

What to expect when Adult Social Care receive a Safeguarding Concern

Claudine Cox, MASH Team Manager
June 2022



The role of MASH

The Surrey Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub for adults is the main referral point for adult safeguarding concerns. This is where partner organisations and the public are advised to refer adult safeguarding concerns.

The aims of the MASH are:

- To enable good decision making by Surrey County Council, in partnership with other agencies, about when an adult safeguarding concern will lead to an adult safeguarding enquiry;
- To enable good decision making by Surrey County Council, in partnership with other agencies, about what will be involved in carrying out an adult safeguarding enquiry;
- To enable good information sharing practice across the partner agencies so that there is a shared understanding of the circumstances and the risk in situations where there is an adult safeguarding concern or enquiry

MASH also complete Standard Enquiries relating to medication errors and some concerns about Health providers.

MASH is not...

- A gateway to reporting crime. If you suspect a crime has occurred, you need to report this to Police via 101 or 999 in an emergency
- A way to request an assessment for someone who appears to have a need for care and support. You should make a referral to the Advice & Information Service via the [Professional Portal](#)
- A service for people in crisis due to their mental health. If you have concern that someone may harm themselves, you should:
 - Report to police if you believe they are at imminent risk
 - Advise them to contact their GP or the SABP Crisis Line on 0800 915 4644
 - Contact the SABP Crisis Line yourself who can advise you

Who are MASH

MASH consists of:

- ASC workers
- Surrey & Borders Partnership Trust workers
- In the future, Health workers

We also work closely with:

- Surrey Police SPA
- Children's SPA

We also can gather information from other partners, such as:

- GPs
- Hospital and Community Health Safeguarding Teams
- Catalyst (in relation to support for victims of Cuckooing)
- District & Borough Councils
- DA Outreach

When to refer to MASH

A referral must be made to the MASH if you have cause to suspect that an adult:

- **Has a need for care and support; and**
- **Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect**

You should make clear in your referral what leads you to believe each of these.

- [You can find information about how you make a referral of an adult safeguarding concern on Surrey County Council's website.](#)
- Not sure whether to make a referral? Consult the ["Level of Needs for Adults"](#) guidance

What makes a good safeguarding concern referral

- Information that has led you to believe the person has a need for care and support
- Details about what has happened, where, when and to who to cause concern; and
- Information about anything that has already been done, or is planned, to help support the person and prevent any further abuse or neglect
- Any risks that it would be helpful for the local authority to be aware of when considering what happens next
- Confirmation that you have informed the adult about the referral, and if you have not informed them, an explanation as to why
- Confirmation of what the adult would like to happen as a result of your referral
- Information that would assist us in making effective contact with the person

If you do have information that can help inform a decision whether the person is unable to protect themselves from the abuse and neglect because of their care and support needs please include it, but you do not have to have this to refer an adult safeguarding concern.



Some issues with referrals can include

- Not informing the adult about the referral and understanding what they would like to happen
- Not giving information about all relevant adults involved
- Not giving enough information about the concern
- Not informing the police where a crime is suspected

Informing the adult – S28 of SSAB Policy & Procedure

- Adults have a general right to independence, choice and self-determination including control over information about themselves and their privacy. In the context of adult safeguarding these rights can be overridden in certain circumstances.
- An individual employee cannot give a personal assurance of confidentiality
- It is good practice to try to gain the person's consent to share information, but only where this is relevant. Under the General Data Protection Regulations consent will not likely be the legal basis for processing information by public authorities but is an important mechanism of empowering people with choice and control.
- As long as it does not increase risk, practitioners should inform the person if they need to share their information without consent

Details of all relevant adults

It is important for us to know who the source of risk is, especially where this is a friend or relative of the adult or another adult at risk. Part of the information gathered in MASH is to enable an assessment of risk to be completed so we would want to gather information about the source of risk from partner agencies where this is relevant.

