



Southampton MASH

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
Guide for Professionals

www.southamptonlscb.co.uk

What is the MASH?

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the single point of contact for all safeguarding concerns regarding children and young people in Southampton. It brings together expert professionals, called “navigators”, from services that have contact with children, young people and families, making the best possible use of their combined knowledge to keep children safe from harm.

What does the MASH do?

The MASH:

- Is a ‘front door’ to manage all safeguarding referrals.
- Researches information held on agencies professional databases.
- Provides a secure and confidential environment for professionals to share information.
- Identifies low-level repeat referrals which taken in isolation may not appear concerning.
- Prioritises referrals using a BRAG (Blue/Red/Amber/Green) rating (see below).
- Refers cases to agencies.
- Activates ‘first response’ social work services to provide immediate protection for a child.

BRAG ratings

Red: There is a potential child protection issue (e.g. serious injury to the child). *Requires immediate action, and information from MASH navigators is expected within 2 hours.*

Amber: There are significant concerns but immediate action is not required (e.g. ongoing domestic violence issues in the household). *Requires information from MASH navigators within 6 hours.*

Green: There are concerns regarding a child's wellbeing but these do not meet statutory requirements (e.g. poor school attendance). *Requires information from selected MASH navigators within 24 hours.*

Blue: There is no safeguarding concern and the issue can be dealt with by an appropriate agency.

How does the MASH process work?

When the MASH receives a contact, the MASH Navigators first check if the child already has a social worker.

If there is an allocated social worker, they are considered to be the best person to support the child, so the case is referred directly to them, but MASH research by the Navigators may provide additional helpful information to that social worker.

If there is no social worker, then the MASH Navigators assess the level of risk.

The MASH Manager confirms the risk level with a **BRAG** rating.

If the rating is **blue** then the contact is directed to a Universal service, or closed with no further action.

If it is **Amber** or **Green**, the contact is passed to the MASH 3 Navigators.

How does the MASH process work cont....

If it is **red**, the contact is passed to both the MASH Navigators and the Child Protection Team at the same time, so they can start an assessment immediately.

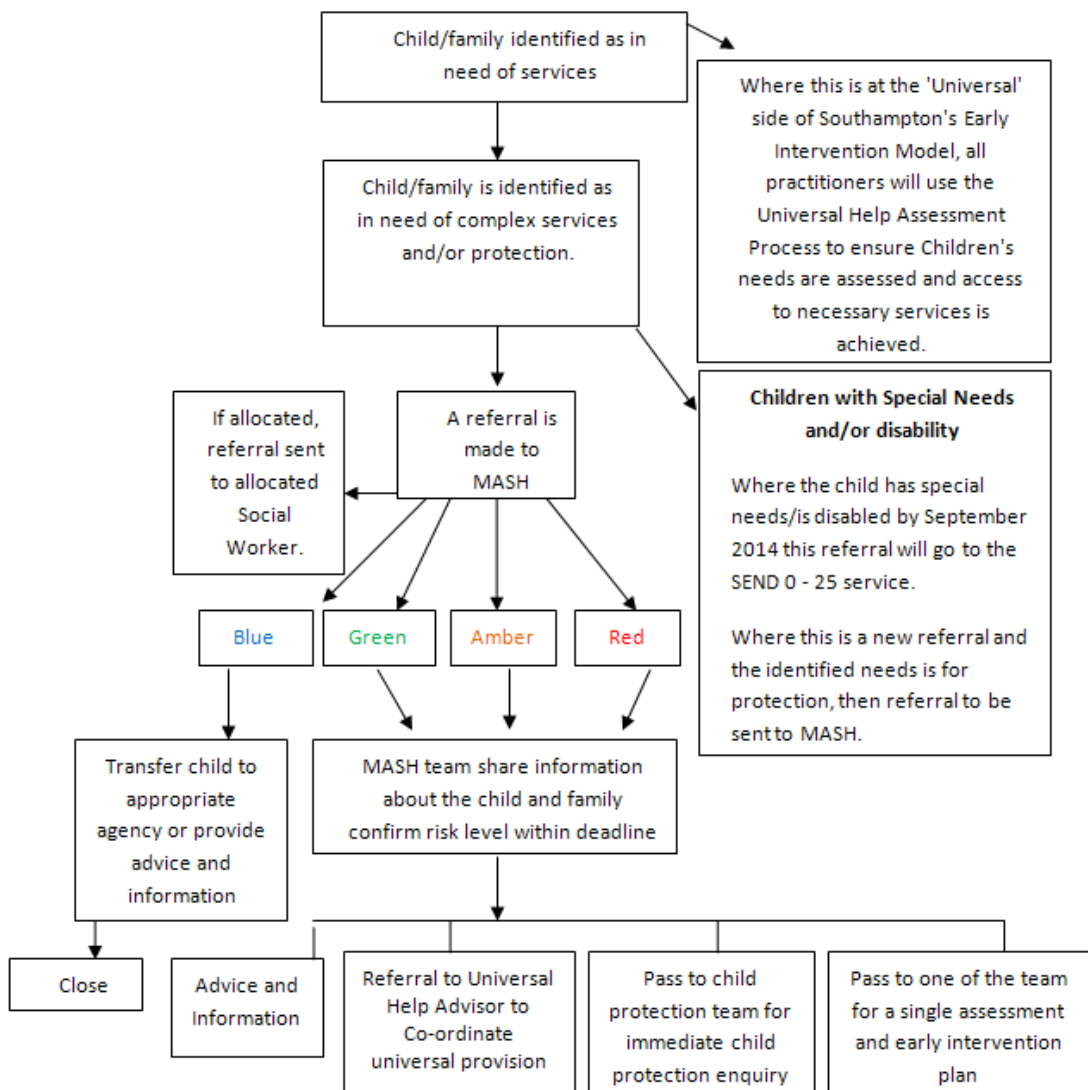
Next, the Navigators research and share information about the child. The MASH Manager may change the **BRAG** rating as new information comes to light.

