

Children and Families Service

Title	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Operational Protocol
Policy Area	Referrals - MASH
Sign-off	Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
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Children and Education Directorate Anti-Racism Position Statement: Hackney's Children and Education Directorate is committed to eradicating systemic racism, discrimination, injustice, and making anti-racism a central foundation of our practice. Our aim is to be a voice and force for change for every child and family that we work with, recognising and addressing the impact of racism on Black and Global Majority children and families within our practice and applying our anti-racist principles in all our interactions and decision-making about our children and young people. We will also determinedly request the same from our schools and partners.

Across the Children and Education Directorate, our goal is to ensure all children's experiences and backgrounds are reflected in our schools' curriculum, and ensure our interactions and decision-making are actively anti-racist.

We are committed to calling out racism, discrimination and microaggressions to ensure that this is addressed across our education system and at all levels in the Council to ensure children, their families and the workforce are supported and feel valued. We acknowledge the harm and impact of racism on our Black and Global Majority children and families and the experience of our Black and Global Majority staff.

We are working towards our directorate, and educational settings workforce, reflecting the community we serve, especially at senior leadership level and committed to ensuring that all voices are represented and heard across our workforce, providing appropriate support to staff who experience work-based racism and microaggressions.

LGBTQIA+ Position Statement: The Children and Families Service is committed to ensuring that every child and young person in Hackney has a safe, healthy and inclusive environment in which they can thrive. This includes all those who may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex or asexual (LGBTQIA+).

We will continue to develop the knowledge and confidence of our staff, volunteers, parents and carers to ensure they are aware of and understand the needs of children and young people who are exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity. We will do so by providing regular training in collaboration with LGBTQIA+ children and young people.

We will support our children and young people to safely explore their identities, who they wish to communicate this to and what support they may be able to access. As a service, we will promote a strong positive image of LGBTQIA+ identities by using affirming language, promoting visible support and challenging any instances of discrimination.

Systemic Practice: Our core values are driven by systemic principles and they underpin how we do our work in Hackney and the way we behave. This includes:

- **Context: *We see the bigger picture.*** Children and families are part of a wider set of systems and relationships, including race, religion, culture, gender, family stories and beliefs.
- **Collaborative: *We work with, not to.*** We don't separate or elevate ourselves from families. We want to understand and learn from the people and communities we work with. We understand that our own experiences can affect our views and decisions.
- **Curious: *We always want to understand.*** We know we cannot always know things for certain; we are continuously curiously creating, testing and creating our thoughts and ideas around the way things are and why.
- **Relationships: *We focus on relationships.*** The problem is the problem, not the person. By working together, we believe we can find solutions. We do not blame or judge, and we do not focus on labels.
- **Multiple Voices/ Many Truths: *We know all viewpoints are valid.*** There is no single truth or 'one right way' of doing things. We aim to hear and understand all perspectives in order to open up opportunities for change and to safely manage risk and uncertainty.

Privacy notice: The Council takes the security of personal data seriously. It is necessary in order for our service to do its work that sometimes personal and private information will be gathered, collected, stored and shared in a secure and confidential way. For further information on this, please check the [Council's privacy notice homepage](#)

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Operational Protocol

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1. Vision and Purpose

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub operates as a single point of contact for members of the public and professionals who are seeking advice and information, and/or who want to make a request for support for a child or young person in Hackney who may be in need of help or protection. The Multi Agency Hub has three core functions:

The front door for statutory social work intervention by Hackney Children's Social Care;

An early help hub, where children and families who are not deemed to be in need of statutory support are offered advice and guidance, sign-posting, and/or referrals to services within the council or in the community that are best placed to meet their needs;

An information sharing and advice hub, where multi-agency partners are able to access advice and guidance around possible contacts with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership, and requests for information are responded to in a timely way, which is proportionate to each agency's involvement in a child and family's life.

