

Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee

13 December 2019



CHILDREN'S SINGLE POINT OF ACCESS

Purpose of report: Scrutiny of Children's Single Point of Access (CSPA)

Introduction

1. This report is prepared for the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee Members to provide assurances that the Children's Single Point of Access (CSPA) is fit for purpose and is meeting the needs of service users.
2. The CSPA was launched 29 April 2019 and replaces the Children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The CSPA is the umbrella term used to describe the front door to Surrey County Council services for children in need of help and support in line with statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018. Anyone can contact CSPA to access support, information and advice for Surrey families and for anyone who works with children and their families.
3. The CSPA approach has changed the way we work with children and their families our principal objective is to direct children and their families to the right support at the right time.
4. Please note this paper will refer to two terms when describing the 'Front Door' - the 'MASH' refers to the front door prior to April 2019 and 'CSPA' refers to the new front door implemented since April 2019.

Is the CSPA fit for purpose – are we meeting the needs of our Community?

Effective Family Resilience Levels of Need

5. In February 2018 Ofsted found; *"the understanding and application of thresholds by external agencies is poor, resulting in too many unnecessary low-level contacts and referrals, and overloading social workers in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)"*.
6. Similarly the DfE appointed non-executive commissioner for children's services in Surrey reported in October 2018 that the MASH was not fit for purpose nor compliant with Working Together to Safeguarding Children. This was because of the volume of contacts and those in particular that did not result families reaching support.
7. In response to this Surrey Safeguarding Children Board introduced 'Effective Family Resilience' which sets out in detail Levels of Need (thresholds) and the support which can be put in place to meet them. The next step was to ensure that the entire

children's workforce (including the voluntary sector) understood how to use the levels of need to guide how they should support children and their families. This involves training in excess of 1500 people between February and May 2019.

8. A particular exercise was undertaken with Surrey Police: 60% of all contacts to MASH were from this source, demanded administration and research with only a small percentage reaching the level for targeted or statutory support.
9. Four hundred Designated Safeguarding Leads for Schools and two hundred GP's have been trained in CSPA practices, processes, pathways and thresholds.
10. This approach has enabled us to work better together with colleagues and partners. The Effective Family Resilience document has introduced a clear and shared narrative about need and how risk derives from need. This makes it easier to identify desired outcomes for children and support to meet these at all levels of need.

Consent

11. Very few referrers to the MASH routinely discussed their intention to refer with parents in advance of contacting the service. This contravened statutory guidance on sharing of personal information, families could readily determine which professional in their network had made the referral and their entire support network was tainted by a lack of trust and transparency. This did not establish the right conditions for families to have faith that we could help.
12. Surrey Safeguarding Children Board agreed partnership guidance about consent that sets out:
 - The responsibility of professional referrers to seek consent of families wherever possible prior to requesting support from Children's Social Care.
 - Children's Social Care's responsibility to seek consent from families before sharing concerns about children with other agencies.
 - The circumstances whereby consent can be overridden in order to safeguard children.
13. The impact of introducing this guidance is that the CSPA consistently receives requests for support with the consent of children and families where appropriate.

Requests for Support

14. In order to enhance the narrative about what working in partnership we no longer employ a 'Multi Agency Referral Form'. We worked with our partners to create the 'Request for Support' form.
15. A 'request for support' assumes Children's Services is being invited to join those already helping the family. The form itself focusses on the needs of the child, young

person and family, what has been tried already, the outcomes sought and who is already part of the family network who can be drawn in to support a family plan.

16. Our position is that few families have no support. Any professional who asks for our support is already helping that family and this help should be valued and endure where possible, the professional may need re-assurance or signposting to additional help or the family may need targeted or statutory help.
17. The impact of this new approach and new form is that CSPA now receives requests for support that have been completed with families that clearly evidence their consideration of consent and the levels of need.

The New Model – CSPA

18. The vision is that the needs of children and families in Surrey are met through early access to help and support; guided through clear pathways to services within a clearly articulated partnership offer of support, achieving better outcomes for children and reducing the demand on statutory services.
19. All requests for support come through the Request for Support team where they are triaged against Effective Family Resilience Levels of Need:

Children's needs at Level 4 are directed immediately to Quadrant assessment teams.

Children's needs at levels 2 and 3 are directed to the Early Help hub.

Children's needs at level 3/4 are directed to the Multi Agency Partnership (MAP).

Commitments to Working Differently Together

20. We are committed to working differently together to offer support to professionals and Surrey residents. We are doing this in a number of ways including a consultation line and relocating with our Family Information Service.
21. Consultation Line – the consultation line was set up to offer support and guidance to schools and partners who were thinking about making a request for support. Survey findings regarding the consultation line reports 83% positive feedback from partners who have used the consultation line and find this extremely supportive.
22. Referrer feedback - We are now consistently offering feedback to those requesting support.
23. Family Information Service (FIS) - Colleagues from the Family Information Service were welcomed into the CSPA and have spent time guiding us through the FIS offer

and how to refer - this has helped us to respond more efficiently to level 1 queries and think about community based services that can support all our children and families.

24. We are screening less at level 4, using the levels of need document to help us be more curious about what support needs the family have and how these can be met by Early Help services.

