Job description questionnaire

Please read ‘Guidelines for managers on how to prepare jobs for evaluation’ before completing this questionnaire. If you have any questions your nominated Senior HR & Change Advisor can help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job title:</th>
<th>MASH Officer</th>
<th>Service area:</th>
<th>Children’s Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reports to:</td>
<td>Team Manager/Senior Practitioner</td>
<td>Section:</td>
<td>MASH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job reference number:</td>
<td>2953</td>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Criminal Justice Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>16 July 2014</td>
<td>Job holder’s name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Purpose of job**

   Please write no more than one or two sentences about why the job exists. Focus on the achievement of the key end results of the job.

   The MASH Officer will work as part of a multi agency integrated team assessing referrals regarding children aged 0-18.

   The MASH process includes searching for and collating information from a range of sources including databases and other professionals.

2. **Job context**

   Give a short overview of the job context and the key objectives of the part of the organisation where the job is placed.

   The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) deals with referrals from professionals and members of the public who have concerns about a child’s welfare and safety. It makes the process of dealing with referrals quicker and more effective by improving the way County Council Children’s Social Care and Education Health and Police colleagues share information. It also includes a number of virtual partners who are not co-located but who share information, such as the probation services, YOS and the fire service.

   By having agency representatives based together, and by having more streamlined processes for the wider partnership, those professionals who are making critical decisions about vulnerable children have quicker access to relevant information, held by different organisations and can work together more quickly to risk assess information and make joint decisions as to future action.

   The MASH Officer will gather and interpret the information required to make a decision on the outcome of the referral in to MASH, and through case discussion with partner organisations based in the MASH, will direct the referral to the most appropriate agency as appropriate.
The MASH officer role includes direct liaison with children and families as well as partner agencies. At times this means having challenging safeguarding conversations in order to ensure that appropriate action is taken for a child or young person. Furthermore, a range of negotiation skills are being used in relation to committing parents/carers to the service package available to them.

An essential part of the role is to contact parents/carers who may have had allegations made against them of abuse toward their children. MASH Officers are required to have a skill base to manage the potential and actual high levels of distress presented by parents/carers in these circumstances whilst maintaining the need to apply careful persistence in gathering information.

The MASH Officers will need to adapt their communication style and pace to suit differing customer communication styles, emotions and situations, which may differ for each individual customer contact. They will be need to be able to respond in a sensitive manner and engage professionals across a range of statutory services in order to ensure that high quality information is gathered to inform the children’s safeguarding process without delay.

In doing so, the MASH Officer will need to analyse and assess customer requirements & concerns in real time (in the case of phone calls) and access and interpret the knowledge and information held within a range of corporate systems. They will need to be able to extrapolate the data and make informed decisions around the most appropriate route of action.

MASH officers are required to work to tight timescales and use their previous skills and knowledge base to ensure that they ask the right questions and gain the right information so that and appropriate information on safeguarding action required can be taken.

With the objectives of:

- Seeking to resolve as many queries as possible at the first point of contact, ensuring that information is collated, recorded and disclosed to partner agencies within specified timescales.
- Ensuring that the Council and its partners respond in an appropriate and timely fashion, utilising information to make the best decisions for safeguarding our children and young people.
- Minimising the need for repeat calls or correspondence from clients, partners and the general public chasing resolution/action.
- Use factual knowledge and reports on corporate information to enable others to take a course of action e.g. escalating cases of a safeguarding nature.
- To be able to undertake Independent analysis of complex information pertaining to safeguarding cases. These cases may involve serious neglect, harm or abuse.
3. Main accountabilities

List, in order of importance, the main accountabilities which describe key end result areas of the job. Each should contain an action, what is to be achieved or purpose of the action and what the end result will be. There should be at least 6 but no more than 9.

1. Maintain constructive relationships with a broad range of internal and external stakeholders and specifically with the Police, Health, Education, Probation and voluntary sectors to ensure safeguarding referrals are responded to robustly and are effectively signposted.

2. Through liaison, dialogue and searching appropriate databases collect and collate relevant information to the outcome of the referral

3. Record, interpret and present social care information and issues that can impact on the risk or needs assessment of the child/young person. This may involve disclosing proportionate and relevant information related to the parents/cares or siblings.

4. Explain clearly, and with sound rationale, highly complex safeguarding information to a wide range of professionals.

5. Participate in the MASH multi agency risk analysis to inform case management, advising where necessary and challenging decisions where appropriate.

6. Escalate evidence of ineffective safeguarding arrangements within or outside the MASH.

7. To ensure clear, concise, and accurate recording of work undertaken, and good electronic and paper file management is maintained. Northamptonshire have adopted the Integrated Children’s System as a data system for record management.