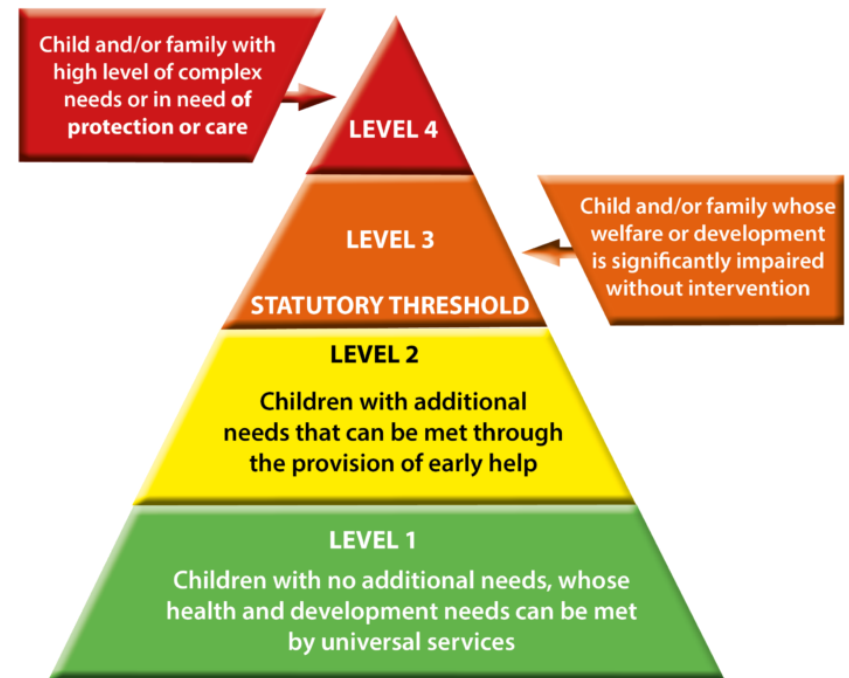
2. Outcomes of Contacts

We know that most families in Hackney cope well with the demands of family life, most of the time. However, when circumstances change, or a family's usual support networks become unavailable to them, some families will need extra support to keep their children safe and well. Only the minority of Hackney families at any given time will require that support to be delivered at a statutory social work level. Possible outcomes of requests for support into the Multi-Agency Information Hub includes:

- Advice and guidance, to the referring agency and/or the family;
- Referral for support within the community and voluntary sector, or other appropriate service;
- Referral for an early help assessment and potential support from one of the Council's targeted early help services;
- Referral for a statutory social work assessment.

We believe that an integrated statutory and early help front door enables us to best meet the needs of our diverse and dynamic community for the following reasons:

- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub provides a single point of contact for any professional or member of the public who is worried about a child in the borough, offering advice and guidance where needed;
- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub offers a timely and well-coordinated multi-agency response to all Hackney children and families in need of additional help, across the spectrum of need;



- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub enables children and families to be referred to the right service as early as possible, in the hope of avoiding referrals being passed through one front door to another in search of a service;
- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub applies clear and consistent thresholds for the Local Authority's early help and statutory service offer;
- Decision-making within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub benefits from the knowledge of any history of concern and previous involvement with Hackney Children and Families Services, whether at early help or statutory level, alongside key information (where appropriately gathered) from multi-agency partners, including police, health, probation and education;
- The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub analyses the information contained in contacts and referrals to identify themes and trends which can inform the development of service provision, so we are best placed to meet the needs of our children and families. This includes looking at contexts of concern beyond the family unit, such as risks associated with peer group dynamics and locations in the community, in order to help families and services respond to these. For more information on this approach visit <https://www.hackney.gov.uk/contextual-safeguarding>

3. Who We Are

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub is a multi-agency partnership of safeguarding experts that includes:

- Police: Public Protection Desk (PPD) team who are part of the Central East BCU Safeguarding Team;
- Health: Health visitors and school nursing staff who are part of the Homerton Hospital Safeguarding Team;
- Education: Hackney Education dedicated MASH representative
- Probation - virtual partner
- Early Help and Prevention: Young Hackney, Yough Hackney Substance misuse team and Family Support
- The Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (DAIS)
- Children's Social Care.
- Turning Point; Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service
- Hackney Housing
- CAMHS Crisis

The governance of the Hub sits under the umbrella of the Family Intervention and Support Service within Children and Families Services.

