

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) FAQs

What is the MASH?

The MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) is a partnership between Suffolk County Council (Adult and Children's Services), Suffolk NHS, Suffolk Police, Suffolk Youth Offending Service, District and Borough Council Housing Services and Probation working together to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Why was the MASH introduced?

A recurring learning point from reviews of serious safeguarding incidents across the country has been the importance of having effective information sharing and close working arrangements between relevant agencies. The MASH is an effective way for organisations to make improvements to the information sharing in a confidential environment. The MASH model had been strongly endorsed by the OFSTED report 'Good Practice by Local Safeguarding Boards' and 'The Munro Review of Child Protection'. The Care Act 2014 draft guidance also highlights a MASH which includes adult safeguarding as best practise.

How many staff work in the MASH?

There are approximately 60 staff from across Suffolk County Council Children and Adult Services, the Police, Health, Mental Health, Youth Offending, Housing and Probation

Are these new resources?

All the partner agencies involved in the MASH have a role in safeguarding children and adults. The MASH brings together these resources into a single unit to more effectively share relevant information and to co-ordinate a proportionate response. Agencies have provided additional resources in order to resource the MASH.

Where is the MASH based?

The majority of staff will be based at Landmark House, Ipswich including Suffolk County Council Children and Adult Services, Police and, Health. Housing, Probation and Youth Offending staff will work from their existing locations.

How long has the MASH been operational?

The MASH has been operational since Autumn 2014.

How will personal and sensitive information be kept secure?

All agencies involved are very conscious that information sharing must be proportionate, secure and kept confidential. An information sharing agreement has been agreed between agencies to support this. The MASH itself is separate from operational social care teams. The staff in the MASH will all have had appropriate employment checks and specific information sharing and data protection training. A secure information system called Guardian is used to draw together relevant information from the MASH Partners and also from other relevant

organisations including schools and early years settings. Sensitive information will remain in the confidential environment of the MASH where only those who actually need to know get to see the information.

Will I be told that there is a safeguarding concern about my child?

Yes. Usually you will be told at the time the concern is raised. If the safeguarding concern has been made by a professional, for example a social worker or a teacher, they will tell you what their concerns are and may ask your permission to contact us.

Can information be shared without my permission?

Yes. Information may be shared without your permission when someone is being harmed or may be harmed in the future and when the information may help to stop or solve a crime.

What happens when an enquiry is made about a child?

Partners in the MASH will share information to decide if: the child or young person has been harmed or could be harmed in the future and if the child or young person or you would benefit from support from other people who help children and families.

What happens after the safeguarding concern about a child?

If the child or young person is thought to have been harmed or could be harmed in the future, we will refer them to Suffolk County Council's Social Care team. Information will also be given to the Police if it is necessary to help stop or solve a crime. If the child or young person has not been harmed but we think they or you would benefit from extra help, then their name, address, reason for the enquiry and outcome will be passed onto the most appropriate service so the appropriate support can be provided. We will also notify you and where appropriate the child or young person, explaining the outcome of the safeguarding concern.

How will my information be used?

Your information will only be used to decide whether you or someone else is being harmed or may be harmed in the future, if you or your family would benefit from help and support, if a crime has been committed or could be committed in the future. Your information will be held in a safe place and will not be shared with other people unless they have a legal power to see it.

Can I see what is written about me?

Yes. The Data Protection Act 1998 lets you ask for a copy of the information held about you. If you would like to request this, contact Suffolk County Council. Further information is available via the county council's website.

REMEMBER: If you are concerned about a child, young person or vulnerable adult and want to speak to someone, contact Customer First on 0808 800 4005 (free from landlines and most mobiles).