

Young Inspectors REPORT 2013

Inspection of the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by the Camden Young Inspectors team

This report is a brief summary of the findings of the Young Inspectors during their inspection of the MASH.

Who are the Young Inspectors?

The Young Inspectors are young people aged 16-21 who conduct research into the views of service users and professionals about the social work service in Camden.

Each Young Inspector has experience of having a social worker and of receiving support from the social work service; accordingly, they have a sound understanding of the service from a service-user point of view.

Why did the Young Inspectors inspect the MASH?

“The Laming review (Department for Children Schools and Families 2009) identified key weaknesses in the way that a range of agencies and individuals, who are separately in contact with a child at risk, share pertinent information with one another. As a consequence, no individual or team has a complete picture of the child’s circumstances.” (NFER)

Camden’s MASH was launched in December 2012 to overcome this difficulty. As a developing service, it will benefit from feedback from frontline professionals and Young Inspectors to help its continued development.

How did Young Inspectors gather the information?

Information gathering included:

- Research of publications and case studies (Devon multi-agency safeguarding hub: case study report by National Foundation for Education Research, Devon information booklet “The Vision”, London MASH Information Sharing Guidance by London Safeguarding Children Board, Camden MASH information for parents)
- Interviewing team managers and team representatives (MASH, duty and assessment, Families in Focus, policy writer)
- Consultations via questionnaires for professionals from MASH – multi-agency feedback, duty and assessment – social workers’ feedback and Families in Focus – family workers’ feedback)
- Views of young people (Young Inspectors).

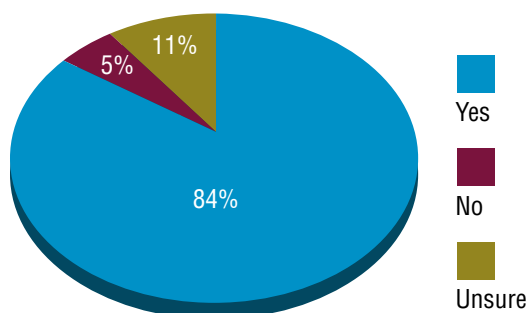


Main themes and key findings from the cons

Information sharing

1. The MASH team will always try to get consent from service users to share information unless this will put a child at risk. All information is shared with other agencies on a need to know basis.
2. Effective information sharing and communication within MASH is enabled by agencies working in the same office. Direct, face to face contact with agencies leads to quicker decisions and families are referred to the right service.

Do you think information from the MASH team is being shared effectively and efficiently?



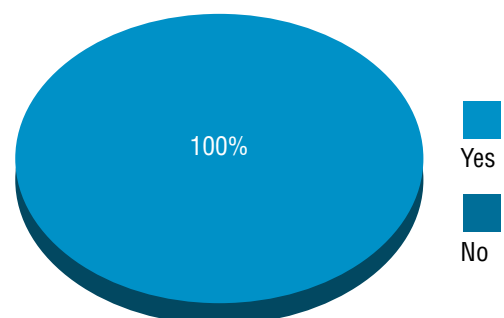
Communication

1. Effective communication between agencies is aided by: better understanding the roles of other agencies, good recording of information, sharing decisions, clear understanding of accountability between partner agencies.
2. There are clear lines of communication between teams and the co-ordination with D&A teams has been good.

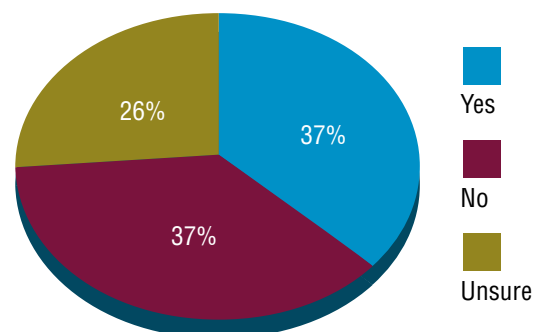
RAG rating system

1. The red, amber, green (RAG) rating system is an excellent system to prioritise cases that are high or medium risk to ensure that they are dealt with quickly.
2. There is evidence consistency between the police initial RAG rating and MASH RAG rating following the assessment. However, at times, amber ratings are downgraded to green by the duty and assessment team.
3. The experience of the duty and assessment team is that not all cases are rated appropriately, but the decisions are fair and justified based on information available to the MASH at the time.

Do you think better decisions regarding the cases are being made since MASH?



Does MASH rate each case appropriately?



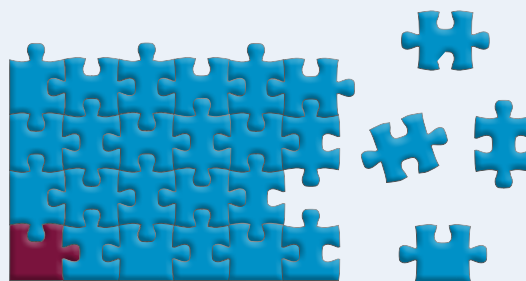
Impact of MASH on the front door referral process

1. More timely decisions being made based on good intelligence.
2. Filtering out inappropriate referrals that do not meet the threshold for a social work service.
3. Focus on cases needing investigation.
4. Signposting to organisations for services in a timely way.