4. What We Do

At the point of their initial screening, a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Manager will make a decision as to whether:

- A. No further action is needed within the hub and the contact can therefore be closed with no further action
- B. The contact should be progressed directly within Children's Social Care to a Section 17 or Section 47 Child and Family Assessment. Where the child has previously been open to a Social Work Unit within the past 3 months, he or she will be re-referred to that unit for a further response;
- C. Children's Social Care screening is required within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub; or
- D. Early Help Screening is required within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

The most appropriate pathway for the progress of a contact is determined by the nature of the concern about a child or family. Priority is given to concerns that pose the most immediate and pressing risk to a child's safety and well-being. The team work to the following timescales:

1. All contacts that are received for which the remit is met for a Section 47 Child Protection investigation - because a child or young person is deemed to be at risk of significant harm - are brought to the immediate attention of a Manager and progressed without delay for further statutory involvement by a Social Work Unit in Children's Social Care;
2. When contacts are received that relate to open cases within Children's Social Care, this information is shared with the case-holding Social Work Unit without delay and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub plays no further role.
3. Where Children's Social Care screening is required, a decision about whether a statutory response is needed is expected to be made within **24 hours**.
4. Where Early Help screening is required, a decision about the outcome of the contact, for example, a referral to an early help service or another organisation, is expected to be made within **72 hours**.
5. Where requests for information are received that relate to open cases within Children's Social Care, these are passed without delay to the case-holding Social Work Unit.
6. Where requests for information are received for cases that are not open to Children's Social Care, these will be responded to within **10 working days**.

5. MASH Checks

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub manager will make a decision as to whether information from partner agencies is required to inform decision making in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. When the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub manager requests information from partner agencies, the partners will check their agency databases and send this information back via secure email. When sending the request, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub manager will indicate how urgent the request is by using a RAG (RED/AMBER/GREEN) rating system. Requests marked as 'RED' require a response within 4 hours, 'AMBER' requests need to be responded to within 24 hours and 'GREEN' requests need to be responded to within 72 hours. There should be no limits to sharing information within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and partner agencies will consider all information known by their agency and how it will help Children's Social Care in deciding what action to take to support and protect a child. If a partner agency comes across information, which in their professional judgement, increases risk of harm or urgency of need, the partner agency representative will without delay flag this to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub manager.

Once a decision about the outcome of a contact is made within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, the referrer will be informed of this decision, unless it is deemed inappropriate to do so. Where the referrer has not been informed of the outcome of their contact, the reasons for this will be recorded on the Contact and Referral Record.

All decisions are made in line with the Hackney Child Well-Being Framework (see [Appendix A](#)). Where professionals disagree with, or have questions about, decisions made within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, they should seek to discuss this with a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Manager. If this does not result in a resolution to their query, concerns should be escalated to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Service Manager and/or Head of Service, either directly, or via their agency's designated safeguarding lead. Further information on how to deal with professional disagreement can be found in the CHSCP's [Escalation Policy](#).

