suffered, or is likely to suffer harm.

Where professionals are referring your child to the MASH team because of child protection concerns, you will only be told about the referral beforehand if the professional is sure this would not increase the risk to your child.

Should you require further information about how your information is being held and processed by the MASH please contact the MASH on 0300 126 1000. The Information Sharing Agreement allows the sharing of information amongst agencies.

Case Study: Anonymous referral

An anonymous referral was received by the MASH from a neighbour concerned that a young child was being left unattended in the home for periods of time. Additional research within the MASH revealed that the parents have spoken to the Health Visitor and that they were struggling financially and needed to take extra shifts at work.

The multi-agency approach enabled Children's Social Care to immediately address the safeguarding issues and for Health to address the additional concerns.

Will I find out what is happening?

In most cases you will be contacted by the MASH team or service you have been referred to, who can update you on what action has been taken.

You can also contact the MASH team on 0300 126 1000 to find out about the referral. If your referral is progressed to children's social care, the social worker will contact you for a discussion or to arrange a time to meet with you and your family.

What to do if I am not happy?

If you are not happy about the way the MASH team deals with any referral about your family, please raise this first with the MASH Team on 0300 126 1000.

If you are still not happy, you can make a complaint by contacting the Customer Feedback team on 01604 363436.

Making children safer in Northamptonshire

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)



www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/

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Safeguarding Children Board

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Information for parents and carers

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