

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

17 December 2013

Subject: Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Cabinet Member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Children’s Services

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

The vision for the Wiltshire MASH is to initially provide a central point of contact for public and professionals for children’s safeguarding concerns. The co-located team of professionals from the core agencies of children’s social care, the police and community health services will deliver an integrated service, including the provision of information, advice and signposting to appropriate services. It will utilise agreed processes for analysing and assessing risk, based on the fullest information known across agencies, to determine if the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. It will also maintain a confidential record system of activity and disseminate suitable information to the area teams in children’s social care or other agencies for action.

Whilst the MASH is planned to include a variety of agencies it was decided that a phased implementation approach would be adopted. Children’s social care, community health and the police will co-locate and pilot the MASH initially so that the processes, working practices and governance arrangements can be robustly tested and refined. Other agencies will be included in subsequent phases and although a variety of partners have been identified in the scoping stages, the exact composition will be trialled during the pilot stage to target those with whom the MASH mainly interacts and where most benefits from partnership approaches can be achieved.

The implementation plan is as follows:

| Description | Timescale |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Phase 1 – Social Care and Police move to County Hall | December 2013 |
| Phase 2 – Co-location (Health & Education) – Pilot Launch | January 2014 |
| MASH Launch | April 2014 |
| MASH Phase 3 – Potential addition of services/agencies | April 2014 |
| MASH Phase 4 – Potential addition of further services/agencies | July 2014 |

The MASH will be located in new County Hall in Trowbridge. The office accommodation has been prepared with appropriate IT provision to ensure that it is suitable for the MASH to allow all agencies in the MASH to access their information systems so that early information sharing is possible. An information sharing and governance protocol has been prepared alongside the working processes and procedures. A joint induction, training and culture development programme is also being devised. Partners are investigating the provision of an information management IT solution for the MASH to assist with workflow, case load management and performance reporting. A communications strategy is in place.

Proposal(s)

Members are asked to:

Note the positive progress towards the implementation of a Wiltshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), reflecting the priority given to safeguarding across the Council, the Police, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Children's Community Health provider (Great Western NHS Hospital Trust).

Reason for Proposal

There are a number of significant benefits associated with the establishment of a Wiltshire MASH.

The MASH will:

- provide a faster, more co-ordinated and consistent response to safeguarding through improved quality of services and information sharing between partners
- will assist in the early identification of safeguarding concerns as a result of improved inter agency working arrangements, closer partnership working and clearer accountability
- improve the planning and management of risk assessment and investigation
- improve the process of accessing services and expertise with clear guidance and support provided to the person raising a concern.

Carolyn Godfrey
Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

21 November 2013

Subject: Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Cabinet Member: Councillor Laura Mayes – Children’s Services

Key Decision: No

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members on the implementation of a Wiltshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Background

2. The protection of our most vulnerable people, whether they be children or adults, is a fundamental responsibility of all public agencies. There is a key acknowledgement that services engaged in the safeguarding of children need to work together incorporating a coherent and structured approach to keeping children and young people safe.
3. Poor information sharing between agencies is consistently highlighted in serious case reviews and by Professor Eileen Munro following her review of Child Protection (2011) and within her report, ‘A Child Centred Approach’.
4. In 2013, revised statutory guidance ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ was published and proposes that closer professional integration should be underpinned, where appropriate, by the co-location of services on single sites who collaborate towards prevention and early intervention.
5. In terms of decision making, professionals need to be able to make timely, proportionate and informed decision in both reducing and mitigating risk and harm to vulnerable children and young people.
6. Underpinning a multi-agency approach is the learning opportunities for organisations engaged in safeguarding and the development of preventative safeguarding strategies.
7. The MASH will support a timely, coherent and unified multi-agency response avoiding agencies acting alone in silos and undertaking interventions without an analysis of all available and relevant information.
8. The evaluation of similar developments within other Local Authorities indicates that a MASH breaks down barriers between organisations engaged in safeguarding work and improves outcomes for vulnerable

children. Multi-agency working has been shown to be an effective way of addressing the wide range of cross cutting risk factors that can contribute to poorer outcomes for children and young people.