The MASH Manager uses the collected information to decide the best response to meet the child's needs. The Manager may:

- Refer the case to the Child Protection team (or leave it with them, if they've already started their assessment);
- Refer the case to another social work team, a multi-disciplinary team, or a Universal Service or
- The case will not progress through the MASH.

The service that receives the case will receive a summary of any appropriate information gathered by the MASH.

Pathways for Children in Southampton



Who is in the MASH?

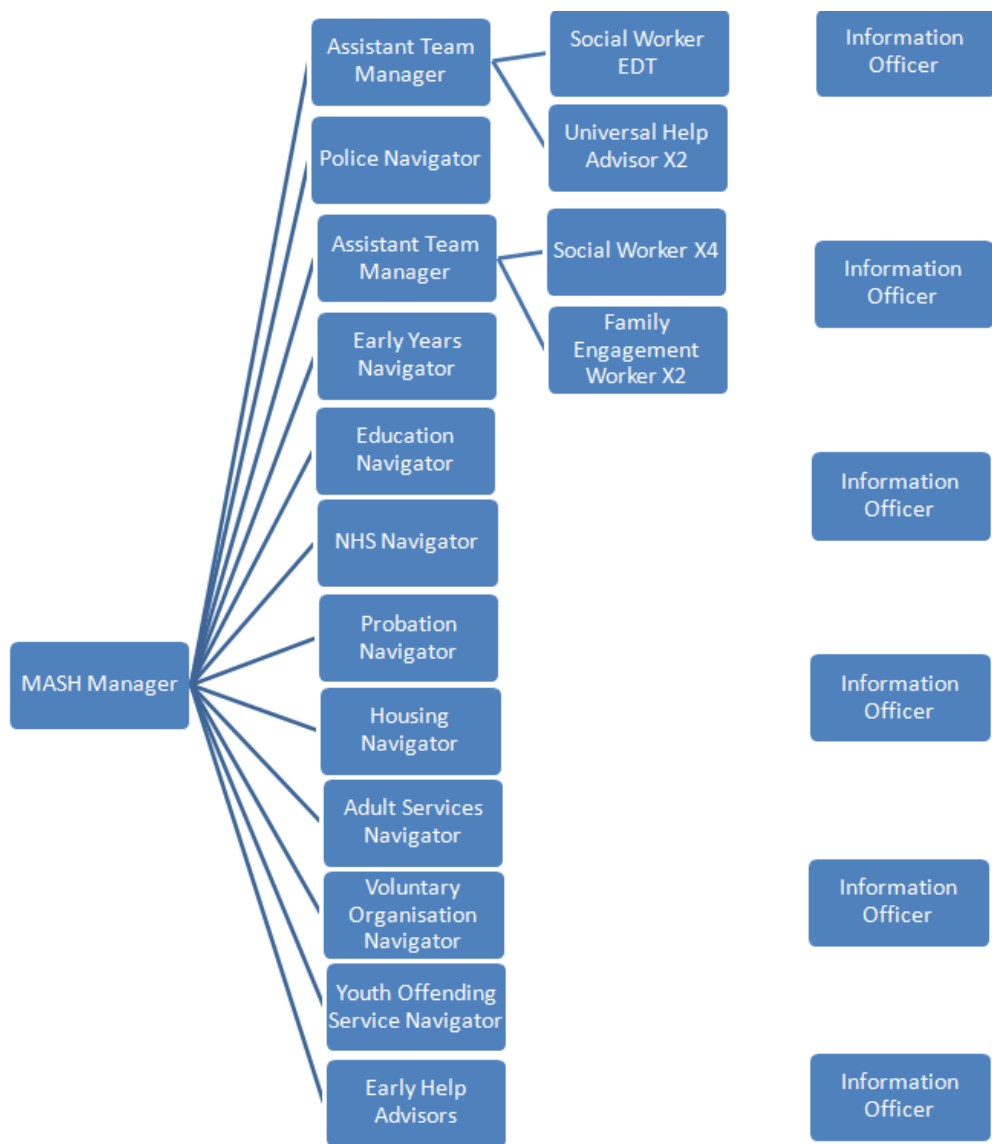
The MASH is composed of staff from different teams and partner agencies. Children's Social Care staff are managed and supervised by the Team Manager. MASH Navigators are supervised by their own agencies, and the Team Manager coordinates them within the MASH.

