

CHSCP Multi-Agency Case Audit: Quality of Referrals (Sept / Oct 2021)

Thematic **multi-agency case audit** undertaken by the CHSCP focusing on the quality of referrals (**Requests for Support**) and an **external audit** commissioned as part of the CHSCP's approach to independent scrutiny.

Requests for Support made by a range of agencies to the Hackney Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in the preceding 4-8 months.

Audits involved a review of supporting documentation (**including MASH decision-making records, MARAC referrals and Early Help or Statutory assessments**).

34 cases audited.

Key Messages for Practitioners

Unsure about how to make a Request for Support? Call the Hackney MASH and ask for a consultation on **0208 356 5500**.

Make a note of the **consultation line worker's name**. There may be instances where you need to call back. Talking to the same person will help with the consistency of advice.

When making a *Request for Support*, **include details of who is in the household – DON'T FORGET** to identify any significant men and extended family members who provide support. If you are unclear about the family make-up or the identity of the other professionals involved, **record this** in the *Request for Support* documentation.

Make sure you are familiar with and reference the **Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework**. This framework will assist you in describing the levels of need, what support is needed and what needs to change for the child or young person. Prior to making a *Request for Support* to the MASH, practitioners should specifically reference sections on : The child's level of need, (p2), Consent, (p3) and the Continuum of Need Indicators, (p7).

Before submitting the *Request for Support*, **review the information**: (1) Is the information child focussed, does it detail the current concerns and the lived experience of the child? Put yourself in the child's shoes, think what life might be like for them and describe concerns / risks in this context. Think about what other information you can add to support the understanding of risk, (2) Have you added in detail about the child or young person's developmental needs and the parental ability to meet these needs?

If unclear whether **consent** should be sought, seek advice from the MASH Consultation Line (see above). The CHSCP has also produced a short video on ['Obtaining Consent when Making a Request for Support'](#).

In instances of **professional disagreement**, practitioners should remain aware of, and use the [CHSCP Escalation Policy](#).

If you are not notified of the **outcome** of the *Request for Support*, follow this up directly with the MASH.

Findings from the **multi-agency audit** and **external audit** highlighted below.

Identified Strengths

- Evidence of Requests for Support being made in a **timely manner** enabling timely review and offer of help or safeguarding support.
- Sufficient information was provided by referrers to enable the MASH Service to quickly and **easily make contact with them**, facilitating a prompt response to children and their families.
- Evidence of **sufficient information sharing involving all children** in the family enabling MASH to consider possible risks to them too. **Evidence of sufficient information sharing on details of mothers.**
- Appropriate **request for escalation** by a referrer, having contacted the MASH twice previously for the same concerns which they identified as continuing. Escalation took place, and the family were progressed for assessment.
- Evidence of **additional reports** from the referrer submitted to **provide context** to the *Request for Support* and reasons for their concern at that time.
- Evidence of cases where referrers (who often knew the family well) described **what they assessed needed to change** for the family to enable them to feel less concerned about the child.
- Evidence of **outcomes recorded clearly and referrers being notified of the decision**. In instances where decision was for No Further Action, referrers were invited to contact the Consultation Line or re-refer in the event of safeguarding concerns relating to the child coming to their attention
- Evidence of referrers **describing the involvement and/or support** they had already offered to the child and/or their family which provides context, and reflects what is not working, or has not previously been sufficient.
 - Positive feedback from GPs regarding **use of the consultation line** and where disagreements occur. Constructive use of escalation routes via GP Safeguarding Leads.
- Evidence of regular **single-agency auditing of decision making** / consultation line advice within existing MASH Quality Assurance processes.

Identified Areas for Improvement

- **Raise the profile of the MASH consultation line** - Evidence that some *Requests for Support* would have been strengthened by utilising the expertise of the consultation line practitioners.
- **Increasing awareness of seeking consent and when this is required** - *Requests for Support* in which consent was not sought included cases of Early Help, where consent should always be sought.
- **Seeking consent from children and young people** - Seeking and recording the consent of children and young people (where of an age and level of understanding to give it) was not clearly recorded. The Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework sets out this requirement.
- **Requests for Support should better reference the Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework** - practice could be significantly strengthened, and the referrer's understanding of thresholds improved by using this document as a guide to explaining risk and need.
 - **Improving the recording of fathers, adult males and significant others.** Poor quality in some cases noted as being due to organisational recording systems / incomplete record keeping on household composition.
- **Improvement needed in describing the support required for children or families** at an early help or statutory level.
- **Improvement needed in describing the support already in place**; detail is especially relevant where a specialist intervention is in place.
- **The MASH should ensure that practitioners making Requests for Support are swiftly informed of its decisions for further action.** All practitioners need to make sure these decisions are accurately recorded.

Improving these areas of practice will help the MASH make timely and accurate decisions. They will improve the partnership's understanding of risk and need and help identify those adults (or other young people) who can be sources of either support or harm.