



**WOKINGHAM**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**WOKINGHAM MULTI-AGENCY  
SAFEGUARDING HUB  
(MASH TEAM)  
HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATION SETTINGS**

November 2024



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## 1. Making a Referral to Children’s Services & Early Help

Wokingham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH Team) is the single front door into Children’s Services and Early Help.

If a professional would like to make a referral to Children’s Services or Early Help, they are expected to complete a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) and send it to: [triage@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:triage@wokingham.gov.uk)

The referrer should always tell parents/ carers when they are referring to the MASH Team and inform them of the concerns which they have - **unless to do so would put any child or young person at risk of significant harm**. The parents’ views about the referral should be included in the referral form.

Any information the professional has about the child's developmental needs and the capacity of parents and/or carers to meet these needs within the context of their wider family and environment should be provided as a part of the referral information.

If a professional requires information or advice – they can telephone the MASH Team on **0118 908 8002** and ask to speak to a duty worker.

All professionals have a responsibility to refer a child to Wokingham Children’s Social Care under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, if they believe or suspect that a child:

- Has suffered significant harm;
- Is likely to suffer significant harm;
- Has disability, developmental and welfare needs, which are likely only to be met through provision of family support services (with agreement of the child's parents) under the Children Act 1989;
- Is a “Child in Need” whose development is likely to be impaired without a provision of services.

If there is an emergency and a child is believed to be at **immediate** risk of harm – then consideration should be given to calling police on 999.

If there are concerns that a child has suffered or is at-risk of suffering significant harm – then a professional should contact the MASH Team on **0118 908 8002** and request to speak to a MASH Social Worker. The MASH Team operates Monday – Friday 09:00 – 17:00.

If there is an emergency outside of working hours: please contact the **Emergency Duty Team on: 0134 435 1999**.

## 2. Key Contact Information

### **Wokingham - Reporting a Concern for a Child:**

MASH Team telephone: [0118 908 8002](tel:01189088002) or email: [triage@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:triage@wokingham.gov.uk)

### **Reading - Reporting a Concern for a Child:**

Brighter Futures for Children Single Point of Access Team: [cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org)

Reading (Brighter Futures for Children) referral form (online portal):

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/cspoa-notification-form1/>

**Postcode Finder:** <https://search-property-information.service.gov.uk/>

(To help determine which Local Authority a child resides in.)

### **Wokingham - Concerned about an Adult Working with Children:**

Wokingham Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): [lado@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:lado@wokingham.gov.uk)

### **Reading - Concerned about an Adult Working with Children:**

Reading Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): [LADO@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:LADO@brighterfuturesforchildren.org) or 0118 937 2684

**Wokingham Education Safeguarding Lead:** [sarah.isaac@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.isaac@wokingham.gov.uk)

### 3. Multi-Agency Referral Form

When making a referral to Wokingham Children's Services & Early Help all professionals are expected to complete a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF).

If a professional has contacted the team due to concerns that a child is likely at-risk of significant harm, the professional is still expected to complete the Multi-Agency Referral Form in full following the telephone discussion with the MASH Social Worker.

When completing the Multi-Agency Referral Form – the below information is required:

- Full names of **all** children **and** adults living in the family home.
- Dates of birth – for children **and parents/carers** (IMPORTANT to include adults!).
- Ethnicity (IMPORTANT).
- Religious beliefs.
- Contact details for the family: address, **phone numbers (for both parents)** and email (if known).
- Referrer's contact details (including phone number and email).
- Any details of professionals known to be working with the family.
- The parents/carers' & children's views in relation to the family's circumstances and view of the referral.
- Details about any children who have physical or learning needs – and what this means for them.
- The reason for referral – to include the worries for the family. If a child has made a disclosure, the professional is to include the words that the child has used and provide context in relation to what led to the disclosure (think: who, what, where, when, why, how).
- Any significant and important recent or historical events or incidents in a child or family's life (to be included in chronology section of the referral form).

## 4. Consent and Information Sharing

It is important to work in an open, honest, and transparent way with a family. This ensures that professionals maintain good working relationships with families.

