

Safeguarding training on referrals, risk and domestic abuse

A training programme designed and delivered by subject matter experts to all officers and staff on safeguarding referrals, risk, children and adults at risk, and domestic abuse referrals.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Public Protection, Safeguarding & Vulnerability Domestic abuse Investigation Training and professional development
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Region	South East
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	November 2021
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Victims Workforce

Aim

The aim of the safeguarding training is to:

- educate officers and staff in the importance of quality and efficient information sharing with partners for safeguarding
- improve both the quality and quantity of safeguarding referrals made by police to partners
- provide a greater understanding of the role of MASH in the constabulary and how safeguarding works
- ensure better safeguarding multi-agency work

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes for the internal training are:

- an increase in the number of relevant referrals being made
- an increase in the quality of such referrals
- a reduction in the number that were rejected by partners or caused further work

Description

The force identified that the quality of referral forms to partner agencies was poor and that they were often not completed when required for children, and completed too often when not needed for adults.

Little training was offered to officers and staff around what was expected on these forms and why the information was needed. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) released an inspection result which highlighted the lack of structural training for multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) staff.

As a result, the MASH lead updated the role profile of an existing MASH sergeant to become MASH trainer, which had three clear objectives:

- create and run a training programme for MASH staff to ensure they receive the necessary training and continuous professional development (CPD) to complete their roles
- create and deliver a training programme for frontline staff to ensure they understand the importance of quality safeguarding referrals and what the result is
- work with partners by delivering training to them and identify relevant training partners can offer police

Objective one

A training programme was created for each specific role within the MASH combining College of Policing e-learning, face-to-face/virtual training and mentoring. Specific modules were written for this including:

- induction to the MASH (covering the MASH history and role, what is needed for a quality information sharing form for partners, children and adults at risk and domestic abuse including Clare's/Sarah's Law)
- crime data integrity training with a MASH focus and examples
- risk training (using the College of Policing 10 risk principles and national decision-making model)
- child neglect module

These are delivered to all new MASH staff and further CPD is developed throughout the year and clearly recorded individual CPD spreadsheets. Some topics for CPD have included referrals to Fire Services, suicidal ideation, Domestic Abuse, risk assessment, stalking, and mental health.

Every new MASH member receives the relevant training which they log on an initial training spreadsheet before being signed off by their mentor and line manager.

Objective two

The force contacted the learning and professional development department and were able to secure threehour training slot in the initial training programme for all new police recruits from 2022, all new Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) from 2023, and all new police staff investigators from 2023. The training has been recorded in video format which all transferees are required to watch.

The force ran a programme in 2022 for all officers and staff from all frontline departments including investigations, firearms, major crime, and specials with the same material as part of their CPD to ensure all officers and staff had been trained. This programme was delivered either face-to-face or over Microsoft Teams by safeguarding staff. The MASH trainer sergeant was the primary lead for delivery, however a team of volunteers from MASH was involved to ensure subject matter expertise was embedded into training delivery.

A MASH attachment day was put on for officers in their second year of service, whereby a paper-feed exercise was conducted for a fictitious case of neglect of two children and worked with partners to record a mock strategy meeting so they can understand how the MASH process works.

Objective three

Engagement with the various departments that ran the initial training programme for PCs/PCSOs/PSIs/transferees was vital and problematic at times as there is limited time to train all the essential material new recruits need, but safeguarding is such an important aspect that all were able to find us time to deliver.

None of this could have been done without significant support from senior management up to superintendent level as we were struggling to keep up with day-to-day demand and requesting an uplift in numbers. There were questions raised why a "training sergeant" was required if we were low on numbers of operational MASH staff but we were able to demonstrate to the assistant chief constable (ACC) the value of the role by the results.

There were no costs beyond having a dedicated sergeant role devoted to safeguarding training.

Evaluation

An evaluation is currently underway, and early results are expected by the end of 2025.

The evaluation is being led by Professor Michelle McManus who is seconded to the College of Policing from Manchester Metropolitan University. It is looking to measure whether delivering the training to MASH staff has a significant effect on their knowledge of core MASH subjects as evidenced by the four training packages used.

Overall impact

Every quarter, approximately 10 public protection notices (PPNs) are examined by senior police leaders and partner agencies to examine the quality of the submission.

The PPN is graded on a one to four scale with one being very poor and four being excellent.

- April 2022 – one grade one, five grade two, three grade three and one grade four, average of 2.4
- September 2023 – no grade one, three grade two, four grade three, two grade four, average of 2.9
- April 2024 – no grade one, two grade two, two grade three, four grade four, average of 3.25
- October 2024 – one grade one, three grade two, four grade three and one grade four, average of 2.87
- March 2025 – no grade one, four grade two, two grade three and three grade four, average of 2.9
- September 2025 – no grade one or two, seven grade three and one grade four, an average of 3.125

Between 2022 and 2025, the average grading of PPNs has increased.

Since March 2022, there have been bi-monthly reviews of incidents selected at random to consider whether the officer has completed the necessary information sharing forms.

Each year, 200 incidents are examined at minimum. This scrutiny process has found that the number of incidents requiring information to be shared with partners and has been successfully actioned has also increased.

For incidents requiring an information sharing form, the following figures for each year contained one:

- 2022 – 64.6%
- 2023 – 69.2%

- 2024 – 80%
- First two quarters of 2025 – 88%.

Both the quantity and quality of information sharing forms has increased consistently over the last four years.

Learning

- a major challenge faced was justifying the expense of a full time MASH sergeant being devoted to safeguarding training. The force were able to show through the impact that the post had merit and should be kept separate from normal safeguarding sergeant posts
- effective communication is key throughout. For example, talking directly to partners, such as local adult services, was vital in understanding what they required in a referral
- any safeguarding training is more impactful if delivered by subject matter experts who are effective at training rather than preparing a programme for general trainers to use. Use of the same material by general trainers from Learning and Development did not have the same impact as subject matter experts
- it is advised to have a dedicated resource for forces who may wish to implement a similar initiative. It would be challenging to deliver this effectively combined with another role, legislation and guidance changes frequently and it is vital to ensure all material is kept up to date.

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