

Referring to Southwark MASH: best practice guidance



- Request a MASH **consultation** when guidance is required to determine whether a referral is the right course of action, or whether support could be offered through other means
 - this ensures children get the right support at the right time by exploring appropriate and effective ways to help families.
- Details of the child / family are NOT shared during a consultation, therefore prior parental consent is not required.
- However, if the information shared indicates immediate risk, the consultation will be converted into a referral and details will be requested.
- Advice and details of the discussion will be recorded and shared with the caller via a 'MASH Consultation Form'.
- Consultations are available Mon-Fri 9am-5pm via the MASH Contact Number: **0207 525 1921**.

[Do not use the consultation service to seek an update on an existing referral or case already open to Children's Social Care]



Don't delay: refer to MASH immediately if concerned child is at risk of harm



- For children at risk of harm / neglect and in need of support / protection, make a **referral** to MASH via [the online form](#).
- You can also call the MASH Line to report your concern or seek advice: **0207 525 1921**.
- If you need to make a referral outside of Mon-Fri 9am-5pm (including bank holidays), please contact the Out of Hours Team: **0207 525 5000**.
- If you have not received contact from the MASH team within 30 minutes of making a referral, please call to follow up.
- **Before making a referral to MASH**, you should inform the parents/carers of your concerns and seek their **consent** (permission) for the referral. However, you do not have to do so if this would place the child at more risk of harm.



- Southwark's Family Early Help service supports families so that problems do not get worse. This includes the **Parenting Service** and **Education Inclusion Service**.
- It may therefore be more appropriate to refer your concerns directly to them.
- More information and referral form can be found [here](#).



Tools to support your referral

- [Southwark's child exploitation risk and vulnerability checklist](#)
- [Southwark's neglect strategy guidance and toolkit](#)
- NSPCC: problematic / harmful [sexualised behaviour](#)
- 'DASH' checklist for domestic abuse
- Further risk assessment tools for Southwark social workers are available [here](#)



What information should be included?

- Use **full names** of family members and job titles of professionals
- ensure accurate and consistent spelling throughout the referral.
- Refer to the [Threshold document](#) in the [London Safeguarding Children Procedures](#) and specify which of the **4 Levels of Need on the Continuum of Help and Support** you think the referral relates to.

What are you worried about?

- ✓ Details of the risk / disclosure: what have you seen / heard / been told? Who was involved? Where did it happen? When did it happen? What's the frequency?
- ✓ Provide a timeline of concerns; quantify terms like as 'all the time', 'happened before', 'historic'.
- ✓ Provide examples to explain your concern e.g. % school attendance; clear descriptions of what's been observed rather than phrases like 'poor home conditions' or 'sexualised behaviours'.
- ✓ Be child centred - evidence impact on / risk to the child (even if the incident relates to parent / carers e.g. domestic abuse).
- ✓ Use the child's exact words where you can.

Apply curiosity to ascertain details using clarifying but not leading questions

Context of the disclosure

- ✓ When did the child make the disclosure?
- ✓ Who did they speak to?
- ✓ How did the child present during this? e.g. were they tearful? Are they scared?

Child / family's wider context

Provide enough detail to create a full picture of the family's situation:

- ✓ Describe the family's identity including ethnicity; language; cultural practices; disabilities / additional needs
 - Considering the family's functioning creates fuller understand of the risk & helps determine the most effective support.
- ✓ Consider relationships, friendships, behaviour, mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse etc.
- ✓ What do you know about the wider family?
 - Include details of siblings and father(s) / male carers.
 - Who else in the home or family network could be a support / risk?
- ✓ What support has been offered already? What was the outcome of this?
- ✓ Have there been any previous referrals?
- ✓ What's going well? Identify strengths to create a full picture of the family's experience and protective factors that could be built on to address the risk.

*Consider intersectionality: How is the child's identity knitted together?
How does the family's specific context impact this concern?*



- MASH managers will read the referral, allocate a RAG rating based on the severity of the concern, and seek information from relevant partner agencies (including Health, Police, Education, Probation, Housing etc.) to determine what needs to happen next.
 - this is done within 24 hours.

- There are numerous options for what may happen next:
 - The referral may be passed to the Social Care Team for a strategy meeting (which you may be invited to attend) or Section 17 Child and Family Assessment.
 - The referral may be 'stepped-across' to the Family Early Help Service.
 - Information and advice may be provided to the family and/or professionals with no further involvement from Social Care.
- Regardless of the decision, MASH should always inform the referrer of the outcome within five days.
- If you do not agree with the outcome of the referral, you can pursue [Southwark's escalation policy](#).



Remember: *your involvement doesn't end once you've submitted a referral – safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, you can continue to play a role in contributing to the safety & wellbeing of the child / family.*