

Northumberland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Review Report: February 2019

Introduction

A finding of many serious case reviews has been poor information sharing between partner agencies. The ability to share information in a timely and effective manner to facilitate joint decision-making is crucial to providing a faster more coordinated approach to investigate reports of abuse or neglect of a child or adult. Multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) are designed to facilitate information sharing and decision-making on a multi-agency basis.

On 6th February 2018 the Northumberland MASH was launched, with the co-location of staff from Children's Services, Adult Services and Northumbria Police, based at Foundry House.

This report will review the developments of the model over the past 12 months, considering feedback from the partnership. Recommendations will be made to enhance the delivery of the service further.

Overview of developments

Through the direction of the strategic group and operational exploration within the design group, the MASH model has developed over the last 12 months. A timeline of key events is presented within Appendix A.

Northumberland were the first area command, within Northumbria Police, to establish an all age MASH, which is considered best practice. The positive attributes of the model are recognised in the multi-disciplinary triage meetings, the swiftness and availability of staff to hold case discussions and the integration of core staff within one location. As a result attempts have been made to mirror Northumberland's model across neighbouring Local Authorities. There is currently a Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) inspection on-going which will consider MASH models across the five North East Local Authorities, and will be a useful benchmark to compare the Northumberland model with its neighbouring counterparts.

Ofsted completed a focused visit to Children's Services Front Door, in February 2018. Whilst the virtual MASH arrangements with child safeguarding health were acknowledged, a physical presence was considered more beneficial. This has been implemented and a nurse advisor has been located within Foundry House, since October 2018. Benefits of these arrangements have included quicker responses from health to research requests and consistent feedback to community services, both of which support a timely and efficient response to safeguarding concerns.

Overall, the alignment is seen to be positive and effective in terms of integration, information sharing and providing consistency within decision making.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) completed an inspection between September and November 2018. It was felt that Northumberland Fire and Rescue staff had mixed understandings of vulnerability and safeguarding concerns. Using the networks established within the MASH, the service responded with increased safeguarding training, including a specific focus on understanding the referral pathway for concerns about a child or an adult, via OneCall.

The MASH was considered as part of a practice day within Children's Service, in December 2018, which highlighted some areas of strength and well as areas to develop. Thresholds were recognised as consistent and appropriate with evidence of multi-agency contributions within cases, as well as supporting swift and effective strategy discussions that led to agreed immediate interventions and safety plans. The benefit of an education representative was also highlighted as having improved links with schools.

LiquidLogic, the recording system and host of the MASH module, has been piloted throughout the 12 month period. Work has been completed to ensure the exchange of information between LiquidLogic and Swift, the adult recording system, is accurate. LiquidLogic has been observed to be slow, at times, hindering case recording and the timeliness of decision making, in addition to the duplication of tasks for staff. Amendments have now been made to reduce these duplications and to streamline processes. These changes will be reviewed again in March 2019 and a second application will be to improve the speed of the system.

Partners have gradually been aligned to the MASH over the 12 month period. Building on the initial co-location of partners, physical arrangements are now in place with child safeguarding health and education being located at Foundry House. Promoting the integration of staff across these partner agencies has been crucial to the models success, which is supported by the use of multi-agency "pods", within the MASH room. This has fostered closer working relationships, improved communication and supported a broader understanding of the disciplines. Virtual arrangements are also in place with:

- The Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)
- The National Probation Service
- Housing
- Public Protection
- Fire and Rescue Service
- North East Ambulance Service (NEAS)

- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Northumbria Tyne and Wear (NTW)

Alignments with Housing, DWP, NEAS, Public Protection and the Fire and Rescue Service are relatively new. Whilst MASH requests have been low, their alignment has reinforced awareness of safeguarding procedures within each agency, strengthening networks with partners and increased awareness of the OneCall system.

The benefit of the partners' alignment to the MASH was recognised by Sir Tom Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary. He described OneCall as not only giving the public a better service, but also helping partners become more efficient by working more closely together. The report states "this is a commendable achievement which should be adopted throughout the country." Whilst alignments are now in place, these relationships need to be developed to ensure information sharing is fully utilised. Further work may be required to raise the awareness of the partnership and the scope of information it holds.