Whenever possible, you should seek consent from parents/carers from the outset and include *why*, *what*, *how*, and *with whom* their information will be shared.

Consent is not the same as asking permission.

If you are making a referral to the MASH Team raising concerns of a safeguarding nature – a parent/carer should be informed of the referral and the concerns raised. Their views should also be recorded on the referral.

A referral to the targeted Early Help Service can only be made with parental consent.

If a professional is concerned that a child is at-risk of significant harm – then the referral can be made without parental consent. If a professional is unclear – please contact the MASH Team on [0118 908 8002](tel:01189088002) for a further discussion.

Parents/Carers can request a copy of the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) from the MASH Team. This can be provided in the post, email, or in person. As such, it is important to be mindful of the language that is used and that this is professional, unbiased, and non-judgmental.

## 5. Specific Information to Include in the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF)

When completing a MARF, it is important that factual information is provided. Professional judgement can also be provided as supplementary information; however, it is important to be mindful of the language that is used.

It is important that the following is included:

- **What you are worried about and why.**
- Consider the body language and presentation of a child.
- Use terminology that is understandable.
- Please provide information for the MASH Team to understand the concerns raised and the protective factors.
- It is important to provide enough information – but the information needs to be concise. Be specific!

**For example – Mental Health:**

- What does ‘**mental health issues**’ mean for this individual?
- What does ‘self-harm’ mean – we need to know exactly what this looks like
- Is there a diagnosis/are they on a pathway?
- What is the safety plan?
- What does the professional network look like?
- What does the support network look like?
- What are the potential risks to the children? What are the protective factors?

**For example- Domestic Abuse**

- What does the domestic abuse look like specifically? It is okay to ask questions!
- When was the first incident? The worst? The last?
- What is the children’s understanding of what is happening?
- Is there a safety plan?
- Consider a referral to Cranstoun Domestic Abuse Service.

**For example – Substance Misuse**

- What does **alcohol misuse** look like?
- What are they drinking, how much, how often?
- What substances/drugs are being used – how often, where are they being sourced?

**For example – Vulnerable:**

- What does **vulnerable** mean?
- Why is a child considered vulnerable: diagnosis/ SEND/ family dynamics/ history/ etc? Please describe!

## 6. If a Child Makes a Disclosure

Schools must have systems in place so that this is flagged immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead to avoid delay. A referral to Wokingham Children's Social Care needs to be completed as a matter of urgency.

- Write down exactly what was said – **by both the child and the adult** – as soon as possible after the event.
- It can be difficult to know exactly what to say. Avoid leading questions.
- Record factual information, not opinions.
- Do not make promises around confidentiality or about next steps. It's okay to reassure and to admit that you don't know, but that you are going to ask advice.
- If contacting the MASH Team – a Social Worker may ask you to speak to the child again to obtain further information (this could include questions such as – Has this happened before? Does it happen to siblings? Have you ever had any marks or injuries? Are you scared to go home?) – the Social Worker may need more information to determine next steps and any action that may be required that day. Please note that each family circumstances are specific – hence why more information may be required.

The following resources may be able to support.

- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2019/february/equipping-teachers-better-respond-disclosures-abuse-neglect/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvJ5uBIGYgE>



## 7. Harm Outside the Home / Extra-Familial Harm

The definition of Harm Outside the Home encompasses:

- Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Child Criminal Exploitation.

The contexts in which Harm Outside the Home take place could include:

- Online and in the digital world
- Peer groups within schools and places of learning
- County lines
- On and around public transport
- Wider community settings

Please consider completing the Exploitation Toolkit to support in providing additional information with the MARF:

[https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/assets/1/pan\\_berks\\_child\\_exploitation\\_and\\_youth\\_violence\\_indicator\\_and\\_analysis\\_tool\\_-\\_updated\\_october\\_2021.docx](https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/assets/1/pan_berks_child_exploitation_and_youth_violence_indicator_and_analysis_tool_-_updated_october_2021.docx)

[https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/assets/1/child\\_exploitation\\_simple\\_screening\\_tool.docx](https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/assets/1/child_exploitation_simple_screening_tool.docx)

In the MARF – please include information in relation to:

- Names and descriptions of people
- Locations where they hang out
- Car, make, model, registration, etc
- Missing episodes
- Police involvement
- Intelligence received
- Accumulative harm/ intelligence

## 8. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Process

The Wokingham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a partnership between Wokingham Borough Council, NHS Health Services, Thames Valley Police, and Probation Services working together and sharing information to safeguard children and young people.