8. To supervise contact and to provide transport between children and parents when a child first becomes looked after

9. To undertake wishes and feelings work with children prior to Initial Child Protection Conferences
4. Organisation structure

(a) Please provide an organisation chart on a separate document to this questionnaire showing this job, its supervisor, colleagues who also report to the same supervisor and the jobs managed by the post holder, giving full job titles and job reference numbers. **Please do not indicate grades.**

See appropriate chart

(b) Please provide the job reference numbers and job titles of any posts which are line managed by the post holder and briefly describe the major responsibilities for each.

Post holder will not have line management responsibility

(c) Please provide the job reference number and job title of the line manager’s post and briefly describe the key differences between this job and the line manager’s role. Do not simply list the responsibilities of the line manager.

Team Manager (2422)
Senior Practitioner (2915)

- Team Manager/Senior Practitioner will supervise and provide day to day management of the post holder.
- They will allocate work accordingly to the post holder
- Post holder will be supported by TM in carrying out PADP
- TM will have budget responsibility. Post holder will not have any budget responsibility
- Both TM and MASH officer will be accountable for their own professional decision making

5. Knowledge, experience and training

What is the minimum knowledge/training/experience needed for the effective performance of the job? (This is not about the post holder’s own experience/qualifications but the minimum requirements for performance of the job). It may help if you think about this as if you were recruiting to the post - what you would require from applicants. Please do not indicate how many years of experience are required.

- Comprehensive understanding of the roles of different agencies and how they work together.
- Understanding of the legislative context as well as specific Relevant legislation and guidance relating to safeguarding and sharing confidential information to support children
- Understanding of the legislation and guidance relating to housing, education and health and how that impacts on safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people.
- Knowledge of, and ability to operate within, professional and Ethical guidelines.
- Experience of work with families in a social care setting
• Experience of assessing vulnerability, risk and need for children, young people and families
• Computer literacy and the ability to use CareFirst to find key information.
• Ability to collect and analyse complex information where information is drawn from multiple sources and may be conflicting or incomplete which will lead to an informed decision on referrals
• GCSE level or equivalent qualification
• Ability to work under pressure and to use English to produce an accurate précis of proportionate and relevant information
• Ability to develop and use a structured approach to gather and record information about the child’s, young person’s and family’s contact with services and interpret that in the context of possible safeguarding need.

6. Supervision and work planning

(a) How does work get allocated in this job, i.e. what is the pattern of the work cycle (daily, weekly, monthly, annual, etc).

Referrals will come in to MASH on an hourly/daily basis. Referrals every day and all need to be analysed, documented and decision made on those referrals within 24 hours and for Child Protection cases, 4 hours

(b) How regular is supervision and broadly what issues does it cover?

Monthly supervision will be provided to all the MASH officers. Issues covered will be:

• Professional development
• Review of case decisions
• Future training needs
• Review of PADP objectives
• Performance within team

(c) Please give two examples of the sort of priorities which the post holder is able to set themselves.

1. To recognise and record information that managers can interpret for decision making purposes

2. To collate all information required to enable a decision within agreed timescales – 4 hours for Child Protection cases assessed by a Senior Practitioner as high priority i.e. cases that indicate the threshold for significant harm is likely to be met but which require further information and 24 hours for medium priority cases.

(d) Please describe the procedures or systems the job has to work within and how this affects the level of discretion the post holder is given. Or you could give two examples of procedures or systems they have to work within.
1. LSCB Northamptonshire procedures.
3. CareFirst
4. MASH Protect system.

(e) Describe how the post holder controls the work of people they manage in their team if applicable, i.e. weekly/monthly meetings, or setting tasks on a daily basis.

Team Managers/senior Practitioners will set the MASH officer tasks for each referral on a daily basis. Currently they will be managing up to 10 cases per day each. Work will be allocated throughout the day and the rate will be dependent of the number and urgency of the referrals.

(f) Does the post holder co-ordinate sub-functions of the service or service areas or set priorities for them? If so please give details and say why the co-ordination role is needed.

Not applicable

7. Communication/contacts

Please detail the nature of the interpersonal skills the post holder has to use. Give two examples of the nature of interpersonal skills used. (Do not just list the people the post holder has to come into contact with).

The postholder will need to liaise with a number of professionals including the police, health, education, and voluntary agencies to discuss concerns raised and be able to question and explore in order to obtain relevant details. They will then need to critically analyse and relay these details to senior staff to enable decisions on cases and prioritise. Communication is key to assessing the risk.

8 Problems encountered

(a) Please give two examples of the problems encountered in this job and how they might arise. For the examples given, detail the steps you would expect the post holder to take to find the solution to the problem.