Main Considerations for the Council

9. The vision for the Wiltshire MASH is to initially provide a central point of contact for public and professionals for children's safeguarding concerns. The co-located team of professionals from the core agencies of children's social care, the police and community health services will deliver an integrated service, including the provision of information, advice and signposting to appropriate services. It will utilise agreed processes for analysing and assessing risk, based on the fullest information known across agencies, to determine if the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. It will also maintain a confidential record system of activity and disseminate suitable information to the area teams in children's social care or other agencies for action.
10. Whilst the MASH could include a variety of agencies, it was decided that a phased implementation approach would be adopted. Children's social care, community health and the police, will co-locate and pilot the MASH initially so that the processes, working practices and governance arrangements can be robustly tested and refined. Other agencies will be included in subsequent phases and although a variety of partners have been identified in the scoping stages, the exact composition will be trialled during the pilot stage to target those with whom the MASH mainly interacts and where most benefits from partnership approach can be achieved.
11. The intended implementation plan is as follows:

| Description | Timescale |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Phase 1 – Social Care and Police move to County Hall | December 2013 |
| Phase 2 – Co-location (Health & Education) – Pilot Launch | January 2014 |
| MASH Launch | April 2014 |
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12. Following a review of available accommodation, suitable office space has been allocated within the new County Hall for the MASH. Work has been undertaken to ensure that the layout, IT provision and security is conducive to a MASH environment. The office could potentially provide accommodation for up to 60 staff but initially it will be set up to provide 45 work stations. Secure video conferencing and multi-telephone conferencing facilities will be provided to promote inter-agency working and information sharing. Additionally, the office space will meet the

security requirements to enable the Police National Computer (PNC), Police National Database (PND) and the Violent and Sex Offenders Register (VISOR) information systems to be accessed from the MASH. This will save time and resources compared to the current systems.

13. Each of the partner agencies has identified their initial staffing requirements for the MASH. A work-stream has also been established to implement a joint induction, training and culture programme for the MASH to promote inter-agency working and understanding.
14. Other Local Authority MASH arrangements have highlighted the importance of having robust information sharing and governance arrangements in place. The Wiltshire team has identified the need for an additional agreement, over and above those currently in existence to ensure that information is shared in compliance with relevant legislation. This has been prepared and training for MASH staff and partners will be provided.
15. Clear processes and guidance are needed for the MASH. These have been developed through a series of workshops focusing on first point of contact, child protection investigations, information and advice and domestic abuse. These processes will be trialled through the re-location and pilot phases and refined as necessary to ensure best practices are adopted and implemented.
16. Communication of the MASH concept, ethos, processes and benefits will also be fundamental to its success. A communications strategy has been devised and targeted marketing and communication initiatives are being planned at key stages to facilitate this.
17. The partners are also investigating the implementation of an information portal IT system to better manage the workflow, provide a central repository for the information collated for specific safeguarding concerns and deliver performance management information for the MASH. There are a number of packages commercially available and a multi-disciplinary team are considering these with the intention of having a suitable system in place for when the MASH launches in April 2014.
18. There are a number of significant benefits associated with the establishment of a Wiltshire MASH.

The MASH will:

- provide a faster, more co-ordinated and consistent response to safeguarding through improved quality of services and information sharing between partners
- will assist in the early identification of safeguarding concerns as a result of improved inter agency working arrangements, closer partnership working and clearer accountability
- improve the planning and management of risk assessment and investigation

- improve the process of accessing services and expertise with clear guidance and support provided to the person raising a concern.