Quality assuring the work being carried out

1. MASH carries out weekly and monthly quality checks to ensure timescales are being met and audits cases to see that decisions are appropriate.
2. Individual supervision.
3. All work done by social workers is overseen by a manager.
4. Weekly update by admin officers include RAG rating timescales.



Barriers to multi-agency working

1. Confusion around roles and responsibilities.
2. Differences in thresholds and cultures between agencies.
3. Lack of agreement on what outcomes are being sought.
4. Managing the number of agencies involved with the family.



Impact of MASH on services

1. 98% of child protection cases are dealt with in the four-hour timescale.
2. Addressing issues of collecting information from the professional network.
3. Increase of referrals to early help services.
4. Enables faster welfare checks on families.
5. Addressing risk within shorter timescales.
6. The MASH process provides a lot of information prior to visiting families. This may lead to assumptions or different perspectives on the case that can be unhelpful.

Feedback from Young Inspectors

What do you think about the leaflet for professionals about MASH?

"Most of the information is clear but I felt that more is needed on the red, amber, green rating of how cases are handled and examples given of the way green cases are dealt with." > Jennifer

"I found the leaflet too simple and plain. The small font also made it hard to read. The information was concise and straight to the point, giving us a good understanding of MASH." > Allie

"The leaflet says the expected time in which cases are dealt with, but this is different from the information we received during various interviews and so accurate times should be given." > Lyesha

"The leaflet is very clear and formal. I liked the colour scheme, despite it not being very eye-catching. All the relevant information is displayed through a good use of key points." > Paige

What do you think about the information for parents about MASH?

"All the relevant information is displayed but I feel there is a lack of detail concerning the permission needed from parents." > Jennifer

"I feel that the information would be better presented as a leaflet as it currently isn't very eye-catching. I like that the information is easy to read and careful consideration has gone into not using jargon, which could be unclear to parents." > Allie

"The information needs to be updated when the team moves to King's Cross, as the present information says the MASH team is based in the Crowndale Centre." > Lyesha

"Information regarding what qualifies as a concern needs to be added." > Paige



Is the information about the confidentiality and information sharing clear?

"The leaflet clearly explains the team's use of Framework-i which securely protects information." > Jennifer

"The use of Framework-i is a good way to store and share information. The open plan layout of the team's office, makes it easier to communicate with other representatives of the MASH team." > Allie

"Due to the separate databases described in the leaflet, I feel that information is kept protected and confidential within the various agencies that form MASH." > Lyesha

"Yes, it states in the leaflet that information is lawfully shared." > Paige



Other comments about MASH

"Despite various interviews with MASH and duty and assessment staff, it is still unclear to me who decides the final RAG rating of a case." > Jennifer

"I like the fact that the MASH team has been set up as it speeds up the referral process, allowing the duty and assessment team to focus on other roles - for example, visiting families to gain further information." > Allie

"Overall, I think the MASH team will have a good impact on the way referrals are dealt with." > Paige

"I like the RAG rating system as I feel it is an organised and clear way of assessing each referral. I also feel that faster action can be made by duty and assessment as they no longer have the responsibility of making the initial RAG rating or referring green cases to other services." > Lyesha

Key messages for service development

1. Develop clear mapping of service offers across the borough to make sure families are offered the appropriate services in green cases.
2. To consider creating virtual links with services such as CAMHS, adults' mental health and the ambulance service.
3. There should be more of an effort to get the child's views on their welfare if proven to be 'Gillick competent' (not needing parental consent).
4. Establish clear boundaries between the roles of MASH and duty and assessment teams.
5. MASH should keep contact with families within appropriate limits, to avoid confusion of roles once the case is referred to duty and assessment.
6. All referrals should go through MASH as opposed to some going straight to duty and assessment.
7. It is important that professionals physically sit in the same room – the flow of information is quicker and easier.
8. Deliver training for agencies to ensure better understanding of thresholds and the MASH service.
9. Consider other services joining the MASH team such as: adult services, school representatives, health, early help, Barnardo's (for young people who run away or are subject to risk of exploitation).
10. A performance framework should be created to measure the progression of the MASH team, how well it is operating, achievements and room for improvement in order to maintain an efficient service.
11. To have joint meetings of MASH with duty and assessment teams.
12. MASH team to have a role in facilitating network meetings.

Cases with a Red or Amber RAG rating will be dealt with under the MASH procedures, and team members will pass any relevant information their agency holds about the family to the social worker for analysis.

The social worker will pass their recommendations for action on to the MASH manager who will make the final decision on what to take — for the child's safety and welfare.

If you would like to be a **Young Inspector** or would like to know more about the project, please contact us via www.backchatonline.org.uk

Look for action on to the final decision simple work or a child in need.

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MASH need work service for a child in service.

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The MASH will also help Camden to identify any emerging issues or risks within the community that need a more strategic response — for example, child sexual exploitation — and enables agencies to share information and intelligence on risks to groups of victims, or risks associated with specific perpetrators or locations.