The MASH brings key professionals together to facilitate quality information sharing in a coordinated and consistent way. Information from partner agencies will be gathered in order to assess risk and aid in the decision-making process.

The partner agencies include:

- Wokingham Children's Services
- Thames Valley Police
- National Health Service Representative
- Probation Service
- Wokingham Borough Council Housing
- Children's Education Settings – Nurseries, Schools, College
- Cranstoun Domestic Abuse Service
- Cranstoun Substance Misuse Service
- Early Help Team (including Preventative Youth Justice Service)
- Other Local Authorities

The Wokingham MASH was designed for partner agencies to share information about a child and family when safeguarding concerns have been raised, but it is unclear whether threshold for social care intervention has been met. The sharing of information provides a more holistic view of a family's circumstances and aids in the decision-making process.

The Duty Manager will RAG rate a case which determines when partner agencies are required to return information.

RED = 4 hours

AMBER = 24 hours

It is important that information is sent back to the MASH Team **within timescales** so that there is no delay in decision-making for children and families.

## 9. Threshold for Decision-Making

When a referral is received, the MASH team will RAG rate when a decision about the next steps needs to be made.

RED = 4 hours

AMBER = 24 hours

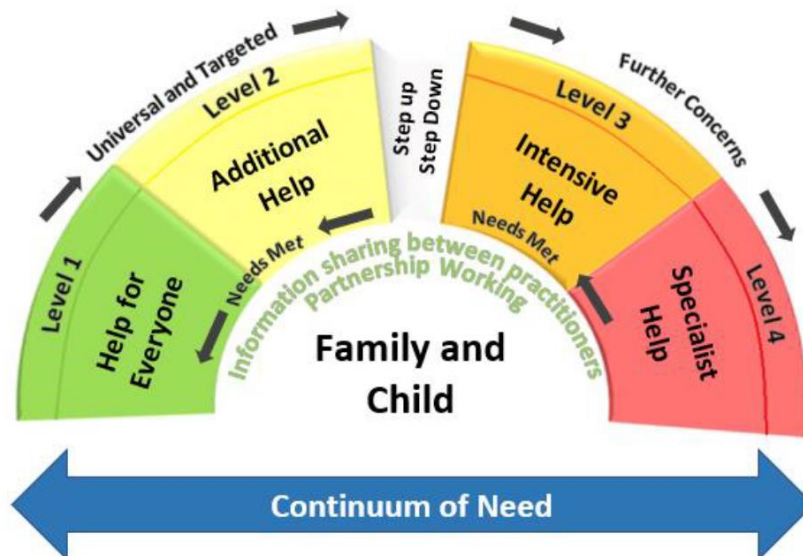
GREEN = 72 hours

Outcomes following receipt of an initial contact:

