

**TO: THE EXECUTIVE
17 NOVEMBER 2015**

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A BRACKNELL FOREST MULTI-AGENCY
SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)
Director of Children, Young People & Learning**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To up date on the proposal to implement a Bracknell Forest Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and seek endorsement for its establishment.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The failure of agencies to work together effectively to safeguard children and young people has been highlighted in numerous serious case reviews. A key recommendation from the Munro Review and other reviews, especially those linked with child sexual exploitation has focused on agencies not sharing information effectively. For this reason multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH's) are being rolled out across the country.
- 2.2 The Thames Valley Police (TVP) wanted to create two MASH's in Berkshire at Slough and Reading and provide the other four Local Authorities in Berkshire with a Referral Centre. Bracknell Forest was keen to work on this proposal, but RBWM would not agree and instead offered to fund a police officer to be based in a RBWM MASH. RBWM claimed that if children were safer with a MASH then that is what they would have. This led to discussions with Berkshire Leaders and Chief Executives. The RBWM decision meant that the other three LAs (Wokingham, West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest) reconsidered their positions, and agreement was reached with TVP that to develop MASHs along the lines of the RBWM model on an individual basis the feasibility of each LA paying for a TVP officer for three years needed to be looked at. This arrangement has been agreed in principle and TVP has been working on the basis that this is the new arrangement.
- 2.3 TVP is no longer planning the development of a referral centre. Since the agreement with RBWM TVP have been meeting regularly with all six LA's to plan how individual MASH's would operate in their area. It will not be possible for BF to have a different arrangement as TVP will not be centrally located. TVP are planning to place their referral centre staff into each LA and to advertise and recruit to these additional posts.
- 2.4 This report therefore recommends that BF implement a local MASH, sets out the reasons for this and the alternatives, details the MASH processes, includes the setting up of a MASH Project Board and the expected staffing requirements, accommodation and ICT. There are a range of papers that cover the PID, MASH processes in detail, Terms of Reference for the MASH Project Board, Accommodation and ICT requirements and a Risk Assessment. Appendix A attached sets out the costs including staffing for the three year agreement.
- 2.5 MASH will take all the new safeguarding contacts and referrals made to the Local Authority. Checks with other agencies will be made in line with agreed Berkshire wide timescales. It is expected that the quality of referrals to Children's Social Care (CSC) will improve as the referral will have extra information from a variety of sources obtained by the MASH. The extra information obtained at referral stage will mean

Unrestricted

that some referrals can be sent straight to Tier 2 rather than as referrals to social care. This will ensure that CSC referrals and assessments are targeted at the most needy families.

- 2.6 Performance targets will be set as part the implementation plan.
- 2.7 CSC will provide the majority of staffing required for the MASH but a MASH manager based full-time in the MASH room is essential for its success. The proposal is to convert one of the new Social Worker posts into an Assistant Team Manager.
- 2.8 Five working groups have been created under the Project Board to plan the implementation and a part-time (11 hours a week) Project Manager has been appointed via a secondment.

The five working groups are;

 - Business processes including data collection
 - Information sharing
 - IT infrastructure and systems
 - Communication
 - Accommodation.
- 2.9 If CMT and Elected Members agree with the plan to implement a MASH it is anticipated that it will 'Go Live' from May 2016.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **The Executive formally endorses the proposed implementation of a MASH in Bracknell Forest.**
- 3.2 **The MASH funding proposal is included in the budget plans.**

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The need for effective multi-agency working and information sharing in order to secure improved safeguarding outcomes is clearly stated in a number of reviews, policy documentation and statutory guidance. To achieve greater multi agency information sharing MASH have been implemented across the Country.
- 4.2 At the time of a national review 26 of the 37 local authorities in scope, said that they had multi-agency models in place at the time of interview (between January and April 2013). (Multi Agency Working and Information Sharing Project Final report July 2014). Since 2013 many more have been established.
- 4.3 According to the Office of Children's Commissioner's –Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups effective multi-agency working needs to become more widespread.
- 4.4 The Children's Commissioner's 2013 [Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups](#) found that both police and local authorities still identified the inability to share information as a key barrier to safeguarding children from sexual exploitation. The report cited MASH as an encouraging development, combining the expertise and resources of several bodies in order to identify children at risk of sexual exploitation. This co-ordination was identified as particularly important for children and young

people who face several different risks. The inquiry found that: in 2013 23% of LSCBs reported having a MASH in their area. 18% had one under development

