

**Decision Maker:** Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee for pre-decision scrutiny  
Care Services Portfolio Holder for decision

**Date:** 19 June 2012

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** PROPOSAL TO CO-LOCATE THE POLICE PUBLIC PROTECTION UNIT WITHIN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE MULTI-AGENCY SUPPORT HUB

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**Ward:** Boroughwide

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1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The report sets out proposals to co-locate the London Borough of Bromley (LBB) Children's Social Care Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) with Police Public Protection Unit and Health at the Bromley Civic Centre. This further develops the current LBB Multi-Agency Support Hub arrangements in Bromley by facilitating early, better quality information sharing in order to more effectively safeguard vulnerable children and more effectively signpost children who do not meet the Children's Social Care threshold to early intervention services.

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2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the proposal to co-locate the Police Public Protection Unit with the Children's Social Care Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) at the Civic Centre.
- 2.2 The Portfolio Holder for Care Services is asked to:
- i) Note Members' comments on the proposal to co-locate the Police Public Protection Unit with the Children's Social Care Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) at the Civic Centre; and
  - ii) Endorse the proposal.

## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
  2. BBB Priority: Safeguarding Children and Young People
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Within existing resources with potential to re-grade the manager role to MG6 at a cost of £6,000.
  2. Ongoing costs: LBB costs are within existing budget.
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Children's Social Care (Multi Agency Support Hub)
  4. Total current budget for this head: £124,000
  5. Source of funding: From Children's Social Care base budget and contributions from other agencies towards the additional facilities costs.
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## Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 4 staff within Children's Social Care, 3 Police and 0.5 Health.
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable
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## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Around 10,000 families based on the total number of contacts to Children's Social Care (2011-12).
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## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

### **3. COMMENTARY**

- 3.1 This report sets out a proposal to expand the existing London Borough of Bromley Children's Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH) arrangements in Bromley by co-locating the service with police and health partners at the Civic Centre site.
- 3.2 The MASH service is a multi-agency information sharing hub that both physically and virtually co-locates key professionals to facilitate early, better quality information sharing, analysis and decision making in order to more effectively safeguard vulnerable children and young people.
- 3.3 The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was an initiative developed in Devon to ensure appropriate information was shared when the police and other agencies had concerns in respect of a child. The Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) has applauded MASH as a model of good practice because it offers a more consistent, timely and multi agency response to issues and concerns rather than Children's Social Care making unilateral decisions about individual situations. As a result many areas across the country are developing models based on the Devon initiative. The Metropolitan Police and London Councils are positively promoting the development of a MASH in all boroughs and are offering some limited set up costs towards their development. This would be available in Bromley to cover the police relocation costs of moving their public protection staff to the Civic Centre.

### **4. DEVELOPMENT OF MASH IN BROMLEY**

- 4.1 An early stage Multi-Agency Support Hub team for children was established in Bromley in July 2011, and formed part of the reorganisation of Children's Social Care referral and assessment services following the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding arrangements in May 2010. It follows a similar model to the national Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub model, however Children's Social Care and police staff are not currently co-located. Currently the team manages all initial contacts to Children's Social Care, screening all referrals to provide a triage service that ensures referrals meet the criteria for children's social care or are appropriately signposted to early intervention services where required. The key strategic objectives of the Bromley MASH are:

- delivering clarity and consistency in the application of thresholds;
- effective and timely signposting of referrals to relevant agencies;
- improving the quality of referrals and decision making.

Over 50% of referrals come from the police public protection desk (PPD) based at Bromley police station who process all police notifications, known as Merlin PAC's. These assess information held on police systems and act as a gateway from the police to statutory agencies such as children's social care, health, the youth offending team and safer neighborhood teams.

- 4.2 Since its inception the Bromley MASH has managed all police Merlin PAC's and has since taken on all other screening of contacts and referrals to Children's Social Care from a range of agencies and the follow up of Emergency Duty Team referrals from out of hours. It also identifies early intervention and prevention specifically where cases do not meet the threshold for children's social care but would benefit from ongoing support from another agency.
- 4.3 The current team consists of one qualified FTE experienced social work manager, two unqualified FTE social services officers and one FTE business support officer. A health visitor has recently co-located to the MASH 2.5 days per week in order to undertake health checks and liaise with health colleagues.

4.4 The aim of the Multi-Agency Support Hub is to research information on children and young people who have come to the notice of the police and Children's Social Care. By pooling and accessing a range of resources, the team can determine which agencies, if any, are already involved with the child, young person and or their family and gather additional relevant information. Once needs are identified the case will either be referred to Children's Social Care, if it meets the threshold for an assessment, or signposted to an appropriate resource. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) can then be used to develop a team around the child approach for those families needing targeted support that do not meet the threshold for Children's Social Care.

#### 4.5 **Strategic Aims**

The MASH offers the opportunity to establish a holistic and individually tailored response for each family who come to the attention of services for safeguarding reasons. As a fully established system it would enable the collation and application of the knowledge of each agency, which when aggregated provides a more complete picture of the problem than would otherwise have been available to individual agencies working in isolation within a short period of time.

