

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015/16**

**HEALTH & WELLBEING SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**22<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY 2016**

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR  
COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES**

<b>AGENDA ITEM 5</b>
<b>MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB UPDATE</b>

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide Members of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with an update on the implementation of the Cwm Taf Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee:

2.1 scrutinise and comment on the information provided in relation to the implementation of the Cwm Taf Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

2.2 agree to receive further reports to ensure that progress with this significant development serves to improve safeguarding provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) provide the opportunity for services to work together more effectively using one point of entry to share relevant information securely in order to safeguard children and adults at risk and develop an immediate proportionate and appropriate response.

3.2 MASHs, therefore, result in a consistent response to safeguarding concerns with professionals within a multi-agency team gathering information to support effective decisions in as timely a way as possible. Risk, threat and harm are quickly assessed and decisions made regarding the most appropriate action to take; enabling a coordinated and consistent response to safeguard vulnerable children and adults.

**Cwm Taf Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub**

3.3 The Cwm Taf MASH has been operational handling concerns regarding adults at risk from January 2015 and fully operational for all concerns regarding

children since May 2015. It is one of only a handful of MASHs nationally that handles concerns about children, adults at risk and high risk domestic abuse; taking a holistic, family approach. Nearly 50 staff from

- Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Councils' Adult Safeguarding Teams
- Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Councils' Children Services
- Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Councils' Education Services
- Cwm Taf University Health Board
- National Probation Service Wales
- Wales Community Rehabilitation Company
- South Wales Police

are working together in the Cwm Taf MASH office at Pontypridd Police Station.

- 3.3 In addition, the Regional Emergency Duty Team which provides an emergency response to a social care crisis outside of normal office hours, on bank holidays and at weekends has also based in the Cwm Taf MASH office since January 2015. Through the co-location, there is now the ability for direct liaison between the day-time and the out-of-hours service regarding safeguarding matters, as well as close collaboration with South Wales Police on numerous joint cases, who also operate an out-of-office service within their Public Protection Department at Pontypridd Police Station.
- 3.4 The Cwm Taf MASH now provides the first point of contact for new safeguarding concerns and directly receives safeguarding concerns from professionals such as teachers, doctors and commissioned care and support providers; as well as members of the public and family members via Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Councils' Contact Centres.
- 3.5 For concerns that meet the threshold for a safeguarding response, representatives from the different agencies in the Cwm Taf MASH and outside collate information from their respective sources to build up a holistic picture of the circumstances of the case and the associated risks to the child, adult or high risk domestic abuse concern. As a result, better decisions can be made about what action to take and support is targeted on the most urgent cases. Feedback is also be given to professionals reporting concerns. Better co-ordination between agencies leads to an improved service for children, adults and their families.
- 3.6 The Cwm Taf MASH has its own Information Sharing Protocol and a bespoke information-sharing and decision making system (MHub), which assists with formalising the sharing of the sensitive personal data that must be undertaken in order for the MASH to work effectively.
- 3.7 Governance of the Cwm Taf MASH is overseen by the MASH Executive Group and supported by legal agreement that clearly sets out each partner agencies duties in delivery of the MASH. The MASH Executive Group is accountable to Cwm Taf Adult and Children Safeguarding Board. Reports are provided to the MASH Executive Group and Safeguarding Board to ensure that all partner

agencies are assured that the MASH is delivering against their safeguarding responsibilities.

### **Adult Social Care Safeguarding Team**

- 3.8 It was originally agreed that the Rhondda Cynon Taf Council Adult Safeguarding Team, consisting of 5 full-time equivalent staff, would be equally split between the MASH office at Pontypridd Police Station and their existing base at the Council's Ty Elai Offices in Williamstown. However, it became apparent that spitting the team was unsustainable, so, after a period of 6 months' trial, the entire team permanently relocated to the MASH from January 2016.
- 3.9 There are 4 FTE Safeguarding Officers that make up the Rhondda Cynon Taf Safeguarding Team who are responsible for decision-making in relation to safeguarding concerns reported from partner agencies within the MASH, the wider health and social care community and members of the public.
- 3.10 Since April 2015, the Rhondda Cynon Taf Adult Social Care Safeguarding Team has processed 878 contacts, of which, 560 (64%) resulted in information and advice being given in relation to the safeguarding concerns and 318 (36%) progressing to a formal referral/report to MASH for assessment.
- 3.11 When assessed as requiring a MASH intervention, information is loaded onto the MHub system, so that formal sharing of sensitive personal information can take place. A multi-agency strategy discussion, involving not only MASH partners but also (via teleconferencing) professionals and agencies with knowledge of the adult at risk, leads to the development of an immediate safeguarding plan for the person (and others, particularly if the alleged abuse or neglect has been committed by a care provider) and potentially to formal criminal or other investigation. The case is not closed until risks to the person can be mitigated.
- 3.12 The Rhondda Cynon Taf Adult Safeguarding Team also consists of a Safeguarding Liaison Officer who is primarily responsible for managing routine information reports shared by the Police with the Council about individuals with whom they come into contact in local communities, who they perceive to be vulnerable and in need of care and support. These information reports are generated via the 'PPN' (Public Protection Notification) process. The Liaison Officer also provides much of the routine information requested by other agencies, in particular, Children's Services.
- 3.13 Since April 2015, the Safeguarding Liaison Officer has dealt with 1026 PPNs.

