

To:	Headteachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)
Title:	Briefing Note on Child Safeguarding Referrals for Schools
Date:	01 March 2021

Introduction

It is anticipated that with schools fully re-opening next week that there will be a corresponding rise in referrals into Children’s Social Care. Support is requested from schools to help the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Child Protection and Assessment Team (CPAT) manage the increase by ensuring referrals are appropriate, timely and of a high quality. This will help avoid delays and ensure that those children most in need are prioritised.

Below are some brief guidance notes for sharing with those making referrals. The Redbridge Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) provides a ½ day Training Course, delivered ‘virtually’ via MS Teams – [‘Understanding Thresholds and Making Referrals’](#) – for those requiring more in depth guidance. The course is due to take place on 10 March (PM) and bookings can be made [on line](#).

What makes a ‘good’ child protection referral to Children’s Social Care?

- Use the multi-agency RSCP thresholds document – [‘Are you worried about a child? How to access early help, and thresholds for referral to children’s social care, September 2018’](#) to ensure that you are making an appropriate referral and proportionate response to your concern. If in doubt, call the MASH on 020 8708 3885 to discuss. Your CAF Co-ordinator will be able to support for Level 2 concerns. If you do not have a direct contact number, contact the CAF Team in the Families Together Hub (FTH) via 020 8708 2613/2674/2614.
- Consider whether it is appropriate to make some initial enquiries with the family, prior to submitting a referral, rather than make a referral prematurely.
- Timely – please make the referral as soon as you have cause for concern – not waiting for the end of the day. Apart from the delay in getting any support needed for the child, this creates potential for important points being forgotten. Consideration may want to be given to **holding ‘Circle Time’ and other similar activities earlier in the day as these are key times that disclosures are made by children when sharing.** Referrals received towards the end of the afternoon cause problems if a home visit is required. Calls to the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) should only be made in circumstances where the risk is too great to the child to wait until the following day.
- Ensure all sections of the [Multi-Agency Referral Form \(MAREF\)](#) are completed wherever possible, particularly the demographics (i.e. DOB, address, parental details) that are needed in order for partner agencies in the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) to interrogate their recording systems.
- Concise – avoid long narratives, keep to the reason for the referral (Section E – page 3) i.e. what is causing you concern (usually one or two paragraphs is adequate). Simply explain why you are worried about the child.

- Legible – fill out the form using MS Word rather than handwriting. If a form needs to be deciphered this will cause a delay or even a misunderstanding.
- If a child makes a disclosure, take care not to probe beyond simple questions such as ‘What?’, ‘Where?’, ‘When?’. Inappropriate questioning can compromise any criminal investigation.
- Include direct quotes from the child to support the understanding of the child’s lived experience.
- Submit the MARF to CPAT.Referrals@redbridge.gov.uk and make an accompanying phone call to 020 8708 3885 (Option 1). **Follow up if you haven’t heard the outcome of your referral** within 24 hours by calling the MASH 020 8708 3885 (Option 3). This is a responsibility of the referrer.

What are the pitfalls to avoid when making a referral?

- Check that the child or young person that you are concerned about resides in Redbridge – use an on-line [postcode checker](#) if you are in doubt to ensure that you refer to the correct Local Authority.
- Check you are using the correct version of the form (MARF) available for download from the [RSCP website](#) – any other form will not have the correct fields on it and an out of date version may have invalid contact details.
- **If the child is already known to either Children’s Social Care or the Early Intervention Service/Families Together Hub**, contact the allocated Social Worker or Family Support Worker direct with your concerns rather than using a MARF. **If you don’t know the contact details for the relevant professional**, call and ask the Child Protection and Assessment Team (CPAT) to look this up for you (020 8708 3885 – Option 2).
- **Don’t let your primary concern get buried** in too much detail, irrelevant points, hearsay or general narrative.
- **Do not share a child’s disclosure with parents or carers if to do so would put the child at further risk.**
- Do not let anxiety about Data Protection stand in your way to making a child protection referral – consent is not required if you **have genuine safeguarding concerns about a child’s welfare.**

The MASH/EDT Service Manager chairs a multi-agency fortnightly Thresholds and Referrals Working Group which provides an opportunity to discuss referrals, receive support and provide feedback to Children’s Social Care. **Schools are invited to attend the meeting and more information is available** via the RSCP Manager via RedbridgeSCP@redbridge.gov.uk or the Terms of Reference for the Group can be viewed [here](#).

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