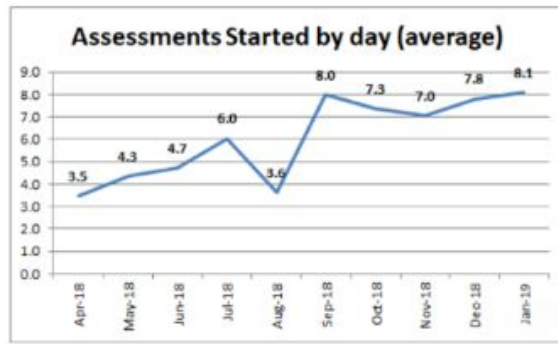
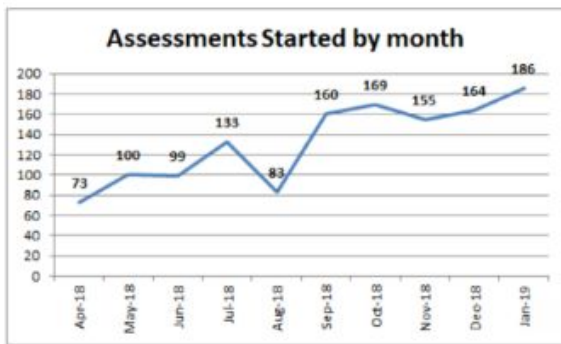
As part of the vision, it is envisaged that Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) referrals could be managed via the MASH, with the representation of an independent domestic violence advocate (IDVA). This reflects the impact of domestic violence encompassing children, adults and families and the relevant partners being present. This continues to be explored by senior managers.

An initial capacity and demand review has been completed. Positive attributes of the model included more efficient collaborative working and that the pathways to share information provides a more consistent service for children, adults and families. As the model is still in its infancy it was acknowledged that a full understanding of the demand and capacity would be limited at this stage, but it is forecast that the model is likely to result in savings for services whilst providing a consistent and effective resource. In the absence of other data regarding time and cost efficiencies, the initial review will serve as a benchmark for any future reviews that are completed.

Performance

It was anticipated that 90 percent of MASH cases would be regarding children and 10 percent for adults. Between 6th February 2018 and 5th February 2019 there have been 1597 MASH assessments started; 1381 for children (86.4%) and 216 for adults (13.5%).

The graphs below show the number of MASH assessments started; this has gradually increased since the launch until August 2018, before averaging at 171 cases per month, or 7-8 assessments per day.



Data from LiquidLogic regarding partner contributions to MASH assessments during the first 12 months, is shown below:

Partner agency	Children's Services	Adult Services
Police	92%	67%
Adult Safeguarding	21%	25%
Safeguarding Health	43%	1%
Education	29%	n/a
Probation Service	13%	1%
Early help	44%	1%

Since education aligned to the MASH in September 2018, they have been involved in 52% cases. Likewise since October 2018, child safeguarding health has been involved with 94% cases.

There are reports of low research requests to some partners, which may be due to the nature of the concern or further work being required to raise the awareness of information partners hold. Additionally, there are some queries about the accuracy of data relating to the number of research requests delegated to partners within LiquidLogic. This could be due to recording issues, but there is an identified gap in data regarding partners contribution for those that do not return information via LiquidLogic. Without this, a full analysis of partners contributions is limited.

Performance data is in its infancy and continues to be developed to understand the efficiency and impact of the model. It is acknowledged that collating performance management data is crucial to driving the model forward; however this relies on the system being set up to extract the required data, the performance team

understanding the systems and processes involved, and staff inputting accurate information and navigating the system effectively. This needs to be explored further.

Summary

Since the launch of the MASH, the model has developed to incorporate ten partner agencies, with physical and virtual arrangements in place. There have been consistent reports from partners and external visitors of positive partner integration and more robust information sharing, both of which benefit a timely and efficient response to safeguarding concerns. The journey has not been without its challenges regarding the IT systems and extracting accurate data, however performance management is developing. Extracting accurate data about the MASH is a working progress, especially as the team is continuing to expand and processes embed.

Overall, this is a positive picture, however the below recommendations would support the model to grow and develop further:

- A review of the service specification to consider if LiquidLogic is meeting the needs of the service and if other platforms need to be considered.
- Whilst partnership alignments are now in place, these need to be developed further to support networking opportunities, raising awareness of the scope of information partners hold, and to explore any operational issues in a timely manner. This can be achieved within the design group.
- The use of video conferencing to be integral to the MASH model, especially ensuring the involvement of rural teams and professionals from different sites are involved.
- Further analysis of the MASH performance data is required, specifically to highlight partnership involvement and MASH outcomes. This may include a review of the MASH assessment form, how information is recorded into the system and how data is extracted. The ICS support team should be involved in this.
- Consistent representations from all agencies at the strategic group to ensure decisions that are made about the model are reflective of the whole partnership.
- A further capacity and demand review to be completed, which will be compared to the baseline data and findings in the initial review.

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