- 4.5 MASH are demonstrating benefits to both children and to Local Authorities. The five other Local Authorities in Berkshire are implementing MASH over the next year and Bracknell-Forest needs to be part of these arrangements ensuring that children and families in the Bracknell Forest area receive the same level of service as others in Berkshire.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 There is no workable alternative. Thames Valley Police (TVP) who currently supplies the majority of referrals to Duty and Assessment Teams across Berkshire have agreed to support MASH across the six unitary authorities. If BF continued with its present arrangements i.e. continuing with a Children's Duty and Assessment Team, TVP would not support this by providing different arrangements for one authority.
- 5.2 **Do nothing:** this is not a viable option as TVP will not now be developing a referral centre.
- 5.3 **Do minimum:** a minimal change is not viable given the premises and ICT issues, the need to recruit staff and the need to redesign the deployment of current police, as well as Bracknell Forest and partner staffing resources to achieve the necessary change.
- 5.4 **A Co-located MASH arrangement:** will deliver the full benefits of a MASH.

6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

6.1 Background

- 6.1.1 The need for agencies to work more closely together is widely accepted. The failure of agencies to work together effectively to safeguard children and young people has been highlighted in numerous serious case reviews. The challenge for statutory safeguarding agencies, of having a joined up picture of information and ensuring an effective coordinated response to concerns, has been subject to persistent debate over the past few years.
- 6.1.2 For this reason multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) are being rolled out across the country. A MASH co-locates a whole range of agencies (or some can be virtual) , including police, local authority children's social care, education, probation and health staff, to share information, spot emerging problems early and share decision making. Risks to children and vulnerable adults can be identified at the earliest possible opportunity and a coordinated, effective and timely response be initiated, resulting in improved outcomes. The final decision as to the next steps with cases lies with the Local Authority.
- 6.1.3 The Munro review of child protection highlighted the value of co-located multi-agency teams dealing with referrals and decision making. MASH is singled out as good

practice, with early evaluation showing improved decision making and outcomes for children.

- 6.1.4 The original plan for Berkshire was for Reading and Slough to have a full MASH and the other four LA to share a Referral Centre. RBWM did not agree with this plan and insisted on a full MASH on the basis that children would be safer with a MASH, and there was considerable local media coverage at the time. In response the TVP stated that they could not afford staffing for six MASH, RBWM therefore offered to pay for their TVP MASH staff. This then placed the remaining three LA (Wokingham, West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest) in a difficult place as in effect any other delivery model than a MASH had now been ruled out, and in discussion with the Leaders and Chief Executives together with TVP they determined in principle that each LA would contribute funding to TVP for a three year period. It is on this basis that the proposals have been developed and TVP has committed to establish the MASH model across Berkshire.

6.2 MASH Process

- 6.2.1 The MASH will take all new contacts which are currently sent to the Duty and Assessment Team and will make more thorough checks with a variety of agencies on many of them, subject to agreed criteria. These very thorough checks, extending MASH enquiries to a number of agencies for a greater number of children, with tight timescales to monitor, will be labour intensive and will require dedicated staff solely focused on MASH work. It must be noted that high risk child protection work, which need an urgent response, will go straight to the Duty and Assessment Team.
- 6.2.2 MASH checks/enquiries will need to be completed in line with RAG ratings agreed with the other Berkshire MASH. Red responses to be received in 4 hours, Amber in 48 hours, Green in 72 hours. The following are examples of referrals that that would be rated Red/Green/Amber.

Red	Amber	Green
CP referrals	Domestic abuse	Minor concerns on a repeated basis
Registered sex offenders	Substance misuse	General concerns about parenting
CSE	Missing	Re-referrals

- 6.2.3 Currently the Duty and Assessment Team do not undertake any checks on some contacts, beyond speaking to parents, and the majority of checks made with agencies are with one agency only. Although a decision is needed on contacts to the team within 24 hours of the contact being made, agencies/parents can take some time to respond to the Duty and Assessment Team's checks with some contacts taking up to a week to conclude. The MASH will ensure that more thorough checks are undertaken in a more timely manner.
- 6.2.4 It is hard to predict the volume of work in a Bracknell Forest MASH as the number of contacts may increase with a MASH in place, as has happened in some other Local Authorities, or it may remain broadly the same. If better quality information is obtained at the 'front door' to Children's Social Care it will mean that more families that need an assessment are assessed in a more timely way and appropriate support /interventions offered.

