



Date of Meeting: 4 September 2019

Lead Member: Cllr Andrew Parry - Lead Member for Education and Early Help

Lead Officer: Sarah Parker – Executive Director for People – Children

Executive Summary:

This report provides information in respect of the work being completed to transform the front door (currently the MASH). We are working with Professor David Thorpe from Lancaster University and his team to develop and implement his ‘front door’ model.

The aim of the model is to implement the “Virtuous Cycle” with the strategic goals of safely reducing the numbers of referrals, developing intensive social casework services focussed on the most vulnerable children and families and reducing the numbers of children looked after.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

Not applicable

Budget:

There are no negative impacts for the budget.

Risk Assessment:

Not applicable

Climate implications:

Not applicable

Other Implications:

Not applicable

Recommendation:

For information

Reason for Recommendation:
Appendices: One – The Virtuous Cycle
Background Papers: None
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1. Introduction

1.1 The current MASH has been under significant pressure because of increasing numbers of Contacts and Referrals. This has contributed to numbers of unnecessary assessments being sent to the District Teams, elevated rereferral rates and high caseloads. High re-referrals can be costly, but more importantly, potentially stressful and harmful to the children and their parent/carer. Research completed by Dr Patricio Troncoso in 2017 found that, “potentially, multiple referrals can be detrimental to children’s development, as they may imply prolonged periods of unmet needs and recurrent episodes of abuse, neglect, maltreatment, etc.” *Analysing repeated referrals to children’s services in England 20 July 2017.*

1.2 We need to manage Contacts differently, so that children get the right support, first time, and from the right professionals. To achieve this, and as part of the wider changes in Children’s Services through the Blueprint for Change, we have been working with Professor David Thorpe from Lancaster University, and his team to transform our Front Door arrangements, creating the Children’s Advice and Duty Service.

1.3 Professor Thorpe’s model was developed from his work on the ‘The Virtuous Cycle’ – appendix 1. This is based on building a ‘front door’ where experienced social workers who have received specialist training from Professor Thorpe, provide advice and support to other professionals. They do this by ask key questions about the strengths and risks within families and will then agree together who is best placed to meet the needs of the child. The service will no longer take written referrals, but instead will have conversations with potential referrers so that a comprehensive understanding of the child’s circumstances can be obtained.

1.4 We know from the work with Professor Thorpe, and from talking to other Councils where the model is used, that quality conversations are more likely to lead to right support at an early stage for our children and young people, the first time. By talking through concerns and solutions with professionals we can work better together and get support earlier to families.

1.5 It is expected that successful implementation of the model in October 2019, will not only reduce the numbers of unnecessary referrals, lower the re-referral rate, and social work caseloads, it will, more importantly, help us safely support children and young people remain in the care of their families.

