

DORSET
CHILDREN’S ADVICE AND DUTY SERVICE
Terms of Reference

Contents

1. Introduction to the Children’s Advice and Duty Service (ChAD)	2
2. Introduction to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	2
MASH function	2
Mash Workforce.....	3
Location	3
3. Introduction to the Early Help Hub	3
Early Help Hub Function.....	3
4. Governance of ChAD	4
5. Data sharing and fair processing	4
6. Consent	5
7. The ChAD Workflow	6
Contact.....	6
Consultation	6
Consultation and Police Reports	7
Principles.....	7
During Consultation.....	7
After Consultation.....	8
8. Standards for MASH referrals	9
Following the BRAG rating	9
MASH information-gathering	10
Outcome of MASH information-gathering	10
9. Standards for referrals to the Early Help Hub	11
10. Resolving problems and disagreements	12
Appendix A ChAD Workflow diagram.....	13
ChAD contact details	13

1. Introduction to the Children’s Advice and Duty Service (ChAD)

1.1 Building on the strengths of ChAD, further development has taken place to deliver a single point of contact for all safeguarding, support and wellbeing concerns regarding children and young people in Dorset. ChAD will:

- Act as a “front door” to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) that manages all safeguarding referrals and initiates Child Protection investigations where required and,
- Act as a “front door” to Early Help via the Early Help Hub.

1.2 In doing so ChAD is designed to meet the two key principles of effective safeguarding as defined by Working Together 2018:

- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- A child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children¹

1.3 Bringing together an Early Help Hub and MASH within ChAD will ensure we are able to confidently:

- Gather all relevant information about a child in one place to inform decision making
- Facilitate early intervention
- Improve co-ordination, communication and information sharing between practitioners
- Reduce referrals to children’s social care for those who needs can be met through early intervention and support – identify the right service for the right child as early as possible to maximise impact on improving outcomes.

2. Introduction to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

MASH function

2.1 MASH brings together expert professionals, called “navigators”, from services that have contact with children, young people and families, and makes the best possible use of their combined knowledge to keep children safe from harm.

- Researching information held on professional databases
- Providing a secure and confidential environment for professionals to share information

¹ [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682000/Working-Together-to-Safeguard-Children-2018.pdf), viewed Jan 2023

- Identifying low-level repeat referrals which taken in isolation may not appear concerning
- Prioritising referrals using a **BRAG (Blue/Red/Amber/Green)** rating based on the levels of need and risk
- Referring cases to other agencies
- Activating 'Child Protection' social work services to provide immediate protection for a child

Mash Workforce

- 2.2 The MASH comprises consultant social workers, early help advisers, managers and staff, known as Navigators, from different core teams and agencies. Navigators are employed and supervised by their own agencies, and the consultant social worker will coordinate their contributions to MASH.
- 2.3 The Home Office protocol is clear that accountability for a MASH lies with Children's Services (DCS) in the local authority. The ChAD Manager has the final say in all safeguarding decisions.
- 2.4 The core partners represent the following agencies/bodies:
- Dorset – Children's and Adults Services, and Housing
 - Dorset Police
 - Dorset Youth Justice Service
 - Dorset Health Care NHS Foundation Trust
 - National Probation Service
 - REACH – Drug and Alcohol Services
 - Paragon – Domestic Abuse Support
- 2.5 All core partner agencies are signatories to the Dorset Information Sharing Charter.

Location

- 2.6 MASH team members are not co-located; they work together through IT and phone channels.

3. Introduction to the Early Help Hub

Early Help Hub Function

- 3.1 The function of the Early Help Hub within ChAD is to provide help to children and their families, to prevent escalation of need and to ensure the most appropriate plan is put in place in a timely manner.

- 3.2 The Early Help Hub does this by being the single point of contact where access to targeted (Universal Partnership Plus) services is coordinated.
- 3.3 The early help adviser also acts as the Early Help Navigator to inform MASH gathering episode advising on information available from education settings and locality intervention.
- 3.4 ChAD officers record on Mosaic all requests to the Early Help Hub and the services to be involved. Requests to the Early Help Hub are monitored and analysed via a reporting dashboard.