1. Post holders will need to monitor time scales and deal with difficulties in ensuring all agencies access information.

2. Confidential information will be shared with the post holder which may not be shared with professionals outside the MASH team. They need to be aware of the Information Sharing Agreement and ensure that recording of information is compliant with the agreement.
(b) How does the post holder decide at which point they need to refer a problem on?

MASH officers frequently encounter challenges in identifying correct contact details for parents and carers and need to approach clients with sensitivity. Once this has been done, they:

Identify when delays in safeguarding may become an issue and if checks are not able to be undertaken. Not to allow these delays in processing referrals and know when to seek guidance from managers to progress these cases and how. To identify other solutions where possible. For example, if incomplete referral without child’s details they would need to contact child health or other appropriate agencies to obtain these.

Need to be able judge when it is appropriate to contact Senior Practitioners for advice regarding thresholds and risk levels.

The postholder may also need to review information to discuss the case with their manager and if this can be progressed with out a check, if the appropriate agency is not available.

9. Making decisions

Please give two examples to show the ‘thinking challenge’ in the job, i.e. is there a set process to resolve the problem, does the post holder choose a solution based on their past experience or does the post holder have to seek more information to determine the extent of the problem, or use creative thinking to develop new concepts.

The MASH Officer role requires continuous problem solving and creative thinking. Whilst a procedure exists for how customer queries are to be managed, it is the responsibility of the Officer to ask intuitive and probing questions to understand the root cause of queries and utilise all available knowledge and information resources to resolve them to the satisfaction of the customer. This is of significant importance in the MASH environment.

MASH officers attend and contribute to strategy meetings in accordance with S47 the Children Act(1989) at which important decisions about the welfare of children are made. In so doing, they are required to present information in an analytical and evaluative manner.

10. Freedom to act

(a) Please give two examples to show areas that the post holder has discretion over.

The postholder needs to be able to analyse information and make judgements about what needs to happen and the actions required without constant direction. They are expected to review family history which may mean decisions need to be altered depending on what details are held. Therefore
they require the ability to work on their own initiative and independently but equally to be aware of limitations.

Staff are not supervised at all times and senior staff may not always be available, therefore the postholder needs to know when urgent cases need to be progressed and be able to decide if action is required before waiting for senior staff to be available. For example, they will need to explain why a case is to be signposted or referred to an agency outside of the MASH or to provide information to another local authority or service.

Prioritising the need to familiarise themselves (either by self-directed learning or through formal training) on change to processes, legislation or regulation that impacts their area of specialisation within the MASH.

(b) What kind of systems, procedures or ‘rules’ are set around the job which prevent the post holder having total discretion as to how to undertake the job.

Information sharing agreements are in place

11. Area and type of impact

There are two ways of looking at the type of impact the job has upon the council.

- **The first is where the jobs impact can be expressed in financial terms** (annual income or expenditure). If you think the job falls in this category complete section a.
- **The second is where there is no relevant financial dimension to the job.** If you think the job falls under this category, please complete the following section b.

Please note that you must complete either a) or b). Please complete section (c) for all jobs.

(a) Which parts of the organisation are most clearly influenced by the job’s objectives? Please indicate current year income, expenditure and capital budget, if appropriate, and state the impact on each figure given, i.e. is there a controlling impact; or partnership/joint accountability for the area (if so with which other jobs). Or is the impact indirect because the job is advisory and influences decisions taken in the area of impact?

or

(b) What kind of support services are delivered by the job - does it involve processing information, interpretation/analysis of information, supervision of others, or acting in an advisory/specialist capacity?

Collating and analysing information is a key role as is the ability to relay appropriate information when required as part of strategy discussions and information sharing for decisions and action to be determined. The postholder will on many referrals be expected to make decisions on information obtained and act appropriately to progress these.
and

(c) Is there any statistical information that can add to the understanding of the job, i.e. it is useful to know whether a Payroll Officer deals with is 50 or 50,000 payslips and whether they pay people weekly and/or monthly. Figures for their own sake are no help, but those directly relevant to the purpose of job are useful. e.g. providing a daily home care service to ten clients.

The team currently receives an average of 350 cases per week

12. Physical effort and/or strain

Describe whether the job requires physical effort and/or strain more than is normally experienced in a routine office environment, i.e. lifting heavy objects, how heavy are the objects, how are they carried, for how long and how often would this happen?

Not applicable

13. Working environment

Does the job require working outdoors or being exposed to objectionable, uncomfortable or unfavourable working conditions and is the post holder able to predict or plan for the elements faced?

Not applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreed by:</th>
<th>Print name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job holder(s):</td>
<td>Signed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed by:</td>
<td>Print name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signed:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved by:</td>
<td>Print name:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(line manager)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Assistant Director or Director)</td>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>