Unrestricted

- 6.2.5 If after gaining all possible information the case meets a Tier 3 service, a referral will be made to the Duty and Assessment Team to carry-out an assessment. As stated previously, child protection concerns will automatically go to the Duty and Assessment Team.

Numbers of contacts to CSC over the last 2 years

	Contacts	Referrals	Re referrals
2013/14	5706	1066	21.1%
2014/15	5482	1060	20.8%

- 6.2.6 It is expected that the quality of referrals to CSC will improve as they will have extra information from a variety of sources obtained by the MASH. The extra information obtained at referral stage will mean that some referrals can be sent straight to Tier 2 rather than as referrals to social care. This will ensure that CSC referrals and assessments are targeted at the most needy families. However this is not guaranteed, at least in the short term, as other LA's, through the MASH enquiries, have discovered families with 'hidden harm' and this has increased the pressures on CSC.
- 6.2.7 It is not clear yet what impact this may have on Tier 2, though it is not expected to be onerous. Tier 2 and Tier 3 service and team managers have regular planned meetings to explore the pressures in each others service and look at what can be done differently.
- 6.2.8 As the MASH will be managing the majority of CSC front door, the Duty and Assessment Team will have sufficient time to undertake multi-agency strategy 'sit down' meetings on all referrals of significant harm so that threshold decisions about S47's will receive the appropriate level of scrutiny and quality information will be shared.
- 6.2.9 Between April 2014 - March 2015, 624 strategy discussions were held. As there are approximately 253 working days per year this equals 2.5 strategy discussions per working day. The majority of these would have been undertaken by the Duty and Assessment Team. The team also carry out single assessments on families within a maximum of 45 working days (timeframe recommended in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' March 2015 although Bracknell Forest aim for shorter timescales) and undertake some short term work.

MASH implementation progress in Bracknell-Forest

6.3 Project Board

- 6.3.1 A Project Board has been established which will propose the MASH model for Bracknell Forest and, if agreed, oversee the implementation of the co-located Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub for the Bracknell Forest area. The Board comprises of Bracknell Forest Council, Health and Thames Valley Police (plus other services to be agreed). It is chaired by the Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People and Learning and consists of a multi-agency group of key stakeholders who will monitor the progress of the MASH Project.

Unrestricted

- 6.3.2 A Project Manager will be crucial to the development and implementation of a MASH by April 2016 and a part-time project manager started on 13 July 2015 as a secondment.
- 6.3.3 The Board meets every 8 weeks and has formed 5 working task groups to drive forward different aspects of the MASH and report back to the Board meetings.

These working groups are:

- Business processes including data collection
- Information sharing
- IT infrastructure and systems
- Communication
- Accommodation.

6.4 Staffing

- 6.4.1 The most crucial element of a successful MASH is the recruitment of high quality staff with the capacity to undertake the work of a MASH. TVP have agreed that the four smaller LA's in Berkshire will each be allocated three TVP staff. These will consist of a risk assessor to assess the domestic abuse notifications, a data analyst and a referral sergeant (who can make decisions for TVP). It is likely these posts will be interchangeable and cover for each other for leave/sickness. BF will make a contribution of £37,500 to TVP for three years towards the costs of these posts.
- 6.4.2 The additional checks, and co-ordination of information from other agencies with the RAG timescales cannot be incorporated into Bracknell Forest's Children's Duty and Assessment Team, which will continue to provide a Duty Service for the child protection work. It is proposed that a MASH Manager, 2 MASH Referral Co-ordinators, Social Worker and Family Support Worker, will be needed.
- 6.4.3 The existing Duty and Assessment Team Manager would provide overall management support for a MASH (as well as managing the Duty and Assessment Team), but all MASH's need a manager based in the MASH room. An additional ATM will need to be appointed to undertake this role and CSC propose converting one of the social work posts to an ATM. See Appendix A for proposed new structure.
- 6.4.4 The Duty and Assessment Team will also provide the social worker, family worker and administrative (referral co-coordinator) posts from existing staffing and provide cover for these posts when any of the staff are on leave/sick/training.
- 6.4.5 The impact of using existing staff is expected to be challenging at times of pressure. If all front line social workers are dealing with child protection enquiries it will be difficult to free up a worker to undertake the MASH work. The pressures in this team are constant and increase at any time with no prior warning. An added challenge will be the team not being based in Time Square as it will be hard for the team manager to move staff around during the course of the working day.
- 6.4.6 This will be particularly difficult at times of sickness/leave/when staff leave and replacements can be difficult to find. The Duty and Assessment team will also provide cover for the MASH Manager when he/she is sick on leave.
- 6.4.7 The Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Service (DAPS) will assist with the domestic abuse notifications completing risk assessments on perpetrators for eligible referrals.

