RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

29TH JANUARY 2018

CWM TAF SAFEGUARDING BOARD UPDATE REPORT ON THE MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR C LEYSHON

AUTHOR: Nicola Kingham, Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board Business Manager, 01443 484550

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the RCT Corporate Parenting Board on the ongoing work of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in achieving its primary aim of safeguarding children and adults at risk.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Board Members note the contents of this Report:

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Cwm Taf MASH has been fully operational since 7 May 2015. The MASH (located at Pontypridd Police Station) was set up to enhance safeguarding practice, with agencies working together in one place to receive all safeguarding referrals and share relevant agency information to make collaborative decisions. Governance sits with the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board (CTSB).

3.2 MASH activity comprises:
- Child Protection / Safeguarding
- Adults at Risk Safeguarding
- Domestic Abuse (MARAC - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

3.3 Cwm Taf MASH Partners are:

- Cwm Taf University Health Board
- South Wales Police
- Merthyr Tydfil CBC and Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC:
- Adult Social Services
- Children's Services
- Education
- MARAC
- Emergency Duty Team (EDT)
- National Probation Service
- Wales Community Rehabilitation Company

The original objectives that were set for MASH related to the following themes:

- Improved co-ordination and consistency of threshold/decision making when a concern is raised
- Improved response times leading to earlier interventions
- Reduction of repeat referrals

4.   WHAT DID THE MASH AIM TO ACHIEVE IN 2016/17?

4.1   The CTSB identified the following improvement outcomes for the MASH in 2016/17:

1. The operation of the MASH is supported by a sustainable infrastructure that facilitates the effective management of accommodation, resources and systems.

2. The MASH has an agreed framework in place to measure and evaluate performance and outcomes and this is underpinned by quality assurance processes to support continuous improvement.

3. The operational delivery of the MASH is supported by effective information-sharing, consistent processes and an integrated approach to thresholding.

5.   HOW WERE THESE PRIORITIES DELIVERED?

5.1   The MASH Executive Group was set up to provide the overall direction for the MASH. The Group oversees and evaluates the work of the MASH Operational Committee in delivering the goals to improve safeguarding and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk.

5.2   A MASH sub-group has been set up to support the ongoing development of the MASH to ensure it continues to achieve its goals.

6.   ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016/17

6.1   A Sustainable Infrastructure for Accommodation, Resources and Systems

- Established the MASH Operational Committee and Sub Group to support MASH processes and systems
- Resolved specific ICT issues via the deployment of a new system release of the multi-agency information sharing platform (Mhub)
- Carried out a comprehensive accommodation review with recommendations for all agencies within MASH.

6.2   Measure and Evaluate Performance and Outcomes with Quality Assurance to Support Continuous Improvement

- Carried out an audit to investigate Children's Section 47 fallout data, with actions identified
- Carried out an audit to look at repeat referrals for Children, with actions identified
- Integrated MASH performance into CTSB Quality Assurance performance indicator reporting scorecards

6.3   Effective Information-Sharing, Consistent Processes and An Integrated Approach to Thresholding

- Completed a multi-agency evaluation of MASH process maps and agreed a joint approach for amendments and improvements
- Carried out a thresholding review / screening pilot of children's referrals into MASH which led to the proposal for a Cwm Taf single thresholding approach

6.4   The following table shows the number of MASH referrals that met the threshold for child protection, adult protection and high risk domestic abuse. The number of incidents is comparable with the previous year's data, with a slight increase overall.

Cwm Taf MASH Information Sharing (Total Mhub incidents)	
2015/16 (over 11 months as MASH commenced in May 2015)	2236
2016/17 (12 months)	2511

6.5   The data is indicative of the thresholding and triaging of all types of referrals that enter the MASH through agencies front door. The total numbers of referrals/contacts that were triaged by the MASH for

2016/2017 were 24,644. The data represents a 90% reduction and break in demand demonstrating only the referrals with the most significant risk are processed through the MASH.

6.6 Reduction of Repeat Referrals (Children)

There was a reduction in repeat referrals for Child Protection in RCT during the second year of MASH, meeting the MASH objective to reduce repeat referrals.

