**Contact Protocol**

1. **Definition of a Contact**
   1. There is no national definition of a **contact,** and isnot defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013.

1.2 An Initial Contact is made where Children's Social Care is contacted about a child and where there is a request for general advice, information or a service.

1.3 All contacts need to be considered alongside thresholds for Children in Need and/or the CAF criteria.

1.4 At any time, an Initial Contact may become a Referral if it appears that services may be required for a Child in Need.

1.5 Any significant information received about a child who is an open case should be regarded as an Initial Contact, passed to the child's allocated social worker and recorded on the electronic data base.

1.6 Some calls into MASH are professional consultations rather than contacts. These are where professionals want to discuss a case anonymously. These are logged on a spreadsheet and the caller is given a number.

1.7 The contact date is the date information received into MASH.

1.8 Contacts also include information requests, for example Safeguarding requests from CAFCAS and checks from Ofsted for Wiltshire residents applying to become childminders and foster carers.

1. **Process for How a Call or E-mail into MASH becomes a Contact**

2.1 Information Officer (IO) receives a telephone call or GCSX email and assigns it to 615 once they have checked Impulse, CareFirst, closures within last 3 months and provided a summary/chronology of historical involvement.

2.2 This is reviewed by an ATM who decides on whether:

1. CP threshold is met and a decision is required in 2 hours to progress to referral
2. Threshold decision made and no further social care involvement required
3. To reassign to IO to complete further/low level work/CAF recommendation
4. To allocate to a social worker to consider whether a threshold decision is required – professional judgement is required in relation to the need for managers comments.
5. **Timescales**

3.1 I & II – Must be completed within 24 hours

3.2III – Must be completed within 48 hours

3.3 If parents are not contactable within this timeframe, a letter will be sent from MASH to parents advising them of the contact and signposting. An outcome letter will also go to the professional regarding the outcome.

3.4IV – Must be completed within 48 hours

3.5 Social worker makes contact with the referrer if required. The parents are contacted to discuss the referral and gain consent regarding making further enquiries/welfare checks if necessary.

3.6 A threshold decision is made regarding whether outcome is a referral to social care or signposting to other agencies/CAF.

3.7 If parents are not contactable within this timeframe, a letter will be sent from MASH asking parents to make contact within 3 working days. The contact remains open to the social worker and is up-dated is accordingly.

3.8 If no contact is made by parent, the contact is reviewed in light of this and threshold reapplied and the majority progress to referral.

1. **Re-Referrals within 3 Months of Case Closure**
   1. If a referral is received within 3 months of case closure the IO will reassign to 615 with relevant details and the MASH manager sends to relevant Safeguarding and Assessment Team desktop.

4.2 Safeguarding and Assessment Duty Manager makes a decision on whether:

I. CP threshold is met and a decision is required in 2 hours to progress to referral

II. To reassign to a social worker to consider whether a threshold decision is required. Where possible this will be reassigned to the last allocated social worker. The social worker will make a threshold recommendation of:

* No further social care involvement required
* Progress to referral for Single Assessment.

NB: The rationale

As per 3.4 this decision must be made within 48 hours.

It remains the responsibility of the safeguarding and assessment duty manager to keep track of the contacts reassigned to social workers and message the next duty manager where they remain open at the end of the day.

1. **Open Contacts**
   1. At any one time contact may be open to MASH Information Officers, Social Workers and ATM’s. In addition to this there will be some that fall into the re-referral category (4).
   2. There are 7 FTE SW’s in MASH. Each social worker is allocated 10 contacts at any one time with a target of processing 10 per day. This equates to 70 open contacts at any one time.
   3. In addition to this there will be some actively being worked in the system by the other staff noted.
   4. The target of open contacts has been set between 50-85.

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