



North Tyneside Council

BCP
Council

Feedback from the North Tyneside Team

31 May 2019



Tyneside Alliance: Sector-Led Improvement



About us:

- North Tyneside has been a Partner in Practice since **March 2018**
- We are part of the only **joint** PiP arrangement in the country
- It enables the two Councils to maximise scope, expertise, learning and impact
- We have developed a **specialism** in relation to support around the **Front Door**

About our principles of engagement:

- The **safety** of children is our foremost priority
- We commit to **open and transparent** dialogue throughout
- We work **together, as equals**
- Solutions and plans must be **co-designed**
- **Delivery** of the improvement plan must be **owned** by the authority



Our Work in Partnership with You

Our Team:

- **Julie Firth** – Assistant Director, Children's Services
- **Nik Flavell** – Senior Manager for Quality Assurance
- **Mark Jupp** – Senior Manager for Transformation
- **Carrie Barron** – Team Manager, MASH
- **Dawn Hodgson** – Team Manager, Social Work Assessment Team (SWAT)

Your request to us:

Review and assess the strategy, governance, operational design, and implementation plans for the merger of the two organisations, as they relate to Front Door services (MASH and Assessment) and adoption of the Signs of Safety practice model.



Our Work in Partnership with You



With your help, we have:

- Undertaken an **off-site review** and scrutiny of contextual documentation provided
- Come **on-site** to you on **20-21 May** and **28-31 May 2019**
- **Visited** your MASH, Lansdowne and 14A (Assessment), EHAP and BLC (Early Help)
- **Observed** practice, including your 4 Zones of MASH and work at 14A
- **Reviewed** a sample of Contacts, Referrals and Assessments (s.17 and s.47)
- Facilitated staff **round-table discussions** (MASH and Assessment)
- Facilitated **reflective discussions** with practitioners and managers
- **Strategic discussions** with key safeguarding partners
- Led 3 **Workshops** (SoS Implementation; Model of Change; Workforce Event)

A huge ***thank you*** to all those involved for your hospitality and openness



Our Key Lines of Enquiry

With your help, we have sought to better understand:

1. Your Strategy, Partnerships and Service Design

- Strategic leadership, management and governance
- Service design and delivery model, including Signs of Safety
- Improvement plans
- Performance framework and management
- Resource planning and management

2. Your Quality of Practice, Systems and Processes

- Signs of Safety practice model and plans for implementation and embedding of this
- Appropriateness of the case management system and alignment with practice model
- Thresholds / criteria for the provision of services at different levels of need
- Management oversight and supervision
- Operational pathways and processes
- Information sharing
- Process for securing consent



Our Findings – Areas of Strength



We have found:

- A system with **resilience and core strength** which enabled you to ‘cross the line’ on 01 April 2019 without ‘falling over’
- Staff **passionate** about achieving better outcomes for children, young people and families
- Staff **committed** to the success of the Local Government Review
- Staff **positive about the future**
- Examples of **strong assessments** with the **voice of the child at the centre**
- Examples of **safe decision-making** on cases observed
- **Early Help** committed to providing help and support to vulnerable families
- A **strong, clear commitment** to the implementation of **Signs of Safety** from staff and partners
- **Commitment** to the MASH across the partnership



Our Findings – Areas for Consideration (1)



We have found:

- The current operating model within the MASH has **vulnerabilities** which makes it **potentially unsafe**
- **Anxiety within the system** with staff about the impact of LGR on structures
- **Anxiety about the lack of clarity** about the MASH operating model
- There is **unsustainable administrative complexity** resulting from two Case Management Systems in use within the Front Door
- As information is not held on one system, risk management decisions may be **compromised**
- Due to the use of multiple systems, **meaningful performance management information about the Front Door is unreliable**, impacting quality assurance, service delivery and service development



Our Findings – Areas for Consideration (2)



We have also found:

- A significant number of Contacts **do not have a decision within 24 hours**
- Thresholds within the Front Door **do not appear to be consistently applied**
- **Threshold** decisions to progress to Assessment **appear to be too low**
- **Consent** by a parent to a Contact to the MASH does **not appear to be consistently obtained** by referring agencies
- Contacts, where a decision has been reached to progress to referral and assessment, were **not transferred in a timely way** to the Assessment Teams
- There is **delay** to the timely assessment of risk for children and families. This is impacted in part by the lack of co-location of MASH and Assessment Teams.
- Within the current operating model, **Early Help is not an integrated part** of the Front Door and has multiple entry-points



Our Findings – Areas for Consideration (3)



We have also found:

- **Partner feedback** is that they would value the accessibility of Social Work advice at the Front Door and that this may be an opportunity to reduce Contacts
- **Partner perception** differs from Social Care about responsibility for decision-making by the Front Door
- There is a need for all partners to **develop and define partner relationships** in light of opportunities presented by the Local Government Review
- The current **accommodation of the MASH** may be a potential **barrier** to future developments, not least increased co-location of partners
- The **dispersed accommodation** of MASH, Assessment and Early Help may be a potential **barrier** to the effective and timely delivery of services
- There is a need for **increased pace** in the implementation of Signs of Safety



Our Recommendations (1)



1. Agree **strategic intent, communicate** it effectively and increase the **visibility** of the Senior Team
2. Immediately adopt **one case management system** on an interim basis within the MASH to record activity relating to Contacts and Referrals
3. Make a decision on the **adoption of a single case management system** for Children's Social Care and Early Help – the system chosen should be configurable to or offer alignment with the Signs of Safety Model of practice
4. Immediately **change your operating model** within the MASH to address identified vulnerabilities within the current model



Our Recommendations (2)



5. Urgently review and implement a **consistent approach to consent**
6. Urgently review and implement a **consistent application of thresholds**
7. Co-locate an **Early Help decision-maker** within your MASH
8. Increase the pace of your implementation of **Signs of Safety**
9. Explore the **co-location of MASH with your Assessment Teams**
10. Across the partnership, re-define **relationships** in light of opportunities presented by the Local Government Review and the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