Safeguarding Considerations

19. The MASH concept is designed to improve the partnership's ability to safeguard children and young people. This will be achieved through the improved information sharing between partners, improved inter-agency working arrangements, including closer partnership working and clearer accountability, and more consistent application of threshold decisions for safeguarding.
20. The MASH will also provide a central point of contact for safeguarding concerns ensuring that these are assessed and prioritised in a timely manner. Additionally it will improve the planning and management of risk assessment and investigation.
21. The MASH is an integral part of Wiltshire Council's Improvement Plan for Safeguarding Children and Young People. It's development and operation will also be monitored closely by the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board.
22. Within the project, consideration has been given to the training requirements of the staff working within the MASH to ensure best practices are adopted and members are aware of their roles, responsibilities and remit. It will also be necessary to engage wider partners and stakeholders so that they are aware of the new operating practices and understand how these may impact upon current procedures within their individual organisations.

Public Health Implications

23. The MASH will enable the early identification of concerns with a clear focus on timely help, support and intervention related to safeguarding and well-being. The MASH will help to prevent the escalation of issues through targeted support and investigation into the effects and implications of domestic abuse on children and young people. The multi-agency approach to safeguarding and assessments will assist in the prevention of foetal and neonatal issues by ensuring that appropriate strategies are in place to protect the unborn child.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

24. The co-location of children's social care, police and community health staff in County Hall will enable the Council's energy consumption to be marginally reduced through the vacation and disposal of The Cedars in Devizes. The Cedars is an old building and a much larger space than the team currently require. The newly refurbished County Hall will be a much more economic building to operate than The Cedars with respect to its carbon footprint.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

25. The MASH will promote equality through the more consistent application of threshold decisions for safeguarding children and young people.
26. The MASH will also enhance customer experiences through the creation of a central point of contact for safeguarding concerns. This will minimise the risk of customers receiving different information or advice.

Risk Assessment

27. A number of risks have been identified relating to the establishment of a Wiltshire MASH. The primary risk is the commitment, engagement and support of this new operating model. Currently this risk is low as the Council and police and community health colleagues are fully committed to the MASH, however this will need to be monitored as the MASH develops. Regular communications will be imperative with partner agencies and commitment will be re-affirmed at periodic intervals as the MASH expands.
28. The identification and establishment of suitable operating processes and systems for the Wiltshire MASH will be fundamental to its success and ability to deliver the benefits anticipated. A number of process workshops have been held to develop these and the implementation plan provides sufficient opportunity for testing and refinement during the pilot phase. The processes and systems will also be further developed as the MASH expands and it is envisaged that this will be a continual process once the MASH becomes 'business as usual'.
29. A further risk identified as a result of the implementation of the Wiltshire MASH relates to information sharing between the partner agencies. A requirement for an additional protocol for the MASH has been identified and this has been prepared utilising other Local Authority examples as a template. It will further be tested through scenario planning to ensure that clear guidance is provided. Once produced, training and support for MASH personnel will be available to ensure that the information sharing procedures are fully understood.
30. The final key risk that has been identified relates to staffing the Wiltshire MASH. The people operating the service will be fundamental to its success. Partners need to ensure that the roles are accurately defined and that individuals with the right skills, competence and attitudes are appointed. Commonalities are being identified and a joint training and culture programme will be put in place prior to the MASH being launched. Full funding for the social care staffing establishment is still to be finalised through the Council's budget setting process. The mitigation to this specific risk is that staffing levels would be reviewed or resource moved from other areas within the service to prioritise the MASH.

Financial Implications

31. The majority of expenditure within Wiltshire's MASH relates to staff costs. Each agency has identified its initial staffing requirements and the police and community health services have confirmed funding is available for these positions.
32. For 2014/15, the funding contribution required for the current proposed staffing structure from each agency is as follows:

| Agency | Contribution |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Children's Social Care | £828,300 |
| Police | £423,400 |
| Community Health | £50,000 |
| Total | £1,301,700 |