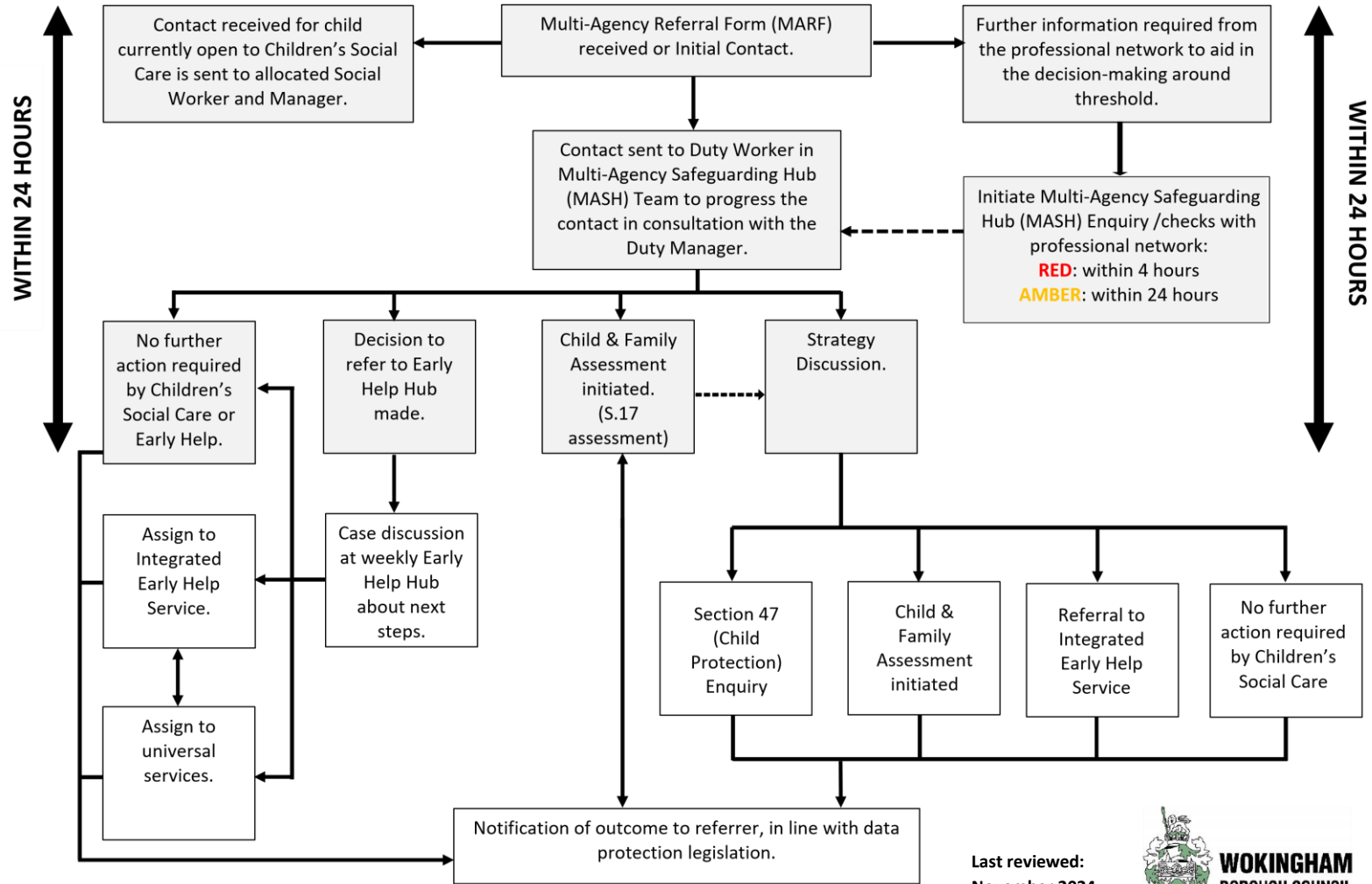
- No Further Action
- Family to be discussed at the Early Help Hub (*parental consent is required*)
- Child & Family Assessment (Section 17) (*parental consent is required*)
- Multi-Agency Strategy Meeting when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to be suffering, significant harm

Decisions are made based upon the [Wokingham Threshold Document](#) which can be viewed here:

<https://www.berkshirewestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp/threshold-guidance/wokingham-threshold-guidance>



# MASH and Referral & Assessment Flow Chart



Last reviewed:  
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## 10. Other Helpful References

### **Berkshire Safeguarding Guidance:**

<http://berks.proceduresonline.com/wokingham/index.html>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice>

### **Wokingham Threshold Guidance:**

[https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/assets/1/wokingham\\_threshold\\_guidance\\_booklet\\_-\\_autumn\\_2020.pdf](https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/assets/1/wokingham_threshold_guidance_booklet_-_autumn_2020.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice>

<https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/16274/harm-outside-the-home-strategy.pdf>