The Child Protection Team sits with the MASH team. Their role is to carry out assessments where there is an urgent child protection issue.

Core Partners

- Children and Families Services
- Police
- NHS Team
- Education
- Voluntary Sector
- Early Years
- Substance Misuse Services
- Adult Mental Health
- IDVA
- Youth Offending Service
- Housing

MASH Structure



When to make a MASH referral

Enquiries should be made when your assessment has identified needs which can only be met through Enhanced Services at upper Level 2 or Specialist Services at level 3 of the Southampton Child and Family Early Intervention Model.

The Southampton Child and Family Early Intervention Model and Threshold Document can be found at:

www.southamptonlscb.co.uk

You can talk about your decision with Children and Families Service professionals based in the MASH and any decision reached should be clearly recorded by the agencies involved.

Before making a MASH enquiry

Before making a MASH enquiry you need to consider if the child or young person's needs can be met by services from within your own agency, or by other professionals already involved with the family.

We know that it is sometimes difficult to decide the appropriate point of intervention. To help you to determine levels of need when making your own assessment, please refer to the multi-agency additional needs indicators which form part of the threshold document at www.southamptonlscb.co.uk

You can always contact the MASH team for advice on completion of the Universal Help Assessment.

Before making an enquiry you should always try to get the consent of the parents or carers, except where a child is considered to be at risk of harm and you believe that seeking parental consent may increase this risk.

How to make an enquiry

Urgent referrals relating to Child Protection

If you believe that urgent action is needed because, for example, a child is in immediate danger or needs accommodation (upper Level 3 of the Southampton Child and Family Early Intervention Model and Threshold Document), phone the MASH on 02380 832300 or if immediate danger, phone 999.

Your call will be passed immediately to the Manager who will make a decision on the risk level and acknowledge this with you within one hour. You must follow up your telephone call by sending a completed Child Protection Referral form to the MASH within 24 hours. Referral form can be found here:

www.southamptonlscb.co.uk

Other Child Protection concerns

If you have a Child Protection concern but urgent and immediate action is not needed (lower Level 3 of the Southampton Wellbeing Model), you must complete a referral form which can be found on www.southamptonlscb.co.uk

All other concerns

For any other concerns, or where a Universal Help Assessment is already in process, you should complete a Universal Help Assessment form providing as much up-to-date detail as possible. Whichever form is used, it should be shared with the parent or carer and, where appropriate, with the child, prior to making the enquiry if possible. The information you provide will support threshold decisions and contribute to any subsequent assessments, such as a Single Assessment. The Universal Help Assessment found at www.southamptonlscb.co.uk.