4. Governance of ChAD

- 4.1 Children's Services are core members in ChAD. The ChAD Managers have the final say in all safeguarding decisions, and report to the Service Manager Children's Advice and Duty Service, who in turn reports directly to the Corporate Director, Care and Protection. The multi-agency MASH Strategic Group meets quarterly to oversee the operation and performance of ChAD. The multi-agency MASH Operational Group meets 6 weekly. This meeting receives a report from ChAD, Police and Health partners capturing audit data, learning and recommendations (completion of the report is shared between the statutory partners). This detail is also provided to the MASH Strategic Group. Children's Services, Police and Health partners complete a report for the Strengthening Services Board to update from the MASH Strategic group, with a MASH service spotlight for the Board every 6 months.

5. Data sharing and fair processing

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 All partners are signatories to an Information Sharing Agreement. The work of ChAD is covered by the Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD) privacy notice, which is available on the Dorset Council website.
- 5.3 Each agency will assess whether it is appropriate for their information to be shared in line with the Information Sharing Agreement on a case-by-case basis. ChAD is a consent-based service, unless seeking consent would place a child/adult at significant risk of harm, the seeking of consent and recording of this is required as part of the information sharing process between partners, if consent is not sought then a rationale is to be provided.

- 5.4 The data is held securely and confidentially. The MASH has electronic and managerial safeguards to ensure that sensitive information is only accessed by those who 'need to know' about it.
- 5.5 Only appropriate and relevant parts of the information disclosed during the MASH process will be passed to the non-MASH professionals receiving the case record.
- 5.6 In some cases, a MASH navigator may hold confidential information which the MASH manager needs for decision-making, but which is too sensitive to be shared elsewhere (for example, when an ongoing police investigation is taking place). In these cases, the MASH system will indicate that there is confidential information held but will not reveal the information itself.

6. Consent

- 6.1 Consent is the key to successful information sharing. For all assessment, it is important that consent is obtained where it is sensible, in the child's best interest, and practical. Even where the Data Protection Act does not demand it, operating with consent is good practice.
- 6.2 To give informed consent, a child/young person and/or their parent/carer must be entirely clear about the purpose of the information; how it will be used; who it may be shared with and how it will be shared; how long it will be held and in what form. *This must include making them aware of circumstances where information may be shared without consent and where confidentiality cannot be maintained.*
- 6.3 Consent can be withdrawn at any time: giving of consent is not a one-off event. It is a continuous and ongoing issue which needs to be revisited at regular and reasonable intervals. The child/young person and/or their parent/carer should be informed that they can withdraw consent at any time.
- 6.4 Where a child/young person or their parent/carer refuses to consent to the sharing of information that they have given us, or having given consent subsequently withdraws this, we will respect their wishes unless we believe that failing to share their information will place the child/young person at risk of significant harm or perpetuate any existing risk.
- 6.5 Consultant Social Workers in ChAD will only share information without the consent of the child/young person or their parent/carer with the agreement of their line manager or the manager on duty. They will record this agreement in the child/young person's records.
- 6.6 Professionals contacting ChAD will do so with the consent of a child/young person and/or their parent/ carer and they will have explained

that information may be sought from and shared with partner agencies within the MASH to inform the decision around the most appropriate services or support to be offered. The exception is if seeking consent could place a child at increased risk, in which case a no name consultation will take place. A no name consultation will not be recorded on Children's Services records system by ChAD, unless the agreed outcome is that the level of risk is such that the child needs safeguarding.

7. The ChAD Workflow

7.1 Please refer to the flow chart at *Appendix A* which summarises the description below.

Contact

7.2 ChAD is a consultation-based model and therefore it is encouraged that all contact with ChAD is made by phone. All calls are routed through Dorset Direct. If there is an allocated social worker, they are considered the best person to support the child, so the contact is passed directly to them.

7.3 **Members of the public** will be passed to an Early Help Adviser. If safeguarding concerns are identified, then the call will be transferred to a consultant social worker.

7.4 **Professionals** will be passed to the Consultant Social Worker.

Consultation

7.5 Consultation is the sharing of information between workers in order to gain the perspectives of another service.

7.6 Consultation is available for both members of the public and professionals in determining a course of action for children and young people in need of help from targeted and specialist services (level 2, 3 and 4). Consultation will provide an opportunity for those working with a child, young person and/or family to access additional knowledge and expertise from suitably qualified and experienced staff to explore a concern and decide how best to respond to it.

