

# Minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 18 April 2024

Present: Bob Spencer (Chair)

Attendance	
Gill Burnett-Faulkner (Vice-Chair (Overview))	Kath Perry, MBE Paul Snape (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))
Ann Edgeller	Samantha Thompson
Johnny McMahon	Conor Wileman
Gillian Pardesi	

**Also in attendance:** Mark Sutton and Mike Wilcox

**Apologies:** Janet Eagland and Paul Northcott

## Part One

### 20. Declarations of Interest

There were none at this meeting.

### 21. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2024

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 February 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

### 22. Development of the Adult Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

*[Ruth Martin, Principal Social Worker and Safeguarding Lead, in attendance for this item.]*

The Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Team had been based within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) since 2011. The Committee were aware that the MASH had originally been set up in a joint arrangement for both children and adults by Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council, along with police and NHS colleagues. The decision taken by Stoke on Trent City Council to separate from the joint MASH in 2019 prompted a significant review of the MASH arrangements moving forward. In February 2023 it was agreed that there would be separate MASH arrangements for children and adults. The Police have also separated their children's and adults' safeguarding functions and structures. Members heard that the Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Team remain co-located with Staffordshire Police at Lindum House as part of a Staffordshire adults' MASH. This also remained the base for the

Staffordshire children's MASH, enabling links between adults' and children's MASH arrangements to be maintained.

The Adult Safeguarding Enquiry Team (ASET), who were responsible for completing high risk enquiries, would also be moving to Lindum House from their current base at Staffordshire Police Headquarters. This will mean that all specialist adult safeguarding functions for adult social care and the Police are co-located. Two dedicated Staffordshire adults' MASH police sergeants will link with the police adult investigation team. This will ensure that adult safeguarding is accorded sufficient priority and resource and that there will be contingencies in place against any absences from the policing team.

Members heard that the Information Sharing Log (ISL) would continue to be the method used to share information between partners, enabling information requests from children's social care and NHS colleagues through this system. This also gave an audit trail to what information had been shared between partners. Joint training would be completed to improve knowledge, understanding and skills of social care, police, and other colleagues, helping to develop multi-agency relationships. The intention was to engage and bring in other services in the future, such as housing, drug and alcohol services, that were relevant to adult safeguarding.

Members heard details of the governance arrangements for the new adults MASH. This included an Adult MASH Strategic Group to monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements, with performance monitored, and future developments discussed. Outcomes of multi-agency audits would also be fed into this group with any areas of risk identified and actions agreed to address these.

The Committee queried whether intelligence gathering had been adversely impacted through the separation of Stoke-on-Trent from the MASH. This had been avoided by including representatives from Stoke-on-Trent MASH in the Staffordshire Adult MASH Strategic meetings. Both the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent MASH were using the ISL, which enabled intelligence sharing. Both Adults MASH arrangements were cognisant of the potential difficulties and were working to avoid them.

Members raised concerns around the transition from children's to adult's services and were informed that the Preparation for Adult Services Team had access to the ISL for both children's and adults, enabling appropriate awareness of any safeguarding issues impacting on service transition.

Difficulties with IT systems in appropriate information sharing was raised. Members were aware that the current Care Director system was finishing in five years and this was seen as an opportunity to find a replacement that addressed a range of difficulties, including information sharing. The

development of a joint case management system would also enable adults and children's services to share information more effectively.

Members queried who took the lead on decision making within the MASH and who took responsibility if something went wrong? The Committee heard that the response and who led on this was dependant on the individual case and circumstances. Cases were audited together, and areas of concern reviewed together, with learning from these reviews influencing future practice across the MASH partners.

Members were particularly encouraged to hear that there was work towards including wider partners in the MASH, specifically housing. The effective and innovative work of Stafford Borough Council Housing was highlighted.

The development of performance data was discussed and the Committee queried what this would include, suggesting peer review data would help in identifying effective practice.

**Resolved:** That:

- a) the new multi-agency arrangements for adult safeguarding and the development of an adults' MASH be welcomed; and
- b) the proposed performance data type be shared with the Committee once this has been developed.

### **23. 5 April MASH visit - Feedback**

After consideration of the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report in January and scrutiny around the development of the Children's MASH in February, the Committee had outstanding concerns around a number of issues raised. These included communication and partnership working to ensure effective safeguarding. To help establish the facts a visit to the Staffordshire MASH took place on 5 April, where Members had the opportunity of gathering information on how the Children's MASH worked, the partnership working, information sharing and development within the MASH following recent changes. In particular the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were seeking further information on the IT systems in place for sharing information across MASH partners, effectiveness and buy-in for training, and how the effectiveness of safeguarding is evidenced.

The eight Members who attended the visit shared their findings. Overall Members had found they were reassured. They were very impressed by the quality and experience of the practitioners they spoke to and by the representatives from the three strategic partners who shared details of the Children's MASH developments. The comments around information

sharing had been recognised, however the ISL worked well in sharing information currently and further opportunities for future systems would be developed through the replacement process for Care Director.

The Committee noted the improvement made through changes in teams physically present within the MASH, including Police representatives. Details of regular auditing had been shared. Improvements in reducing the Police data backlog had also been welcomed.

Whilst being reassured, Members felt it would be useful to include a future item on their work programme giving them an opportunity to see how changes had developed. Members also noted that they had been offered the opportunity to shadow the work of the emergency duty team, which some of the Members would welcome.

**Resolved:** That an item be included on the work programme to consider developments with the Children's MASH.

## 24. Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were aware that this was the final meeting of this municipal year. Two items would be carried forward to next years' work programme:

- Domestic Abuse contract 6 months on
- Hearing the Voice of the Child

Following the outcome of the Children's MASH visit an item to consider how changes had developed would be put forward to next years' programme.

The June Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee will focus on work programme planning and Members were asked to consider what areas they would wish to put forward for inclusion. Members initially suggested items could be considered around:

- Adult MASH data and performance
- Housing safeguarding issues and partnership working to address these
- SCC's work around safeguarding within Staffordshire Prisons

**Resolved:** That the proposed changes be considered as part of the work programme planning meeting in June.

## 25. Exclusion of the Public

"That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as

defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below”.

PART TWO

## **26. Children's Services Ofsted Improvement Plan**

*(exemption paragraph 3)*

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered detail of the Children's Services Ofsted Improvement Plan.

**Resolved:** That:

- a) the action plan and work required to achieve outcomes be acknowledged; and
- b) scrutiny of progress with the Plan be considered as part of the Committee's work programme planning in June.

**Chair**