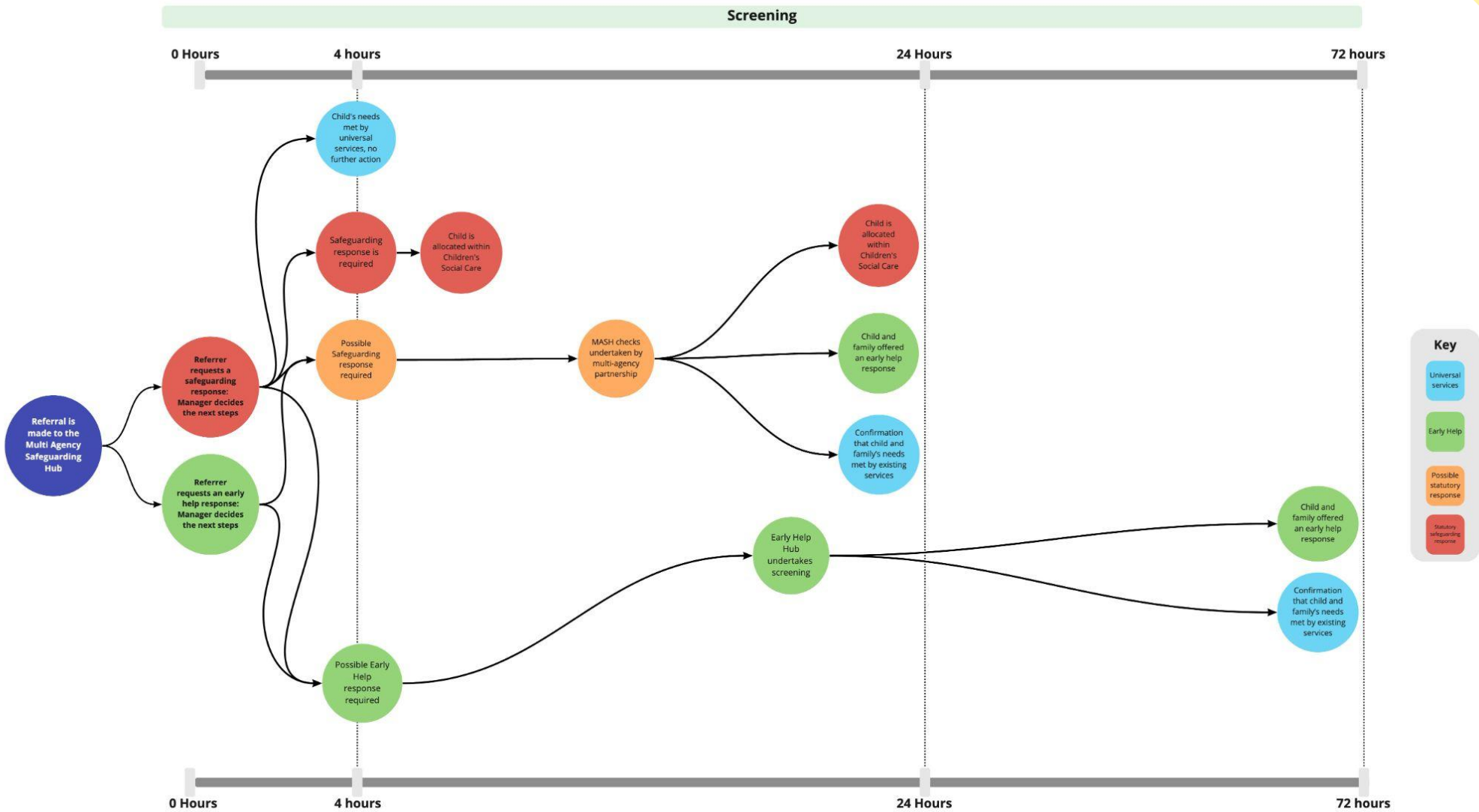
Where a member of the public disagrees with, or has questions about, a decision made within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, they too can ask to speak with a member of the hub's management team, or they can make a complaint via the Children and Families Services Complaints Team on children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk or on 020 8356 5800.

6. Daily MASH meetings

Every weekday morning the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub facilitates a Daily MASH Meeting (DMM). The DMM has been developed to enhance and promote good practice, improve joint working between the Police, Social Care and partner agencies and to ensure a robust multi - agency response where it is believed a child may be at risk of harm.

The DMM meeting provides the framework to allow regular information sharing and action planning to safeguard children believed to be at risk in Hackney. This is a gateway to 3rd party agencies very quickly after an incident has occurred. The DMM also serves to quickly build up a picture of a child's context to inform decision making if sufficient information is not available within the referral/ notification to MASH. The DMM meeting serves as a channel to ensure that action regarding child safeguarding matters and overnight critical incidents is taking place and is coordinated.