7.7 Any existing agency involvement at lower levels of concern may also be identified by contacting the early help advisers who will be able to provide existing or previous contact details of practitioner/agencies leading on Early Help Assessments, which have come through ChAD.

7.8 With consent, all consultations are recorded to capture emerging concerns early. Where there is no consent, consultation is recorded and the person calling ChAD will have their details and conversation stored (there will be no

identifying details of the child/family taken or noted, unless during consultation a level of risk is identified which would allow for consent to be overridden and reason for doing so would be recorded on a Contact and Referral). The consultation document where there is no consent, is stored in a file and can be accessed by ChAD staff should review of this initial consultation be required e.g., further call made by professional and they provide date/time of previous consultation, this can then be searched for using their details and date/time for reference.

Consultation and Police Reports

7.9 Police reports are received via email. All reports that are flagged as **Red** by the police are directed immediately to a consultant social worker to progress through MASH and determine the most appropriate outcome. For all other police reports (Amber/Green), arrangements are in place for twice daily consultation with police, consultant social worker and early help manager to agree the most appropriate response. The outcome of these consultations will be recorded as follows:

Red – Contact MASH Referral

Amber – Contact MASH Referral

Green – Early Help involvement request

Blue – Signposting only, or no further action

Principles

7.10 The following principles govern the work of ChAD:

- Agencies must have a genuine desire to work together in the best interests of the child or young person.
- Consultation is a two way process and demonstrates an acknowledgement of different but equally valuable knowledge and expertise.
- Information should be shared in a spirit of openness but with due regard for confidentiality.
- Consultation may be used in any situation where there are genuine grounds for concern for the well-being of a child and family.
- Consultation should not be seen as a way of transferring ownership of a 'problem' unless this is the agreed outcome of discussions, at which stage a Referral for MASH or Request for Early Help will be made or an agreement regarding on-going joint working will be recorded.
- Communications with other professionals should be followed up in writing to ensure clarity of agreement and as part of audit trail provision.

During Consultation

7.11 The person asking for advice should:

- Identify what outcome they are seeking
- be clear about what the concern is and what is needed from the consultation
- offer evidence to support the concern and its impact on the child or other children
- outline what the agency has already done about the concern
- indicate what the impact of this has been
- share ONLY such other knowledge of the child and family as may be necessary to clarify whether the child or other children may need support or safeguarding services
- initial consultation may be anonymised where appropriate
- be open to suggestions made for the way forward
- make notes of agreed decisions (as outlined in next sub-section)

7.12 The professional giving advice should:

- seek clarification where there are any uncertainties about what is involved
- determine whether consent has been obtained to share information
- determine the appropriateness of not seeking, or overriding, parental permission.

After Consultation

7.13 Following a consultation, the ChAD officer will:

- Consider Referral for MASH, Request for Early Help Hub or Information and Advice.
- Where the child or other children have been identified as in need of support or safeguarding services, record detail of the discussion and of decisions made within the contact record on Mosaic.
- Collect appropriate information, in accordance with procedures.
- Where a child requires medical examination, follow the procedure set out in the [Siblings in child protection medical examinations procedure](#)
- All consultations with a Consultant Social Worker will be recorded on the consultation page of the Contact MASH Referral form and a copy will be sent to the referrer.

- All consultations with an Early Help adviser will be recorded on the consultation page of the Early Help involvement request form and a copy will be sent to the referrer.

8. Standards for MASH referrals

8.1 During consultation, the consultant social worker will consider the immediate level of risk and ensure that sufficient information is available to apply **BRAG** rating.

8.2 **BRAG** risk ratings should be used as set out in the table below:

BRAG rating	Assessment	Action	Time scale for MASH information
Red	There is a potential child protection issue (e.g., serious injury to the child)	Requires immediate action	4 hours
Amber	There are significant concerns	Immediate action is not required (e.g., ongoing domestic violence issues in the household)	6 hours
Green	There are concerns regarding a child's wellbeing	This is not a referral to children's social care. Services are likely to be delivered via Early Help Hub to meet needs.	No MASH response required. Passed to Early Help Hub
Blue	There is no safeguarding concern	The needs can be met by a Universal service.	No MASH response required. Advice or referral to a Universal service may be provided

