



LANCASHIRE  
CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES

# SUPPORT HUB

(MASH)

[www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk)

## Why are we changing the way we deliver services?

As part of Lancashire Children's Services transformation journey we have reviewed our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to ensure we are meeting the needs of children, young people, and their families in Lancashire. We have undertaken extensive research of Good and Outstanding Local Authorities (as determined through OFSTED), engaged in dialogue with neighbouring authorities and with our partner agencies. All of this has led us to the conclusion that we needed to develop a single point of contact for all of our Children's Services within the Council: the Lancashire's Children's Services Support Hub (CSSH).

This movement to a single point of contact also reflects our ambition to rebalance our 'Front Door', enhancing the focus on early support services through targeted intervention services and community support.

The Hub has been aligned to Lancashire's commitment to Family Safeguarding and there is a clear emphasis on all professionals identifying family strengths at the earliest interaction with the authority

This is not to the detriment of safeguarding; the Children's Services Support Hub accommodates the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which continues to ensure multi-agency collaboration and information sharing when there are safeguarding concerns about a child.

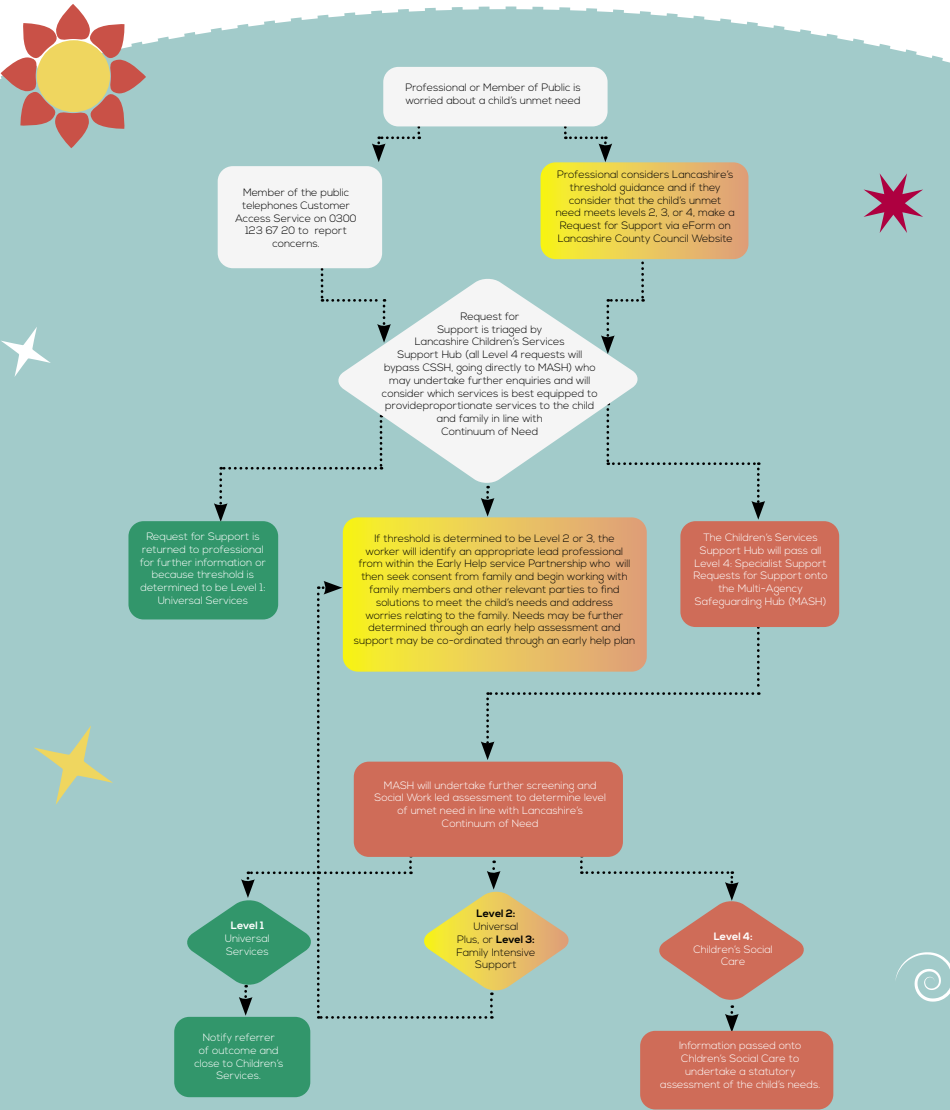
We believe that the movement to the Children's Services Support Hub will strengthen multi agency application of thresholds and will allow a more coordinated and succinct processes which will ultimately result in efficient decision making that enables children and families access to the right support at the right time.



# How do I access support from Children's Services Support Hub, and what happens next?

The current referral mechanism, The Children's Social Care referral form (MARF) and the Children Family Wellbeing Request for support form will be replaced by the Children's

Services Request for Support Form. This will be an eForm and will allow an accessible way for professionals to request support or raise safeguarding issues to the Hub.