The DMM meeting is not intended to replace or supersede the guidance set out in Hackney and Pan London child protection procedures or any other referral and assessment process currently in place in relation to safeguarding. No agency should delay action whilst waiting for a discussion at the next DMM meeting. Please see [terms of reference](#) for further information around DMM.



7. Consent

In line with [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#), the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub operates to the principle that every family (parent/carer and child) has the right:

- To be told when a professional is worried about the safety or well-being of their child by that professional;
- To have their consent obtained when someone makes a request for support on their behalf;
- To be front and centre of the plan to keep their child safe and well.

Consent to make a request for support on their behalf should also be sought from children and young people, wherever they are of an age and level of understanding to give it.

Parental consent must only be overridden where there are urgent concerns about the safety of a child **and** it is felt that speaking to the family about the concerns may increase the immediate risk to the child. These circumstances will be exceptional.

8. Consultation

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub operates an advice line for professionals who are considering a referral into the hub.

- The caller must have consult their Designated Safeguarding Lead first;
- Callers use the main Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub number - 020 8356 5500 - and ask for a consultation;
- Calls will be responded to by experienced members of staff from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub who will listen to the caller's concerns and offer advice and guidance about the most appropriate next steps. This advice may include:
 - The caller having further conversations with the child and family about the concerns and - with their consent - other members of the family's network;
 - The caller making a written referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub;
 - The caller making a referral to another service.

Whilst the hub will keep a log of calls received, in order to monitor the use of the consultation lines, calls will not be recorded on Hackney Children and Families Services children's case files and so it is important that all callers make their own agency records of discussions.

9. How to Contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

Referrals: The referral form is available [here](#).

Phone: Consultations with the hub can be requested by calling 020 8356 5500.

Email: Queries can be sent to MASH@hackney.gov.uk

Mail: The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Hackney Service Centre, 1 Hillman Street, London E8 1DY

Walk-in: Children and families can 'walk in' to Hackney Service Centre, 1 Hillman Street, Hackney E8 1DY, and ask to see a duty social worker on Monday to Friday during office hours.

Opening Hours: The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub is open from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. Outside of these hours and on bank holidays, Hackney's out of hours Emergency Duty Team can be contacted on 0208 356 2710.

10. Information Sharing

The sharing of information must comply with the law relating to confidentiality, data protection and human rights. Having a legitimate purpose for sharing information is an important part of meeting those legal requirements. Hackney Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub terms and references for information sharing are stipulated in the London Multi- Agency Safeguarding Data Sharing Agreement for Safeguarding and Promoting the welfare of children. [Final London MAS DSA Jan21](#). For partner agencies that share information to safeguard children in Hackney, they confirm via email to the Hackney Safeguarding Partnership that they are content to comply with the agreement (chscp@hackney.gov.uk).

11. Governance

As a multi-agency group, the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub is accountable to safeguarding partners of the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership. It will provide routine progress reports to both the Executive and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. Oversight of the performance and functions of the MASH is led by the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Steering Group. The day-to-day oversight of the MASH sits with the Family Intervention and Support Service within Children and Families Services. This protocol has been agreed within the Steering Group and any changes to this document will be agreed by the partnership. This document should be read in conjunction with:

- [London MASH Information Sharing Guidance](#)
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub Steering Group Terms of Reference dated June 2021 (see Appendix iii)

Governance Structure

- **Steering Group which meets quarterly:**
 - Chaired by Head of Service for Family Intervention and Support Service, Children and Families Service
 - Senior Advisor from Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership Board
 - Detective Chief Inspector Safeguarding, Metropolitan Police
 - Head of Homerton Safeguarding
 - Head of Safeguarding for Hackney Education
 - Head of Service for Early Help and Prevention
 - Head of Service, Probation
 - Head of East London Foundation Trust Safeguarding Team
 - Head of CAMHS community
 - Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub Service Manager
 - Safeguarding Manager Turning Point
 - Hackney Housing
 - Domestic Abuse Intervention Service, Service Manager