33. Of the total Council contribution for staffing costs £586,900 is to be met from existing budgets with staff transferring across in to the MASH with their associated costs. Expenditure currently exceeds the base budget due to the level of safeguarding activity. £241,400 is still to be finalised within the base budget as part of the budget setting process for 2014/15. Across Children's Services savings proposals are being identified in order to fund growth requirements for 2014/15, including the staffing costs required for the MASH.
34. The additional refurbishment, layout and IT provision for the MASH office accommodation is projected to cost £24,178 and the costs will be met in the current financial year. Wiltshire Police have confirmed that this will be funded from within existing partnership allocations. Ongoing facilities management and IT support costs will be apportioned in accordance with the Joint Transformation Plan agreement between Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Council which outlines a standard approach to apportionment of costs between organisations. The council contribution to the ongoing costs is to be met from within existing FM and IT budgets as part of the overall running costs of County Hall.
35. Additional costs will be incurred for communications and marketing activity associated with the implementation of the Wiltshire MASH. These costs will be funded from existing corporate budget allocations.
36. The partners are also considering the implementation of an information portal IT system for the MASH. Initial indications illustrate that this could have an initial cost of between £50,000 and £70,000 with an ongoing annual maintenance cost of between £10,000 and £15,000. Wiltshire Police will contribute the remainder, £15,822, of the partnership allocated funding for this purpose. Whilst a contribution will be sought from Health, it is anticipated that the balance will be funded by the Council through reprioritisation of resources from within the existing ICT budget.

A full business case will be developed, including costs, prior to any decision to implement an information portal IT system.

Legal Implications

37. The information sharing and governance arrangements for the MASH are crucial to ensure that data protection and human rights legislation are adhered to. Information governance leads from each agency are working together to prepare the MASH protocol and legal assistance will be sought.
38. Staff recruitment policies, guidance and employment law will be followed when populating the MASH structure.

Options Considered

39. Do Nothing
The Council and its partners could continue to utilise existing systems, processes and working arrangements for the assessment and handling of safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people. However the considerable benefits of more integrated working, particularly in relation to safeguarding outcomes for children and young people, would not be realised.
40. 'Big Bang' Implementation
There are a number of different models in operation around the UK for multi agency safeguarding hubs. The partners involved vary greatly and seem to be based on local requirements and working relationships. Wiltshire has identified a variety of partners and agencies that could be involved in the MASH and have considered whether it should deliver a service for all vulnerable people, children and young people, or adults. An option which was considered was to involve all partners and agencies from the outset and also to provide a safeguarding hub for vulnerable people. Upon reflection and further consideration, the risk to a 'big bang' implementation was felt to be too great as it would be a major change to working practices, management and the scope for failure was too great. Therefore, this option has also been discounted.
41. Phased Approach
The final option which was considered was to implement the Wiltshire MASH utilising a phased approach. This would involve the MASH being launched initially with core partner agencies, i.e. the police, children's social care and community health services, and then once this is operating successfully, engage further partners and agencies. Eventually, it could potentially be expanded so that it provides a service for all vulnerable people and not just children and young people. A phased approach enables the systems and processes to be tested as the MASH concept is embedded. The gradual expansion in a measured fashion also ensures that service delivery is not compromised and safeguarding concerns continue to be dealt with effectively in a timely manner. As a result, this

was the preferred option for implementation.

Conclusions

42. The implementation of a Wiltshire MASH will provide a central point of contact for public and professionals for safeguarding concerns. The co-located team of professionals from core agencies will deliver an integrated service, including the provision of information, advice and signposting to appropriate services. It will utilise agreed processes for analysing and assessing risk, based on the fullest information picture, to determine if the vulnerable child or young person is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. It will also maintain a confidential record system of activity and disseminate suitable information to the area teams in children's social care or other agencies for action.

43. There are a number of significant benefits associated with the establishment of a Wiltshire MASH.

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44. Members are asked to:

Note the positive progress towards the implementation of a Wiltshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), reflecting the priority given to safeguarding across the Council, the Police, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Children's Community Health provider (Great Western NHS Hospital Trust).

Carolyn Godfrey
Corporate Director

Report Author: Terence Herbert
Associate Director, Children's Social Care

Date of report: 17 December 2013

Background Papers

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: NONE