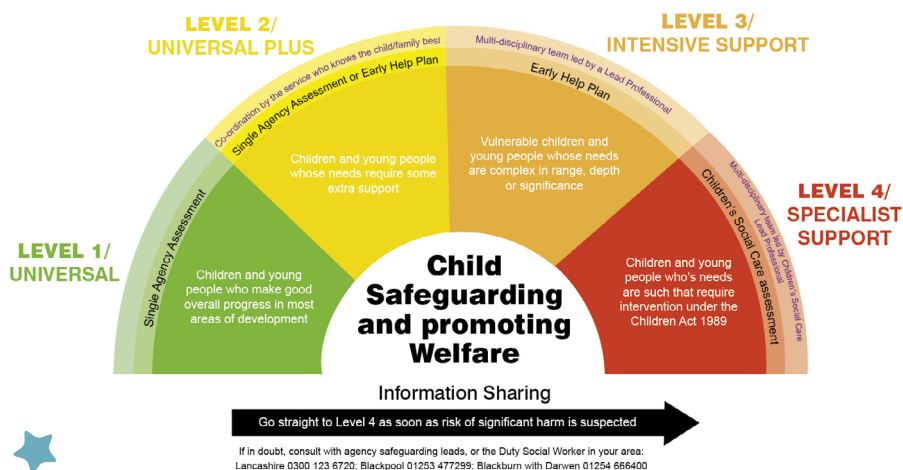
Professionals will continue to be able to contact the Hub and request to speak to an Early Help Officer/ Worker or a Social worker to discuss concerns but any formal requests for

support or safeguarding concerns will need to followed up with a request for support. For Education partners, the MASH education leads and the advice line will continue to be in place.

## How are decisions made?



### Levels of Need – At a Glance



Across Lancashire, all professionals working with children should familiarise themselves with [Working Well](#) With Children and Families Guidance, which includes detailed information around thresholds and the continuum of need (CON).

Within any request for support, you will be asked to identify what level of support you feel the child and family needs in line with the

guidance. Similarly, the Children's Services Support Hub, MASH and Statutory Children's Social Care all provide interventions depending on the assessed level of need in line with the CON. This is because legislation is very clear that families have the right to privacy and must consent to work with professionals. This can only ever be overridden if a child is at immediate risk of, or currently experiencing significant harm.





**Level 1 needs - Universal Services** • Most children, young people and families will experience challenges in their lives that impact on their wellbeing. Most families will be able to weather these challenges (are resilient to them) either without help from services, or with advice, guidance, and support from universal services, including empathy and understanding.

**Level 2 needs - Universal Plus** • Some children, young people and families will need support from people who know them well and have established relationships with them to meet some challenges when advice and guidance has not been enough to help the family achieve change or where a child or young person needs additional support to help them to thrive.

**Level 3 needs - Intensive** • A small number of children, young people and families will experience significant difficulties and will need coordinated support from experts working with them to find sustainable solutions that reduce the impact of challenge on the wellbeing and development of children and young people.

**Level 4 needs - Specialist** • In exceptional cases families need specialist, statutory support that is designed to maintain or repair relationships and keep families together safely wherever possible. In some very specific circumstances, the needs are so great that children need to be away from their family to ensure that they are protected from harm and in these circumstances the local authority becomes their "corporate parent".



## How do I obtain consent from families?

Conversations about a worry should usually begin with the family. It is a good way of exploring whether they share the concerns and worries and to assess help that might be needed. If parents or young people understand that you are trying to help and are willing to work with you, they may be open to you making a request for support to obtain the help they require, which will need their explicit consent (unless they are experiencing significant harm).

The following questions may help you ensure that consent is obtained:

- Does the person with parental responsibility know that a request for support is being made?
- If this request for support based on information from a third party, are they aware that it is being made?
- Does the child or young person know about this request for support?
- Does your Line Manager or Safeguarding Lead know about this request for support?



## What agencies are represented within the Children's Services Support Hub and MASH?

The Children's Services Support Hub consists of two teams, both of which are led by a Practice Manager and overseen by the CSSH/MASH Team Manager. In total the two teams are made up of:

- 3 Senior Social workers
- 9 Early Help Officers
- 3 Early help workers
- Business support

The MASH is consists of 5 teams, each supervised by a Practice Manager and CSSH/MASH Team Manager. These are primarily Social Work teams but also have input from Police, Education, Health, Early Help, Probation, Fire and Rescue, Child and Youth Justice Service and Victim Support.





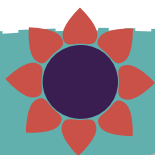
## What does a helpful request for support look like?

Families tell us that support works well when they are respected and listened to by the people who work with them or they approach for help. This is more likely to be successful when practitioners show empathy and work with families to explore how problems have come about and how to make change.

- It is important that any problems are identified early, so that the child and their family receive appropriate support in a timely way to prevent the problem from escalating.
- Provide clear details about what work you have done to support the family, and the impact of your worries on the child.
- Unless you are aware that a child has been open to CSC in other areas, you don't need to include

the history of our past involvement – we know it! We do need to know what has happened since CSC involvement ended.

- Provide clear, factual information.
- Detail information about consent, make sure that children and families are aware of request for support (when age appropriate and safe to do this).
- Acknowledge protective factors and family strengths.
- Avoid both formalising and watering down language; use the child's and parents' actual language and quotes wherever possible.
- Ensure the request for support written in a way that is not appropriate for sharing with families in terms of language that can be perceived as judgemental and stereotyping





## Why is a good request for support and threshold application important?

The work dealt with in Children's Services is about ensuring that the right children receive the right service at the right time. Research has shown that when children who are referred become subject to child protection enquiries which are subsequently unsubstantiated, they are less likely to receive a service at all, in contrast to those who are assessed as children in need from the point of access.

This means that children and families experience stressful and intrusive interventions for no benefit. It also means that Children's Services become overwhelmed triaging the volume of requests for those children who really do require services. This reduces time and resources available to provide services to families who do need support. This can cause unnecessary and unacceptable delay in meeting children's needs.