Following the **BRAG** rating

8.3 The BRAG rating should be determined using the following guidelines:

- **Blue:** If the rating is Blue then the caller is directed to a Universal service, or information and advice is provided.
- **Green:** If the rating is Green and consent has been given, the contact may be passed to an early help adviser or to the Early Help Hub. At this stage, this is not a referral to Children's Social Care unless additional information is provided which indicates significant harm. At this point the case will step up to the MASH Manager to apply **BRAG** rating of either **Amber** or **Red**.
- **Amber:** If the rating is Amber, this means there are significant concerns, and the contact has met the level of need to become a referral to Children's Social Care and is passed to all relevant MASH navigators.
- **Red:** If the rating is Red, this means there are potential child protection concerns and therefore the contact has met the threshold to become a referral to Children's Social Care and is passed to all relevant MASH navigators in readiness for a strategy discussion. The relevant Locality Team is notified, so they can join the strategy discussion and start a child protection assessment without delay.

MASH information-gathering

- 8.4 Next, the navigators research and share information about the child, using the Pan Dorset Continuum of Need to establish the level of need. The Pan Dorset Continuum of Need is based on four levels of need:

Level 1: Universal

Level 2: Universal Plus

Level 3: Universal Partnership Plus

Level 4: Specialist/Statutory

- 8.5 The consultant social worker may change the **BRAG** rating as new information becomes known.

Outcome of MASH information-gathering

- 8.6 The consultant social worker uses the collected information to decide the best response to meet the child's needs. The ChAD manager ratifies the decision and may:
- Notify relevant locality team for completion of a child Protection Investigation, s47 CA 1989.
 - Notify relevant locality team for a single assessment, s17 CA 1989

- With consent, notify relevant locality team for an Early Help Assessment/Plan
 - Provide advice and information and close.
- 8.7 The service will receive a summary of any appropriate information gathered by the MASH and the referrer is notified in writing within 1 working day of the outcome.
9. **Standards for referrals to the Early Help Hub**
- 9.1 Referrals to the Early Help Hub may be made directly, or via ChAD. This section sets out how ChAD officers will manage referrals that are made via ChAD.
- 9.2 Before an Early Help referral can be considered, ChAD officers will expect that universal services and/or school support have already been put in place and measured for its effectiveness. Examples of universal support are ELSA, self-referral to school-based counsellor, peer mentoring, universal parenting group.
- 9.3 In addition, if the child is eligible for pupil premium or has SEN support, it will be important to show how the interventions offered have been evaluated.
- 9.4 If the outcome measures produced suggest that the current support or intervention that was put in place is not meeting the needs of the child or family, it will then be appropriate to request Early Help from Early Help Hub in ChAD.
- 9.5 If the request is for Early Help and consent has been given, the early help adviser will discuss and identify the right services that will help to meet the family's needs. If the early help adviser feels that there are safeguarding concerns that may require social care involvement, then they will transfer the call to a consultant social worker.
- 9.6 Where a request to the Early Help Hub is accepted, one of the following will be offered within 48 hours:
- Locality Early Help Service(s) to be offered which may include further assessment.
 - Support provided to existing Lead Professional to review Early Help Plan.
 - Signpost to service/intervention (e.g., Voluntary Organisation). An Early Help Adviser will offer to liaise if required.

- Advice and information provided about a wide range of services available for families requiring preventative or targeted help.

9.7 Where it is agreed that Early Help Services will be offered, the relevant locality team will be notified, and a decision will be made within the locality as to who will be the Lead Professional and which services will be offered within the framework of an Early Help Assessment, Plan and Review.

10. Resolving problems and disagreements

10.1 Disagreements could arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- Levels of need and risk
- Roles and responsibilities
- The need for action
- Communication