Unrestricted

- 6.4.8 It is hoped that Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA) will support the adult victims referred to MASH who have been subject to domestic abuse. This depends on their capacity.
- 6.4.9 Agreements with other partners have not yet been made about who will be co-located with a MASH. The Health Visiting Transformation Board has committed to a proper and full engagement with MASH across Berkshire. At this stage partner agencies will be virtually connected to a MASH and how this will work in practice will be part of the work of the Project Board and its sub-groups.
- 6.4.10 Nationally, more agencies tend to become full partners of a MASH once it has been in operation for a period of time and can demonstrate its effectiveness. It is envisaged that Adult Services will join the MASH arrangement at a later stage. The numbers of vulnerable adults referred to safeguarding services is currently low in the Bracknell Forest area but these numbers may grow if adult social care becomes involved with a MASH.

6.5 Training

- 6.5.1 For the TVP and Council staff, training on systems and processes, information sharing, understanding of each others roles, responsibilities and services as well as team building will be need to be planned.

6.6 Accommodation and ICT

- 6.6.1 A MASH needs to be fire walled i.e. become a 'sealed intelligence hub' keeping MASH activity confidential and separate from operational activity and will need a confidential sound proofed room.
- 6.6.2 Meetings to consider possible sites for confidential accommodation in Time Square with Thames Valley Police staff have already taken place. Internal meetings with Facilities, ICT and Corporate Property have also taken place and three options meet or could meet Building Regulations and TVP Accommodation Standards.
- 6.6.3 Having explored all possible options, including renting off site accommodation near to Time Square, Easthampstead House Floor 3 is the simplest, quickest and cheapest option. Easthampstead House (EH) Floor 3 is currently occupied by Corporate Property. The proposal is to re-locate the team to EH Floor 1. This will require a reconfiguration to the EH Post room to incorporate the Corporate Property team and refurbish floor 3. Costs would fall within MASH expenditure. Construction and maintenance (part of Corporate Property team) will be commissioned to oversee the building work.
- 6.6.4 All building work must be completed by end of March 2016 in order for the MASH to be launched by end of May 2016.
- 6.6.5 IT sub group will draw up an ICT plan once ICT requirements are assessed. A specialist meeting has been held at Reading to discuss specific issues around ICT and Information Sharing. The ICT estimated cost of £10,000 has been confirmed. ICT have confirmed that in Reading the total capital costs for the Reading MASH were split pro-rata based on staff numbers and charged back to TVP accordingly. It is expected that this will be the case in Bracknell Forest and TVP have been asked to confirm this.

6.7 Information Sharing Agreement

- 6.7.1 Penny O'Callaghan, Information Management and Security Officer and Anna Pett, MASH Project Manager are working on a draft Multiagency Information Sharing Agreement and will use best practice from other MASH projects to speed the process. It is likely that the Reading MASH agreement will be used as a template, as it has already been endorsed by their legal team. It is anticipated that the draft agreement will be ready for presenting to the Project Board at the next meeting.
- 6.7.2 Negotiations with TVP continue regarding the degree of sharing information. It is important that there is a 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MoU) in place that all partners sign up to as it describes access/sharing on a more detailed level.
- 6.7.3 BFC policies must be taken into account when drafting the Information Sharing Agreement and the MoU 2015.

6.8 Financial implications

- 6.8.1 Significant financial implications arise from the outline proposals set out in this report. This includes a one off cost of £12K for a project manager in 2015-16. From April 2016, £12.5k for staffing and £37.5k as a contribution to Thames Valley Police, which is an ongoing commitment for three years, will be required. The project will require a one off expenditure of £32k capital expenditure funding for Accommodation and ICT. Funding will need to be identified in advance of making any financial commitments. The necessary bids have been prepared for capital and as part of future pressures.

7. ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

7.1 Borough Solicitor

The relevant legal issues are addressed within the main body of the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 7.2 Funding for the capital and revenue costs associated with establishing the Bracknell Forest MASH will be included in the Council's budget proposals that will be published for consultation on 15 December.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.3 MASH will improve equalities however a screening equality impact assessment will be written as part of the implementation plan.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 7.4 The proposal for a MASH supports the ambitions of the Council to improve outcomes for children and young people through work with vulnerable families. The Council may suffer reputational damage and criticism from Inspection Bodies if a cost effective and efficient service, delivering good outcomes for children nationally is not implemented in Bracknell-Forest.

There is a risk that a future Serious Case review identifies shortcomings in multi-agency information sharing which the implementation of a MASH may have addressed.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 Principal Groups Consulted

Social Work Team Managers, BFC colleagues, Thames Valley Police, Health, BWA, and Probation.

8.2 Method of Consultation

Meetings

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A Proposed costs including staffing costs

Contact for further information

Mairead Panetta, Children's Social Care - 01344 351523

Mairead.panetta@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Lorna Hunt, Children's Social Care -01344 351528

Lorna.hunt@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Appendix A

STAFF

Full staffing complement will need to be agreed by the Project Board. However it is likely that the following posts will be needed:

Thames Valley Police

- Risk assessor for the domestic abuse notifications
- A data analyst
- Referral Sergeant (who can make decisions for TVP)

It is likely these posts will be interchangeable and cover for each other for leave/sickness

Bracknell Forest Council have pledged £37,500 per annum to TVP to fund these posts, the remaining costs will be borne by TVP.

Bracknell Forest Council

From existing resources BF will provide:

A Team Manager who will oversee both MASH and the current Duty and Assessment Team and will supervise the new MASH manager

The Duty and Assessment Team will provide a social worker and family worker who will move across to the MASH from the current team and provide cover when the MASH staff are on leave/sick.

The 2 admin members of staff will be trained to be the referral co-ordinators and will be provided from the existing admin staffing team.

New Staffing requirements:

Staff	Function	Cost
Temporary Project Manager (likely to be in post for 6/9 months)	To take the lead in setting up the MASH	£12,000 pa for 1.5 days per week. Post will be until 31 st March 2016
MASH manager (ATM grade)	To take responsibility for the work of the MASH and make decisions on behalf of BF To include: Sign off all MASH enquiries on a daily basis Ensure the quality of the risk assessments Be the 'face' of MASH to all agencies Collect data and write performance reports for MASH Develop close links with Tier 2 agencies	£12,500 (needed to covert social work post to an ATM based on current salary grades)

Unrestricted

	Manage the BF staff based in MASH	
MASH social worker	<p>Work on information coming into MASH</p> <p>Make appropriate enquiries from agencies and undertake risk assessments</p> <p>Undertake brief assessments with families where appropriate (on some higher risk referrals)</p> <p>Escalate referrals to CSC in a timely way</p>	Post to be moved from Children's Duty and Assessment Team (or to be provided on a rotating basis from the team)
MASH family worker	<p>Work on information coming into MASH</p> <p>Make appropriate enquiries from agencies</p> <p>Undertake brief assessments with families where appropriate (on lower risk referrals eg some missing/CSE)</p>	Post to be moved from Children's Duty and Assessment Team (or to be provided on a rotating basis from the team)
MASH referral co-ordinator *2	<p>Take all phone calls to the MASH</p> <p>Ensure all new referrals are inputted onto the ICT system</p> <p>Manage all referrals ie close down, step-down to Tier 2, transfer to CSC as appropriate</p> <p>Set up appropriate ICT systems to manage all new referrals</p> <p>Contact agencies to ensure information is being received in a timely way</p> <p>Track and monitor all new referrals and requests for information ensuring timescales are adhered to</p> <p>Work with MASH manager to produce reports and performance indicators</p> <p>Assist admin with phone calls as needed</p> <p>Add new referrals to the ICT system as needed</p>	Post to be moved from Children's Admin Team
Total staffing Costs		
Project manager costs (July –Mar 16)		Approx £12, 000 for the Project Manager. This is a one –off cost
Costs to TVP from BFC (agreed for three years)		£112,500 over a 3 year period
Costs of converting a social work post to an		£37,500 over a 3 year

Unrestricted

ATM		period
<p>Costs of ICT, desks, phones, other equipment</p> <p>Costs of refurbishing Easthampsted House (if this option is chosen for the MASH)</p>		<p>Current estimation is £32,000</p> <p>These are one-off costs</p>