Percentage of Children referrals that are re-referrals within 12 months (Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC)	
April 2015 to March 2016	24.12%
April 2016 to March 2017	20.53%
Reduction of:	3.59%

6.7 Partner Consultation

In 2015 and 2016 individuals representing a range of partner agencies were invited to participate in a consultation survey to assess their understanding and perceptions of the MASH. This survey was repeated for a third time in 2017, and responses from the latest consultation survey demonstrate that most respondents feel that the MASH has made a positive difference to safeguarding in Cwm Taf. Key conclusions are noted below (from a total of 91 responses):

- 94% felt that MASH had improved safeguarding in Cwm Taf, compared to 87% in the previous year's survey

- 83% of 91 respondents felt that information sharing is effective

- 82% of 91 respondents felt that risk management between agencies is effective

7. PROGRESS UPDATE 2017/18

7.1 The ongoing review and development of the MASH is being driven via the MASH Executive Board on behalf of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board. In 2017/18 continuing work has been undertaken to further streamline the work of the MASH.

7.2 Activities and achievements from April 2017 to date include:

- Establishing a MASH Quality Assurance Group to develop a robust performance management framework and audit programme

- Ongoing improvements to the MHUB information sharing system. A cross border Task and Finish Group with Cardiff and the Vale and Western Bay Safeguarding Boards is being established to assess the ongoing IT needs of the MASH

- An accommodation review has been carried out resulting in alteration works to improve MASH accommodation

7.3 Cwm Taf Approach to Responding to Child Protection Concerns

The MASH Executive Group initiated a piece of work to agree a single Cwm Taf approach to responding to child protection concerns.

7.4 A multi agency workshop was held to consider the following:

- To identify any differences in response between RCT and Merthyr Tydfil Local Authorities and agree a common approach
- Identify areas for Quality Assurance by the MASH Sub-group
- Identify any changes in practice that are required.

7.5 The findings of the workshop included:

- Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) - the process is the same in both Local Authorities. This is a single agency process and is not a safeguarding service and therefore belongs outside of MASH.

- Local Authority Decision Makers - there are a pool of individuals who undertake this function (usually 2 for RCT and 1 for MT). All contacts relating to a child are reviewed by a decision maker on the day they are received. This is the same in both LAs.

- Threshold for Child Protection Intervention - all decision makers reviewing contacts decide if there is 'reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect' and, if so, will determine if immediate protective action is required and will initiate this after a discussion with the police. However, not all these discussions are being recorded as Strategy Discussions.

- Strategy Discussions - the procedural timescale is within 24 hours to ensure initial information sharing and planning the Section 47 child protection investigation. There can sometimes be delays in holding Strategy Discussions due to capacity issues. However on further discussion it became apparent that this refers to the multi-agency meeting held within MASH and that a discussion would

have previously been held between the LA and police to agree any immediate actions required..

- No Reasonable Cause to Suspect Abuse or Neglect - when the MASH decision maker determines that there is NOT 'reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect' both Local Authorities pass the contact to their teams outside of MASH.

- Cannot Determine Reasonable Cause to Suspect Abuse or Neglect - when the decision maker cannot determine, at this point, whether or not there is 'reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect' both Local Authorities pass the case to their teams outside MASH to begin a proportionate assessment.

- Use of RAG system - there are different practices around the use of colour coding of cases on MHUB to determine the prioritisation of cases.

- Daily Domestic Abuse MARACs - whilst there is no difference between the two Local Authorities in how they manage child protection cases, the workshop did identify a difference in the responses to daily DA MARACs. RCT often send cases discussed at daily MARAC for a s47 Investigation. MT generally send these for a proportionate assessment and only bring back to MASH for strategy discussion if the child protection threshold is met during the assessment.

7.6 The MASH Executive Group have subsequently agreed the following recommendations as a result of the workshop:

1. Incorporate into QA process the implementation of the MARAF in the MASH and to regularly audit a sample of cases to provide assurance that consistent thresholds are being applied across the decision makers.

2. All discussions with the police around action to be taken to safeguard a child including any home visits by the Local Authority should be recorded as Strategy Discussions.

3. The timescale for Strategy Discussions will be a key performance indicator for the MASH.

4. The use of colour coding of cases on MHUB should cease with immediate effect.

5. The Safeguarding Board Quality Assurance Group should undertake an audit of cases where the s47 Investigation determines that there is NO cause to suspect abuse and neglect.

6. All daily DA MARAC discussions which are also Child Protection Strategy Discussions must be clearly recorded as such.

7. No new process to be introduced into MASH until it has been robustly tested by MASH Operational Committee

7.7 As a result of this ongoing integration work in the MASH, the Executive Board has now initiated a review of how the administration of the MASH safeguarding process. The intended outcome will be to provide greater resilience and co-ordination across all partners