**Supplementary Guidance for MASH - Joint Protocol for the Assessment of Homeless 16- and 17-Year-Olds**

**Introduction**

MASH undertake holistic assessments for children and young people where there has been a concern for their welfare or safety, this includes for young people aged 16/17 at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This guidance has been developed in response to the additional risks and duties to this cohort of young people and will support practitioners in the MASH assessment process.

**What will the assessment include?**

Where the referral information indicates a young person is homeless or at risk of homelessness the assessment must:

Confirm the young person’s age.

Confirm the young person is in the Local Authority Area

Identify it the young person require accommodation.

Determine if the young person is a child in need.

**Gaining the young person’s views**

Where it is safe to do so MASH must contact the young person to ascertain their views on the following:

Explore the current situation- what has happened to lead to the young person presenting as homeless? With whom would the child usually reside? What is their accommodation history?

What family members or friends are in the young persons network? What support might they be able to offer?

Outside of their housing concerns does the young person have any worries? Do they feel safe?

How is the young person feeling now? Who is offering them emotional support? Have they ever been support by CAMHs in the past or received counselling? If so, how did they find this support?

Is the young person accessing education, training, or employment? Have they received any additional support with this in the past?

**Please ensure that the young person is advised that we need to speak to adults who hold Parental Responsibility for them- the young person should be given an opportunity to share if they feel that doing so would place them at risk of harm.**

**Parents Views**

Unless there is evidence that doing so would place a young person at risk of significant harm all persons with Parental Responsibility should be spoken to as part of the MASH assessment:

Explore the current situation- what has happened to lead the young person to present as homeless? Are parents of the view that the young person can safely return home? What would need to happen for them to return? What support do they feel they would need to achieve this?

What family members or friends may be able to support at this time? This may relate to more than with accommodation.

Do they have any wider worries for the young person?

Are they aware of any additional vulnerabilities the young person may have?

**Views of other agencies**

Information should be gathered from other agencies that know the child to determine any wider risks or protective factors for the young person, examples may include:

Housing- **A referral must be made to Housing** when a young person presents as homeless in the Local Authority area.

Education- to understand if the young person is attending and progressing in their education setting, do they have wider friendships and how does this impact? How does the young person present? What support has already been offered to the family?

Health- does the child have any additional health needs and how are these managed? Would this increase their vulnerability?

Police- where wider worries have been identified such as domestic abuse in the young persons usual home address, anti-social behaviour, or contextual risks- a police check should be requested to understand wider risks.

CAMHs- where the child has recently accessed support from CAMHs or is currently open checks should be undertaken to understand the support available and any additional vulnerabilities the young person may have i.e., history of self-harm

Youth Justice- where the child is accessing support or has recently accessed support from Youth Justice checks should be undertaken to determine the wider risks and protective factors for the young person.

Any other agency with whom the child is working.

**Wider friends and family**

Where parents or young people have identified that support may be offered to them by their wider network, we should request that contact is made with them to explore this.

Please gain the views of the person identified and explore their on-going plan- what on-going support might they need? Are there any risk factors that require further exploration?

**Analysis and Initial Decision**

As with all MASH assessments the analysis of the practitioner should identify any areas of risk and/or safety factors identified for the young person.

The worker should provide a view about the immediate safety of the child and the impact if intervention and support is not provided.

**The assessment should conclude:**

**The young person can return home or stay with family/friends.** (The outcome must include what on-going support will be provided to the young person; it must be considered that in the event the young person is disabled private fostering guidelines would still apply [Private Fostering (proceduresonline.com)](https://www.proceduresonline.com/bcp/p_private_fost.html?zoom_highlight=private+fostering). Targeted Help or Early Help in the community may be agreed at this stage)

**Support into appropriate and sustainable accommodation** (Referral for assessment under s17; to be completed jointly with housing. Support into appropriate emergency accommodation)

**Young person is unable to return home, their level of need or the risks identified suggest they cannot safely reside in sustainable accommodation** (Suitable emergency accommodation should be sought and agreed between children’s social care and housing)