- **Operational staff meets monthly with the MASH managers which includes;**

- MASH managers Manager
- Early Help MASH Manager
- Police Detective Sergeant
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub Health team
- Hackney Education
- Probation lead
- East London Foundation Trust Safeguarding lead for children
- Domestic Abuse Intervention Service Team Manager
- Council lead Early Help Services
- Hackney Housing
- City and Hackney Recovery Service
- CAMHS Crisis

Appendix A – Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework

Please find the Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework here:

<https://hackney.gov.uk/children-and-families>

Appendix B - Caldicott Principles and Golden Rules of Information Sharing

1. Everyone must understand his or her responsibilities whilst also remembering **that the Data Protection Act* is not a barrier to sharing information** but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about living persons is shared appropriately.
2. **Be open and honest** with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be share, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. **Share with consent where appropriate** and, where possible, respect the wishes or those who do not consent to share information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case whilst understanding and complying with the law.
4. **Seek advice** if you are in any doubt, without disclosing the identity of the person where possible.
5. The duty to share information can be as important at the duty to protect confidentiality. In making decisions consider safety and well-being by basing information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the person and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. **Necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure:** Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely. Access to confidential information should be on a strict need-to-know basis.
7. Justify the purpose(s) for using confidential information by **keeping a record of your decision and the reasons for it** – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.
8. When requesting information from another professional, **ensure that you provide the context for why this is needed.** Professionals will be unable to judge what is necessary, proportionate or relevant without knowing the nature of the concern you have for the child, young person or family.
9. Remember that **international information sharing** may be different.

*Please note that although the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) has updated data sharing regulations the principles of good information sharing remain the same.

Appendix C - MASH Steering Group Terms of Reference dated June 2021

Hackney Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub Steering Group

Terms of Reference June 2021

1. Purpose:

The Hackney Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Steering Group is responsible for strategic oversight of the implementation of the three core functions of MASH as set out in the MASH Operational Protocol:

- The front door for statutory social work intervention by Hackney Children's Social Care;
- An early help hub, where children and families who are not deemed to be in need of statutory support are offered advice and guidance, sign-posting, and/or referrals to services within the council or in the community that are best placed to meet their needs;
- An information sharing and advice hub, where multi-agency partners are able to access advice and guidance around possible contacts with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership, and requests for information are responded to in a timely way, which is proportionate to each agency's involvement in a child and family's life.

2. The Steering Group will:

- Collaborate as key stakeholders in the continued development and refinement of our single point of contact for Children and Families Services;
- Agree to share information as set out within the MASH ISA protocol;
- Provide data and analysis of local trends, including risks to inform service delivery and commissioning;
- Provide support and challenge to promote best practice in safeguarding children and families;
- Work to address obstacles and barriers in progress towards best practice;
- Approve changes to the delivery model and partnership interface in the context of organisational and policy changes.



3. Meetings

The Steering Group will meet every quarter.

4. Governance and Accountability:

The Steering Group reports to the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Hackney through the Director of Children and Families.

The Steering Group will provide reports, when appropriate, to the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children’s Board.

The Steering Group will interface with the London MASH Operational delivery Group.

Members of the Steering Group will take responsibility for working within their own organisations and service divisions to promote the concept, communicate progress and overcome obstacles.

5. Membership

Role	Organisation	Name
Chair	Children’s Social Care	Head of Service
Steering Group Members	Children’s Social Care	Service Manager
	Early Years	Service Manager
	Health	Head of Safeguarding Children, Homerton University Hospital

	Health	Service Manager, Homerton University Hospital, Safeguarding School Nurse Service
	Borough Police	
	Child Abuse Investigation Team	
	Probation	Head of Service
	Young Hackney	Service Manager
	Domestic Abuse Intervention Service	Service Manager