

Domestic Abuse

What is the issue

OFSTED found in September 2014 that:

In September 2014, 1,128 contacts were received, of which 568 (50%) required no further action. The number of contacts is significantly inflated by domestic violence notifications from the police, with 1,164 (72%) in the past six months requiring no further action. This high volume of inappropriate contacts limits the capacity of the CART to make timely decisions. In the period April to September 2014, 33% of decisions were not made within the expected period of 24 hours.

For children living in households where there is a high risk of domestic abuse, the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is well established and attended well by most partner agencies except children's social care. This lack of engagement is hampering information exchange and the effectiveness of the MARAC. This issue was highlighted in the recent national review of MARAC arrangements, leading to an immediate positive response from children's social care. However, further improvements are still required, with consistent representation by a sufficiently senior manager who will share and disseminate information appropriately.

Domestic abuse services are well-coordinated and victims have access to a good suite of services including refuge provision, freedom projects, victim support, counselling and dedicated independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs).

Our journey since the last Ofsted inspection

The refreshed Rotherham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) went 'live' on 1st April 2015 and undertakes the 24 hour decision making process formerly carried out by CART.

- A uniform and mandatory MASH template and recording tool has been introduced for social workers to ensure they focus on the details required for referrals to make timely and accurate

our story

analysis/recommendations.

- MASH Operational Guidance, individual RAG rating and Information Sharing Protocol are now operational.
- The Local Safeguarding Children's Board raised concerns regarding the number of inappropriate referrals received from South Yorkshire Police (SYP). To help manage this, a separate domestic abuse email in box for low level 'blue' contacts has now been created.
- SYP are to continue sending low risk domestic abuse notifications (rated blue) and these are to be processed via a different email account at MASH and recorded on children's files for information. This is an agreement between SYP and Children's Social Care Services.
- Threshold Descriptors have been updated and merged into a single document and are now implemented.
- Strengthening Families training has been rolled out and is included in all forms that are in use within the MASH.

What difference has this made?

Practice audits carried out in April and May found that in the cases reviewed decision making was largely sound.

Timeliness of a decision regarding the type of response that is required for a child is made within one working day as per Working Together 2015 guidance.

Performance information is part of daily, weekly and monthly reporting and managers have access to a performance dashboard to allow for real time monitoring of performance against individual contacts.

The introduction separate domestic abuse email in-box for low level 'blue' contacts has enabled the safe and effective assessment and tracking of those contacts from the police which may be deemed to be inappropriate.

Areas for improvement

- A MASH review of domestic abuse processes is underway and includes measures to ensure appropriateness and timeliness of referral to MARAC.
- Further review is needed between SYP & MASH to ensure the national ACPO DASH risk assessment model is jointly being adhered to.
- The effectiveness of and attendance at MARAC still needs to be reviewed and addressed.

Next steps

- MASH Domestic Abuse Process map / procedures are under development.
- From 21st September a daily Multi Agency Domestic Abuse (MADA) meeting will take place. The purpose of the MADA is to share information regarding high risk cases received within the previous 24 hours and agree next steps.
- New Social Care Ways of Working due to implemented in September 2015, include the daily review by a social worker of domestic abuse notifications received. Those which do not meet Threshold for Social Care will be returned to SYP as an inappropriate referral to be held on police records.
- The head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding is due to observe MARAC in order to make recommendations to address the improvement of attendance and process.