A Partnership Approach

25. We are working in partnership both with colocated partners, colleagues in Surrey County Council teams and virtually with those who make requests for support.
26. Referrals from Police - to date we have seen a positive reduction in Police contacts; this has been as a result of work with Police on triage criteria, offering training and guidance and we now only receive level 2/3/4 contacts from our Police colleagues. In the new structure the Early Help Hub and MAP will be staffed with Police. Surrey Police will have council business support at Guildford Police Station to maintain this improvement and continue to work on this together.
27. A single Information Sharing Agreement with partners has meant Health and Police colleagues in the CSPA have access to council systems for MAP Enquiries.
28. We are co-located with partners in the CSPA now which is providing us with a rich set of skills to respond to the needs of our community. We are now co-located with Police, Health, Family Centres, Family Group Conferencing and FSP.

Are we making a positive impact for children and their families?

Inspection Feedback

29. Ofsted carried out a 2 day monitoring visit to the CSPA in June 2019 just four weeks after go live of the new CSPA. Inspectors evaluated the CSPA initial response to and management of incoming contacts and referrals. The full report can be found here.
30. In sum they sound that the fundamental aim of remodelling had been achieved with a significant reduction in the volume of contacts and referrals and the CSPA was providing increasingly safe, proportionate and well-evidenced initial responses to concerns reported regarding children's safety and well-being. They considered that partnership agencies' understanding and application of new threshold guidance was improving, resulting in them exercising more care and thought to their objectives before making a referral to children's services.

31. All aspects of the CSPA were found to be well managed, thresholds were appropriately applied, and the consultation line was improving understanding of thresholds and increasing partner confidence in the front door.

Performance

32. Performance data for C-SPA is in Annex 1. Please note that some of this is locally collected data.
33. We recognise that the success of the service depends upon robust relationships with our partner both internally and externally:
- Daily partnership briefings where co-located CSPA agencies communicate about performance and best practice.
 - Regular meetings with Assessment and Targeted Youth Support (TYS) Service Managers to ensure join up and enhance our focus on outcomes for children and their families.
 - CSPA Service Managers chair monthly Contact and Referral meetings with partners to review pathways in and out of the CSPA.
34. There is a strong quality assurance culture in CSPA. Our audit and performance management shows us that:
- Management oversight is robust and recorded on all contacts that come through to the CSPA.
 - Management oversight is applied at triage and authorisation.
 - Thresholds are clearly recorded with a rationale for the decision being made.
 - Referrers are routinely receiving feedback from their requests for support (no contact can be closed without this)
 - The voice of the child is evident in all case recording.
 - A recent audit of requests received by the Quadrant Assessment teams from the CSPA demonstrated a 96% accuracy rate for application of threshold at level 4.
 - All workers receive 4 weekly supervision.

Conclusions

Progress to Date and Phase Two

35. We have made substantial progress to date and this is reflected in our most recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit, our improved performance, Quality Assurance (QA) findings and feedback from our staff and people requesting support.
36. We still have work to do to continue on our improvement journey and this includes engagement of fathers and continued work to build on our understanding of the level 2 offer, developing the FIS website and accessibility.

37. We will continue to work on consistently hitting our performance targets and this will be aided by a permanently recruited workforce.
38. Phase Two developments for CSPA include working towards colocation and integration with SEND, CAMHS and Education services.

Recommendations

39. This report is to inform the Committee of the impact of the Directorate's transformation activity. The Committee is invited to scrutinise the impact and support our continued improvement.
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Sources/background papers:

Annex 1: Children's Single Point of Access Performance

Ofsted Monitoring Visit June 2019 <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50088564>

Report of the Non-Executive Commissioner for Children's Services in Surrey,
September 2018,
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752455/2018-09-independent-report-Trevor-Doughty-Surrey.pdf

CSPA 2020 Vision – Pillars of Success (Getting to ‘Good’)

People

- Our Community will be supported to receive the right help at the right time by the right service
- Our staff, partners and community will be listened to and respected
- The CSPA team will receive good regular supervision, training and coaching
- Partners will receive regular training updates on locally available resources
- An unshakable culture that places the welfare of the child at the centre of all that we do
- Advice – will be offered through the consultation line to professionals
- Early Help Hub will act to ensure the right help and support is offered quickly to build resilient and resourceful families

Partners

- Our Partners will be confident in their application of the effective support windscreen
- Our Partners submit high quality Requests for Support that articulate clearly the support required
- Our Partners embrace and recognise the benefit of the Lead Practitioner role
- Our Partners routinely use Team Around the Family meeting's to support families
- Professionals will be supported to develop their own plan that will build family resilience
- Our Partners will feel well supported in completing Early Help Assessment's
- The C-SPA will be staffed virtually or co-located with partners who have specialist knowledge, it will be clear what their role is and how this compliments others.

Practice

- From the outset be clear on the risks, strength and worries of the family
- Have curious staff that use motivational interviewing to understand risks and identify family led solutions
- Make high quality referrals that describe accurately and concisely the support needs of the family
- Have confident and tenacious staff that are clear on their role and the support that they offer to families
- Families and professionals will have confidence to seek help early because they have heard that it works
- Be confident in the threshold decisions that have been made and so escalate cases less frequently
- Information that can and should be shared will be. Information Governance will be robust but will not present a barrier to working together to support children and their families.

Performance

- Everyone will understand the services provided within Children's, Families and Learning Directorate and be able to step up and step down appropriately
- Requests for Support will receive an effective and timely response
- CSPA will be efficient and effective in responding to initial concerns and worries
- CSPA will quickly and accurately establishing level of risk
- CSPA will work to identify the right level of support provided at the right time with no drift or delay
- New systems will support professionals to do their job well and this will be quality assured with partners.

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