

Process: Two visits were undertaken in May and June 2023.

Highlight results: A range of ongoing improvement activities were noted, recognising that significant progress had been made from a low base and good practice was seen. The recommendations below were made to support this improvement journey.

Recommendation 1:

Consider the findings of the visit and whether any areas for development already under way require further strengthening.

Updates to the areas of ongoing development noted in the Scrutiny report:

- Practical seating arrangements and the issue of different agency working hours in the MASH has been resolved.
- The issue of more than one manager working in parallel on decision making has been resolved, and only one manager will now oversee a case from start to finish.
- Improving the time it takes to complete an enquiry and make a decision is ongoing. This is being monitored through the MASH Steering Group.
- New forms on Liquid Logic are being tested and once available should improve the efficiency of MASH processes.
- Awareness raising around appropriate referrals and threshold levels with partners continues, linked to the new Early Help Strategy and development of the Family Support Service.
- In relation to Domestic Abuse, a daily Domestic Abuse triage meeting is now in place, and an IDVA within the team. From April, the Richmond Fellowship will provide two workers to deliver a perpetrator behaviour programme.
- The previous high number of contacts recorded as No Further Action are no more accurately being recorded, and as such the number recorded as Provided with Advice and Information has increased significantly.

Recommendation 2:

Focus on a concerted effort to reduce inconsistencies – an initial audit of cases where there is partnership disagreement has been recommended.

Complete: There needs to be a certain level of critical challenge within MASH, and this is now part of the day-to-day healthy operation of the service. Conversations between colleagues are routine, enabled by the large number of staff present face-to-face in the office each day. This is evidenced within the case audits that are undertaken regularly and by the Ofsted monitoring visit in August 2023. Disagreement between agencies is no longer seen as an issue, and if required, colleagues are aware of the refreshed SSCP Escalation procedure.

Recommendation 3:

Give thought to bringing together staff at the MASH into “one team” being mindful to avoid further disruption.

Complete:

- MASH is an integrated service, with colleagues from different agencies working together daily in the office (as noted above). Quarterly MASH Practice Forums have been initiated to enable the team to further embed and learn together, to promote a unified identity for the team.
- ‘One Leader’ position – to support the process of developing a unified service a new Service Manager post was originally suggested for the front door team to act both as a conduit for external agency enquiries regarding the service, and as a way to resolve any challenges over decision making within the team. We have appointed a service manager of the front door on a temporary basis until March 2024; this is funded by Children’s Services (SMBC). Recruitment to this post was initially put on hold while the strategic partners resolved queries regarding the postholders remit, and during that time we have developed the person in the current Team Manager post in the front door. At the point of the original concerns about MASH leadership, the current Team Manager was on secondment and the backfill situation was not working well. The requirement for ‘one leader’ is now not needed and we now have a strong single social care leader in the MASH. The temporary Service Manager post is being used for development projects in the front door.
- Police – The recent high turnover of Police Inspectors in the MASH has delayed the progress of some improvement activity, but a new permanent Inspector starts in January 2024. From Jan 24 there will be 5 Police staff full time in the MASH, plus the Inspector.
- The recent Health handover to Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has gone well and there is a strong working relationship with partners in health and the rest of the MASH.
- Recent Councillor visits have reflected that there is good moral and passion within the service.
- Multi-agency group supervision will start to be instigated now that permanent partnership colleagues are in place. This will support closing the loop on actions following multi-agency audits.

Recommendation 4:

Establish mechanisms for consistent and clear communication and feedback for and to staff, including a dissemination of our findings. Further involve all staff in audit and learning from audit.

Complete: The Team Manager holds a team meeting every Monday and uses this as an opportunity to refer to and feedback on audit learning. It will also be fed into the quarterly practice forums. In addition, there are the multi-agency and single agency (social care) supervision sessions, plus daily morning strategy meeting planning sessions to deal with any ad hoc issues.

Recommendation 5:

Consider short term solutions for minuting strategy meetings to enable all agencies to fully participate in meetings.

Complete: MASH administration staff now minute all strategy meetings.

Recommendation 6:

Ensure that the MASH referral form is attached to requests for information to all partner agencies

Complete: This is being done now and can be evidenced.

Recommendation 7:

Publish a story board and use it as a way to promote wider partners' understanding of the MASH journey.

Complete: The story board was written and shared with staff. This will be updated and shared at the Practice Forums going forward.

Recommendation 8:

Based on the story board, consider mechanisms for providing regular updates on progress to staff and partners to promote confidence in the improvements

Complete: This will be part of the quarterly practice forums. Speakers at the Practice Forums will be rotated between agencies. Partners will be invited, such as Head Teachers, DSLs etc. with a focus on building relationships and giving updates.

Recommendation 9:

Consider regular slots for MASH "open days" for stakeholders to improve understanding, promote transparency and to manage the outside interest.

Complete: MASH has welcomed many visitors over the past year and continues to do so. Partners are invited to arrange a suitable time to visit MASH, to ensure that this can be managed appropriately. Practice Forums – key members of MASH to be able to update to colleagues.