

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 15 th October 2024
Report Subject	Children and Families Safeguarding Hub
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Children and Family Safeguarding Hub was formed in June 2024 to strengthen multi-agency safeguarding decisions for children at risk. The Safeguarding Hub provides a proactive response to feedback partner agencies expressed to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) during their inspection of Flintshire Social Services in December 2023. CIW report that during the inspection agencies advised that “they wished to be more involved in initial strategy discussions/meetings”. Flintshire’s Safeguarding Hub brings together different agencies to enable fast information sharing with the purpose of making an efficient and timely decision to safeguard vulnerable children at risk.

The Safeguarding Hub enables professionals to efficiently and quickly gather and process information to assess safeguarding risks. This multi-agency partnership and coordination supports professionals to make informed, appropriate, and proportionate decisions when it comes to child safety.

Flintshire Safeguarding Hub do not hold cases, it is part of our front door screening process where decisions are made to decide next steps in line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

The Flintshire Safeguarding Hub draws on the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub model (MASH) to provide a robust and proven model for safeguarding vulnerable children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

	That Members note and endorse the establishment of the Children and Families Safeguarding Hub to facilitate multi-agency information sharing
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	and support efficient, informed, and timely decisions to safeguarding children at risk.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	FLINTSHIRE SAFEGUARDING HUB
1.01	Flintshire Safeguarding Hub was created in June 2024 to enhance multi-agency safeguarding practice for children at risk. Drawing on effective and strong partnership working the Safeguarding Hub has been designed to facilitate efficient and timely sharing of relevant and appropriate information and collaborative decision making.
1.02	The Flintshire Safeguarding Hub receives child protection reports (referrals) that have already been screened and assessed as requiring a multi-agency approach and oversight. Representatives from the different agencies in the Safeguarding Hub collate information from their agency to build up a holistic picture of the circumstances of the case and the associated risks to the child. As a result, more informed decisions can be made about what action to take, and support can be targeted to the most urgent cases.
1.03	<p>Flintshire Safeguarding Hubs representatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childrens Services • Adult Services • Police • Education • Probation • Women’s Aid • Housing • Mental Health Services when required. <p>Representatives from other agencies will be brought into the meeting at any time depending on the individual case circumstances as well as social workers from other local authorities when required.</p>
1.04	Flintshire Safeguarding Hub is held at 11am daily via Microsoft Teams. On average between five and ten cases are discussed at Flintshire Safeguarding Hub each day.
1.05	Purpose of Flintshire Safeguarding Hub
1.06	Flintshire Safeguarding Hub brings together agencies from services that have contact with children who may be at risk of significant harm to make the best possible use of their combined knowledge to keep them safe from harm. It enables those agencies in the Safeguarding Hub to share relevant and appropriate information lawfully and securely with others so that a true and balanced risk assessment can be made, and appropriate intervention agreed.

1.07	The agencies within the Safeguarding Hub work together to help identify need, vulnerability, risk, and harm in respect of all referrals discussed within the Safeguarding Hub. The known strengths, resilience and protective factors aligned to each case can also be discussed to establish if the presenting concerns/ risks can be managed safely at a lower threshold of intervention such as early help. Once the level of need or risk is identified the multi-agency group decide the initial multi-agency actions required to protect and support the child.
1.08	Why is Safeguarding Hub Important?
1.09	Flintshire Safeguarding Hub facilitates more accurate assessment of risk and need, as safeguarding decisions are based on coordinated, sufficient, accurate and timely intelligence. A key aspect of this is the ability to compile intelligence from a wider range of sources to build a more complete picture of cases in a timely way.
1.10	The intended benefits of the Safeguarding Hub are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) effective coordination and management of safeguarding responses across agencies with a 'right service right time' approach for families ii) improved understanding of thresholds and practice standards across agencies iii) improved identification of risk and opportunity for earlier intervention, taking preventative action before risk escalates. iv) a reduction in repeat referrals, and a reduction in 'No Further Actions' v) improvement of the quality of our response to safeguarding
1.11	Reporting systems to track performance and outcomes is not yet configured within our IT system (PARIS). We are therefore exploring the establishment of a 'performance tracker' to capture essential performance data until an automated report can be developed.
1.12	Future of Flintshire Safeguarding Hub
1.13	The Safeguarding Hub is still in its infancy and although we have successfully implemented the model into our practice, we still require further core members to join the daily meeting. We require core members from Health and Early Intervention. There are ongoing discussions with to achieve this.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The Safeguarding Hub brings together existing staff working within organisations. Working together avoids duplication of processes across agencies, and allows practitioners to step-up and step-down risk assessments, contributing to better targeting and allocation of resources. Greater efficiencies in processes and resources will contribute to the multi-agency challenge of responding to high levels of referrals and complexity of need.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The multi-agency safeguarding hub model is a nationally recognised, researched, and developed approach in effectively managing and reducing risk associated with our most vulnerable children. The sustained commitment and deployment of workforce from partner agencies is critical to the successful operation of the Safeguarding Hub, particularly within the context of shared challenges in workforce shortages and financial pressures. Embedding proportionate performance and quality measures to evidence the impact of the Safeguarding Hub will be critical in sustaining agency commitment.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Ongoing Meetings with North Wales Police which was later extended to meetings with other partner agencies. Consideration given to other Local Authority MASH Models.

5.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
5.01	Contact Officer: Sarah Grant, Senior Manager, Children's Services Telephone: 01352 701313 Email: sarah.grant2@flintshire.gov.uk

6.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
	None.