

Why are you changing the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)?

We want to provide the best service to Norfolk's children and families, as well as to our partner agencies. The MASH has been under significant pressure because of increasing numbers of contacts and referrals and we want to manage these better, so that children get the right support first time.

What are the changes?

The biggest change is the creation of our new Children's Advice and Duty Service. This will be made up of senior social workers, who will provide advice and support to other professionals and ask key questions about the risks and strengths within families. They will then agree together who is best placed to meet the needs of a child. The service will no longer take written referrals.

Will the MASH still exist?

Yes, the MASH will continue and will provide vital cross agency checks for those children most at risk. The new Children's Advice and Duty service will mean that the MASH will be able to get support to those children who need it the most.

What is the aim of the new Children's Advice and Duty Service?

The aim is to get the right support to children and families first time. We're basing it on what's worked well elsewhere. By talking through concerns and solutions with professionals we can work even better together and get support earlier to families. At the moment we are carrying out too many unnecessary social work assessments and we want to make sure that we're only doing these assessments where they are needed.

What is the number of the new service?

All agencies and children service providers have been issued with contact details for the Children's Advice and Duty Service. If you do not have this number you can contact the NSCB Business Unit on 01603 223409 or call customer service on 0344 800 8020.

What number do members of the public call?

They will continue to call our Customer Service Centre number 0344 800 8020.

What information do I need to give when I call?

You can use the Children's Advice and Duty Service flowchart to prepare for your call. This includes details on what information the Consultant Social Worker handling your call might need.

What sort of things can I call the service about?

If you are a professional working with children and families, you can call with any safeguarding concern you might have about a child.

If there is no written referral, how do I evidence that I have made contact with Children's Services? How will information be recorded?

Every phone call will be followed up in writing by the consultant social worker.

It is also best practice to keep a record of the contact you have made, the discussion and any decisions made. You should also record whether you have obtained parental consent and if not, why not.

What records of the conversation will be made and how will they be kept?

This will depend on the individual discussion and the risks identified to a child. It will also depend on whether you have got consent from the child's parent. However, we will record all of the conversations on our system; by having a record, we will also be able to see when there might be a repetition or accumulation of concerns about a child.

What is the difference between a conversation, consultation and referral?

All calls will result in a conversation. The outcome of the conversation will depend on the levels of concerns raised and the agreed course of action. We are moving away from the restrictions of terminology like consultation and referral, however, the Consultant Social Worker and caller will agree and record the outcome of any conversation.

Do I have to get parents' consent before I make a call?

It is good practice and the expectation that you seek consent from parents. We acknowledge that there are occasions when to do so could put a child at risk or undermine the investigation into a serious crime. In these instances, we would accept a call without consent from the parents. Reasons for not seeking consent should be clearly stated when speaking with CADS and recorded on internal systems for your records.

What are the opening hours of the Children's Advice and Duty Service?

The service will run Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm.

What do I do outside of these hours?

You can continue to contact our Emergency Duty Team on 0344 800 8020.

What happens if I disagree with what the social worker recommends?

The aim of the new service is to work together to come up with the right support or service for a child or family. We hope that professional disagreements will be rare but if you wish to escalate you can follow the NSCB's [resolving professional disagreement policy](#).

How can I provide feedback about the service?

When the caller receives the record of the conversation, there will be a link included to a short survey so that all callers can feedback on the service provided.

How can I contribute to the FAQs?

This is an iterative document and will be reviewed monthly. Callers can e-mail the NSCB Business Unit with questions as they arise on nscb@norfolk.gov.uk, and they will be passed to the Head of Children's Advice and Duty Service.