After the MASH process

Once a fuller picture about the case has been established, the MASH Manager will decide on the most appropriate decision to take. This may mean passing it to the Child Protection team along with the information gathered by the navigators, or referring the case to an Enhanced or Specialist service.

Where the MASH Manager decides that the case does not require an Enhanced or Specialist service, but that the family may benefit from some identified lower-level support, the family will be offered signposting to an appropriate Universal Service.

If there is no wellbeing or safeguarding issue and the family does not need any additional support, then the case can be closed and no further action will be taken.

Referrers and professionals will be notified as to the outcome of the contact within 24 hours.



MASH Opening Hours:

Mon—Thurs: 8.30am to 5pm

Fri: 8.30am to 4.30pm

Contacting the MASH:

Tel: 023 80 832300 (Professionals line)

Email: mash@southampton.gov.uk

Address:

Southampton City Council
Southampton MASH
Civic Centre
Southampton
SO14 7LY

To contact the out of hours Emergency Duty Team, please call: 02380 233344

The contact number for public use is: 023 80 833336

If a child is in immediate danger, please call 999.

Governance of the MASH

The core MASH team and the Child Protection team are a part of Southampton City Council Children and Family Service.

The MASH Team Manager, who has the final say in all safeguarding decisions, reports to the Principal Officer—MASH and Early Help in Southampton City Council Children and Family Services.

The MASH strategic board meetings monthly and will receive regular reports to oversee the performance of MASH,

A governance agreement between the MASH partners is published online at www.southamptonlscb.co.uk

Data Sharing and Fair Processing

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on key people and bodies to cooperate to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. This includes the proportionate sharing of information, where appropriate, to make the best decisions for children and young people at risk.

All partners sign up to an Information Sharing Agreement that specifies what data can be shared within the MASH, and what happens to that data once the MASH Manager makes a decision. The MASH has physical, electronic and managerial safeguards to ensure that sensitive information is only access by those who 'need to know' about it.

It is my information, what are my rights?

The MASH team have a responsibility to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. By sharing your information we can ensure the best decision is made for your child and provide you with appropriate help and support when it is needed.

Information held by the MASH will be kept and processed securely, in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. It will only be shared with other practitioners and/or other agencies on a 'need to know' basis, either:

- where there are believed to be child protection issues, or
- where the information is required to ensure your child receives the appropriate assessment or services.

If professionals are referring your child to the MASH team for advice and support, they will need to ask for parent/carer's permission first.

In cases where it is felt that the child may require a social work assessment, this should be discussed with the parent/carer. Agreement to a referral will be actively sought, however professionals are able to refer a child without this permission if there are concerns that the child's welfare needs are not being appropriately met.

If professionals are referring a child to the MASH team because of child protection concerns, parents/carers will only be told about the referral beforehand if the professional is sure this would not increase the risk to your child.

If the parent/carer would like further information about how their information is being held and processed by the MASH, they should contact the MASH Manager on mash@southampton.gov.uk The Information Sharing Agreement to allow sharing of the information among agencies can be found at www.southamptonlscb.co.uk

Will the parent/carer find out what is happening?

In most cases parents/carers will be contacted by the MASH team or service they have been referred to, who can update them on what action has been taken.

They can also contact the MASH team on mash@southampton.gov.uk to find out the outcome of the referral. If the referral is progressed to children's social care the social worker will contact the family for a discussion or to arrange a time to meet.

What to do if I am not happy?

If you are not happy about the way the MASH team deals with any referral about a family, please raise this first with the MASH manager.

They will explain why the information was shared and how the decision on the case was made. If you or the family are still not happy, you can make a complaint by contacting:

complaints@southampton.gov.uk

Tel: 023 80 833154

Glossary of Terms

BRAG– Blue/Red/Amber/Green risk rating (see p. 3)

Contact – When a professional or member of the public reports a concern about a child’s welfare to the MASH.

Child Protection Team – A team of social workers who deal with urgent child protection cases.

Navigator – The multi-agency MASH professionals who will research information about referrals.

Referral – When the MASH screening officers decide there is a risk to the child’s welfare, and refer the case to be researched by the MASH navigators.

Safeguarding Children – Protecting children and young people from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health or development; and ensuring that they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

Universal/Enhanced/Specialist – Levels of children’s service defined by the Southampton Wellbeing Model.



Southampton Voluntary Services



Southampton Local Safeguarding Children Board

