

Meeting:	Children and young people scrutiny committee
Meeting date:	Monday 1 October 2018
Title of report:	Referrals to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
Report by:	Director children and families

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To inform the children and young people scrutiny committee of the number of referrals that are made into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

To allow the committee the opportunity to review and make recommendations in respect of how the number of referrals can be reduced.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) The children and young people scrutiny committee review the referral rates outlined within the report and determine any recommendation it wishes to make to the executive or responsible partner agency to secure improvement.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options; it is the function of the committee to make reports or recommendations to the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive.

Key considerations

2. The purpose of a contact made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is to express a concern about child. Not all Children's Services agencies across the country have MASH arrangements, but all are charged with having processes in place to respond to concerns about the safety of children under the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance 2018.
3. Herefordshire Children's Safeguarding Board has developed threshold guidance to assist professionals in making decisions as to whether the concern they have regarding a child or children should be referred into the MASH. This guidance was revised in August 2017 and is due for review this month, September 2018.
4. The guidance is very clear in identifying four levels of need, Level 4 being the threshold to refer to Children's Social Care. (appendix attached)
5. It is underpinned by the following:

"when thresholds are understood by all professionals and applied consistently this will ensure the right help is given to the child at the right time".
6. It has become apparent that there have been a number of referrals that are being received into the MASH that are not meeting the levels defined and agreed within the threshold document by all partner agencies.
7. The Ofsted report published July 23rd 2018 stated as follows;

"a significant number of contacts are signposted away from children's social care which means that too many children are being referred who do not need this level of support. A number of children who would benefit from early help services experience delay because thresholds are not appropriately applied or understood."
8. The level of referrals received into the MASH in August 2018 are shown in the table below:

	Contacts	Percentage of contacts	Referrals	Percentage of Referrals	Percentage of referrals NFA'd
Anonymous	0	0.0%	13	3.3%	92%
Education Services	0	0.0%	2	0.5%	100%
Health services - A&E	0	0.0%	16	4.0%	69%
Health services - GP	1	0.4%	13	3.3%	54%
Health services - Health Visitor	3	1.1%	5	1.3%	0%
Health services - Other eg. hospice	2	0.7%	12	3.0%	92%
Health services - Other primary health services	2	0.7%	46	11.6%	41%
Health services - School Nurse	0	0.0%	2	0.5%	100%
Housing or housing association	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0%
Individual - acquaintance eg. neighbours / child minders	0	0.0%	5	1.3%	80%
Individual - family member / relative / carer	31	11.2%	18	4.5%	67%
Individual - other Individuals e.g. strangers / MPs	0	0.0%	4	1.0%	100%
Individual - self	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0%
LA services - external eg. from another LAs	2	0.7%	6	1.5%	83%
LA services - Other internal department eg. youth offending	0	0.0%	6	1.5%	33%
LA services - Social care eg. adults social care	0	0.0%	45	11.3%	31%
Other - eg. children's centres / independent agency providers / voluntary organisations	8	2.9%	27	6.8%	74%
Other Legal Agency - incl. courts, probation, immigration, CAFCASS or prison	8	2.9%	39	9.8%	56%
Police	218	78.7%	131	33.0%	76%
Schools	1	0.4%	4	1.0%	25%
Unknown	0	0.0%	3	0.8%	0%
Total	276		397		62%

9. It has been found that;

- there was an increased number of contacts and referrals being received;
- that the threshold guidance was not being applied consistently;

10. As can be seen in the table the majority of the referrals into the MASH are from the Police and work is due to commence to understand why this is the case and to work with partner agencies to ensure that the thresholds are implemented and applied in a consistent manner.

11. Discussion with Police has commenced between Liz Elgar, AD Safeguarding and Family Support, and DCI Neil Austin, and a meeting is booked for 10th October 2018 to continue to address the issue of over referral by Police into MASH.

Community impact

12. In accordance with the adopted code of conduct Herefordshire achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these is an important strategic choice to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. The council needs robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure our outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best use of resources while still enable efficient effective operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

13. The council must ensure that it has an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Effective financial management, risk management and internal control are important components of this

performance management system. Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development, and review.

14. It is a priority of the corporate plan to 'Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life'. The safeguarding of children and the child protection process is fundamental to this aim.

Equality duty

15. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
16. Protected characteristics and reasonable adjustments are considered for all children who are subject to child protection arrangements. Such consideration enables Herefordshire Council to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Resource implications

17. None associated with the recommendation. Any resource implications of recommendations the committee may determine will inform the executive's response to those recommendations

Legal implications

18. The Human Rights Act 1998 provides under Article 8 that:
 - a. Right to respect for private and family life.
 - b. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
 - c. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
19. The reduction in numbers of children on the child protection register reflects the authority implementing this principle. The department needs to be alert to children being repeatedly referred through to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) as this may reflect on going systemic family problems which need to be addressed.

Risk management

20.

	Risk / opportunity	Mitigation	M
	Inappropriate application of threshold which may lead to children being subject to a plan unnecessarily OR children not being made subject to a plan and left at risk	Refreshed multiagency awareness of the Threshold Document and put in place additional checks which included the employment of an independent reviewing officer	
	Missed opportunity to work with families at a more appropriate lower level	As above	

Consultees

21. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Threshold guidance

Background papers

None identified