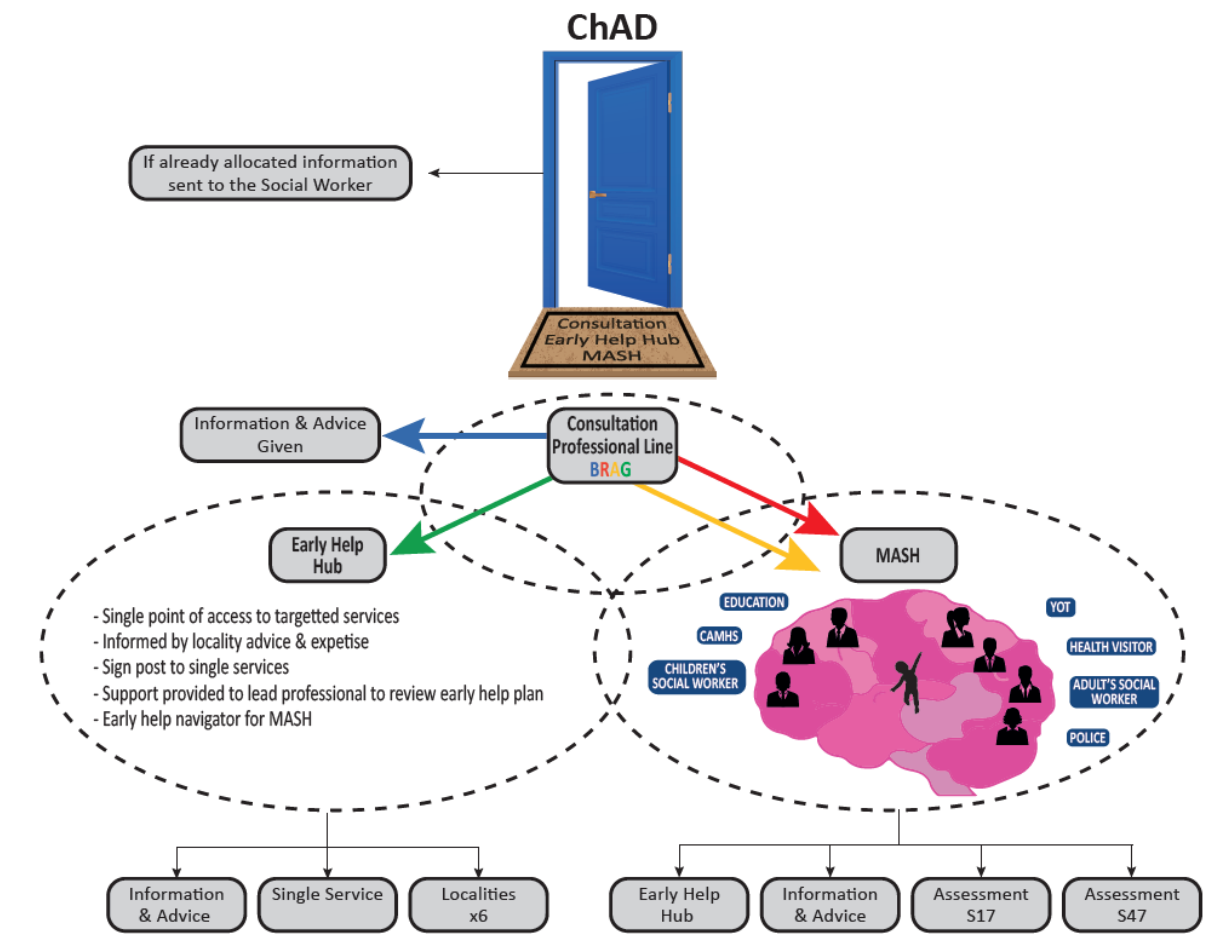
10.2 Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard and promote the well-being of children/young people. While often a positive sign of developing thinking within a dynamic process this can therefore, however, be reflected in the immediate term as a lack of clarity in procedures or approaches.

10.3 Professional disagreement is only dysfunctional if not resolved in a constructive and timely fashion.

10.4 Disputes where necessary should be escalated to the ChAD Manager or in the case of a dispute with the ChAD Manager's decision the Service Manager (ChAD). Escalations to be tracked to promote learning and multi-agency working.

10.5 Attempts at problem resolution may leave one worker or agency believing that the child remains at risk of significant harm. Where this is so, the individual or agency should follow the procedures set out in the Pan-Dorset Multi-agency Escalation Policy in the PDSCP Procedures Library.

Appendix A ChAD Workflow diagram



ChAD contact details

If the child lives in Dorset contact the **Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD)**:

Professional's Telephone Number: 01305 228558

Daytime service is available Monday to Friday between 8am and 10pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am to 10pm and On-Call Out of Hours Service 24/7



This is a professionals-only number to discuss your concerns, you will no longer complete a referral form. For more information on the [ChAD Service](#)

Families and Members of the Public Number: 01305 228866