This also enables MASH and other professionals to understand when an adult poses risks to multiple others or their behaviour may be becoming more dangerous.

Informing the Police

Making a referral to MASH does not mean that it is also reported to police. If you suspect a crime has occurred, you should be making a decision about reporting to police and doing that via 101.

If the adult does not want to inform the police, you may need to do so any way due to:

- Public interest - if someone else, especially a child or another adult with a need for care and support, is also at risk of abuse or witnessing abuse, or a general risk to the public
- Vital interest – the risk to the adult is so high that you need to share information with the appropriate agency, which would be police where the abuse is also a potential crime

What happens next?

The referral is screened the same day:

- If the adult is **open** to a Locality or Specialist Team it is passed directly to them who should then respond to the referrer
- If the referral is **not a safeguarding concern**, it is passed to the most appropriate team and the referrer is responded to with appropriate advice
- Each safeguarding concern referral is assigned a priority rating which dictates how quickly it is reviewed by a social worker

Social worker reviews information on our systems and requests information from other partners as appropriate, then makes the S42 decision as to whether enquiries are needed:

- Standard enquiry relating to a medication error or concern about an Acute Hospital or Community Health Provider (excluding MH) is completed by MASH
- All other enquiries are passed to a Locality or Specialist Team to complete, and MASH provide guidance, information from partners and contact details for partners who need to be involved in the enquiry

Purpose of an Enquiry

The purpose of an adult safeguarding enquiry is to enable Surrey County Council to decide whether any action should be taken in the adult's case, and if so what that action should be. These can be actions by the local authority under the Care Act, or any other actions by anyone else.

The objectives of the enquiry are to:

- establish facts
- ascertain the adult's views and wishes
- assess the needs of the adult for protection, support and redress and how they might be met
- protect from the abuse and neglect, in accordance with the wishes of the adult;
- make decisions as to what follow-up action should be taken with regard to the person or organisation responsible for the abuse or neglect
- enable the adult to achieve resolution and recovery

Will I get feedback?

It would be appropriate for you to receive feedback about the S42 decision if:

- You would have a role in the enquiry
- In some instances, where you have an ongoing support role with the adult
- If the adult gives their consent for you to have feedback

It is not appropriate for you to receive feedback outside of these circumstances as the concern is either about another provider or about something that is happening in someone's private and family life.

If you make a referral by email or online, you will receive an automated email response which confirms that the referral has been received by MASH.

“But how will we know if we were right to refer?”

- Unless you have feedback to say that it was not an appropriate referral and why, then assume you were correct to make the referral.
- The action that we take for one referral should not influence you in making any future referrals – sometimes a S42 decision can change based on escalation of concerns or new information.

Referring concerns about your own service

The response to an adult safeguarding concern in a regulated care setting must be carried out in line with the requirements of paragraphs 14.68 – 14.75 of the Care and Support Statutory Guidance. While this is a legal requirement for regulated care settings, the principles there can be a useful framework to use when concerns arise in other settings. The principles include:

- Though there can be a role for others, the first responsibility to act must be with the provider of the service
- When a service provider is aware of abuse or neglect in their organisation, then they are under a duty to correct this and protect the adult from harm as soon as possible and inform the local authority. They may also need to inform others such as the regulator of the service and commissioners of the service
- Whatever the action taken by the service provider, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult may be experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, then its duty to make (or cause to be made) whatever enquiries it thinks necessary to decide what if any action needs to be taken and by whom still applies

Response to concerns about referrer's own service

In considering whether the response by the service provider has been sufficient to deal with the safeguarding issue, the local authority will need to take account of whether the information provided demonstrates that the objectives of an adult safeguarding, set in paragraph 14.94 of the Care and Support statutory guidance, have been met.

If the service provider ensures the information they provide when referring the adult safeguarding concern, or as soon after as is practical, shows that the response has been sufficient to achieve these objectives, it can help to bring the adult safeguarding enquiry to a timely conclusion.

Any questions?