#### 4.6 **The key strategic objectives for the service include:**

- Jointly managed processes for making notifications, contacts and referrals to Children's Social Care, especially by the Police.
- The advantages of co-location, information which is shared face to face, joint decision making and jointly held risk, within agreed protocols.
- Development of specialism's at the front door of Children's Social Care and the development of a dialogue between Children's Social Care and other professionals and families, which is about designing suitable packages of services, rather than meeting or not meeting thresholds.
- Providing a continuum of services from prevention and early intervention through to statutory child protection services.
- Appropriate services are provided to children and families at an early stage rather than the creation of a revolving door.
- Development of positive relationships between agencies around specific problem areas e.g. Domestic Violence, substance misuse or Mental Health.
- Development of clearer processes between agencies and better data about need in the local area.

#### 4.7 **Operational Objectives include:**

- To provide comprehensive, appropriate, evidence based, outcomes focused interventions to promote positive outcomes for children and young people in Bromley.
- To use effective analysis and whole system information sharing to gain a balanced perspective on the risks facing children, young people and their families and to use that perspective to choose the most appropriate service to do further assessment and intervention.
- To meet children's needs through sharing information legally and professionally using the appropriate technology options.
- To establish a mechanism for feedback from agencies to the unit on the outcomes for children.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposal is to further develop the current Bromley MASH arrangements into a co-located multi agency team of people who continue to be employed and line managed by their respective agencies, but is co-located with Children's Social Care at the Civic Centre. The team would operate within the Referral and Assessment Service as a secure intelligence hub where nationally agreed protocols govern how and what information can be released to operational staff to inform interventions. The day to day operations of the team will be overseen by the LBB MASH manager
- 5.2 A multi-agency steering group has been established to look at how current arrangements can be strengthened and has recommended co-location as the most effective way of continuing to build efficiencies, relationships, trust and understanding between agencies about the sharing of information and decisions around intervention.
- 5.3 Staffing costs would continue to be funded by their respective agencies. The proposed co-located team would comprise:
- Children's Social Care Staff**
    - Group Manager x 1 (who will manage the team) #
    - Social Services Officers x 2
    - Business Support Officer x 1
  - Police Public Protection Desk**
    - Detective Sergeant x 1
    - Police Researchers x 2
    - Police Constable x 1
  - Health**
    - Specialist Nurse Safeguarding Children (MASH) x 0.5 (Health are considering increasing this role to a full time post).
- # Co-location will bring extra responsibilities to the manager for decision making of cases, allocation and developing systems and partnerships. Post to be raised from BR 14 to MG6 at a cost of £6,000. This will be funded from within the current Referral and Assessment Service budget
- 5.4 There are opportunities in the future to develop further partnerships as part of MASH Involving the Youth Offending Team, education colleagues and adult services working with vulnerable people. These arrangements will most likely be virtual, not necessitate co-location and would have to demonstrate added value.
- 5.5 The police will require dedicated desks, telephone equipment and computer terminals and will meet the full costs of these items. The police also have access to project funding towards infrastructure costs for the project. Exact details of the amount are not yet known and will be dependent upon a survey by the police and scale of proposals
- 5.6 Ongoing revenue costs towards letting council office space to the Police have not yet been agreed and is under negotiation with the expectation that the Police will meet these costs. Estimates from property services indicate a full charge rate for the accommodation costs relating to two desks with computer and telephone facilities will be about £4,000 per year. This cost does not include any IT support costs (which is an additional £2,300 per PC) as the police will be using their own systems.

## 6. BENEFITS

6.1 The benefits of co-locating the MASH can be defined in qualitative or quantitative terms. The areas for consideration are:

- speed of response to referrals meeting national performance indicators;
- single point for the collation of concerns about children and families;
- reduce the duplication of activity through better alignment of services;
- increase in the number of Common Assessment Framework and early intervention support to families, thereby reducing the need for more costly interventions;
- the proposal involves the co-location of key partners, who will share the cost of resources;
- development of common systems to process workflow;
- better understanding of each agencies role and therefore better planning around interventions;
- improve speed and quality of social care assessments through effective information gathering.

6.2 The model is considered one of good practice and being adopted by a number of London boroughs and other local authorities across the country.

## 7. RISKS

7.1 It will be important for the Council to ensure that information sharing protocols and standards are robust and meet the Council standards. The service will use nationally agreed protocols and guidance and in addition the MASH steering group are currently developing local governance arrangements for the sharing of information in a co-located but secure environment. These arrangements will be shared with Legal Services to ensure the Council is compliant with its duties in respect of confidentiality.

7.2 The new inspection regime by Ofsted sets out the need for targeted intervention and partnership collaboration between agencies when safeguarding children. This will be assessed in their inspection of both early intervention and safeguarding services. Any developments to improve this will mitigate organisational risk.

7.3 The Metropolitan Police have secured funding to assist with set up costs and this may be lost if Bromley do not sign up to the initiative.

7.4 The Children's Social Care Referral and Assessment Service and current MASH will move from the Old Town Hall to the first floor of St Blaise in August 2010. Potential accommodation for a co-located team as described has been identified on the first floor of St Blaise. The suitability of the accommodation will be dependant upon a survey by the police regarding the location of IT equipment. This survey cannot go ahead until the Police have agreement from the London Borough of Bromley that the proposal can go ahead.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Policy, Personnel and Legal Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	None