## **4. HOW IS MASH MAKING DIFFERENCE**

- 4.1 A formal evaluation of the benefits and outcomes arising from the implementation of MASH is due to commence shortly. However, initial evidence

indicates that the work of MASH is contributing to an improved service to adults at risk and the following the benefits and outcomes are being achieved:

- significant improvement in the sharing of information between agencies, with immediate access to other agencies' information & resources, resulting in quicker & more accurate risk assessment and decision-making
- reduction of adverse outcomes for adults at risk due to more effective risk assessment completed at an earlier opportunity
- more consistent, timely and unified multi-agency proportionate response to concerns about an adult at risk
- improved information-sharing and co-ordination of decision-making processes for adults and children at risk within the same family
- more focus on promotion of earlier intervention and prevention
- closer partnership working, clearer accountability and less duplication or effort

4.2 The positive impact of MASH is reflected in the two case study examples below.

### **Case Study One**

MASH receives information that Sarah, aged 30, who has a significant learning disability and lives with her aunt, has attended her respite care home with bruising to her arms and chest and also had a black eye and saying that her 'aunty did it'.

Information quickly gathered from her social worker and the respite facility establishes that there have been previous incidents of unexplained bruising and concerns about the quality of care Sarah receives from her aunt, but the picture is complicated by Sarah's challenging behaviour.

Adult safeguarding officers share the information received with police colleagues, it was arranged for plain-clothed (Sarah is frightened of uniformed police) specialist police officers to attend the centre to speak with Sarah, resulting in arrest of her aunt. Formal strategy discussion involved the social worker and her manager, who arranged for Sarah to continue to be accommodated by the local authority pending further investigations.

Summary of MASH benefits:

- Triggers identified - potential criminal offence
- Effective and timely person-centred communication between all agencies
- Vulnerability identified
- Early intervention to safeguard Sarah
- Co-ordinated agency response

## Case Study Two

MASH receive a contact via the Council's First Response Service from 75 year old Mair's older daughter expressing concern that Mair is being physically, financially and emotionally abused by her younger daughter, who has recently moved in with Mair, along with Mair's 10 year old grandson, who has witnessed his mother's behaviour towards his grandmother. Reportedly, although Mair wants this abuse to stop, she is very clear that she does not want to make a complaint to the Police.

### Summary of MASH benefits

- Risk identified: potential criminal offences
- Information shared with partner agencies, including police, domestic abuse services and locality social care team.
- Multi-agency strategy discussion results in co-ordinated response: social worker and independent domestic abuse advisor to meet with Mair in safe place to discuss her options
- Children's Services initiate Child Protection enquiries
- Police place warning markers on Mair's address and task PCSO to make informal contact with Mair.

## 6. **PRIORITIES FOR 2016/17**

### 6.1 Priorities for 2016/17, include:

- undertaking evaluation of performance of the MASH to ensure expected outcomes are being delivered
- upgrading and ongoing development of the MHub information-sharing platform
- reviewing all MASH processes to ensure they remain efficient and effective
- producing update MASH & Adult Safeguarding public information leaflets
- developing wider range of multi agency performance measures and management information for the MASH
- implementing the new Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and working with partner agencies to mitigate any risks associated with the ongoing delivery of the MASH

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The Cwm Taf MASH has attracted interest nationally, with the First Minister, Crime Commissioner for Wales and Ministry of Justice senior civil servants amongst others visiting the project. Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan are currently about to launch a MASH based on the Cwm Taf model and other local authorities are in negotiation with their local partners to develop similar projects.
- 7.2 The first year of the MASH has been successful. All relevant partners are fully engaged and recognise the benefits of multi-agency information sharing and improved resource planning in providing the earliest opportunity in achieving improved and effective pathways to safeguarding provision within Rhondda Cynon Taf and regionally across Cwm Taf. This is delivering on a key recommendation of many serious case reviews both nationally and in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 7.3 Future updates to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee are recommended to ensure that Members are assured that progress with this significant development serves to improve safeguarding provision in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**as amended by**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Free standing Matter

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