**Children’s Reception Team (CRT) & Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Who are the Childrens Reception Team? And what do they do?**

The Children’s Reception team – or CRT - are a team of Childrens Social Care childcare practitioners who are based in Fareham. They are responsible for the processing of all referrals where concerns about a child have been identified. CRT will manage all referrals from a range of individuals to include professionals / families / carers, for example, who have a child welfare or more serious child protection concern. CRT are the first point of contact within Hampshire County Council and the Isle of Wight Council where staff will triage the information referred, where risk and protective factors will be considered, and individual outcomes identified. CRT staff will use the Hampshire threshold chart to determine whether the child’s case is closed with no further action, transferred on to Early Help for Level 2 & 3 intervention or whether the child’s case needs additional enquiries to be made within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

**I am unclear as to whether a child’s case is open to Children Services, what should I do?**

If you are a Head Teacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead from a Hampshire Maintained School, you can access this information using the Child Portal without the need to contact CRT. The Child Portal will only identify whether a child is open and who the allocated key worker is. The Child Portal will not provide any case information related to the current involvement. Information can be obtained using this link: [Child Portal](https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/itschools/childportal)

The Child Portal is available to the majority of HCC maintained schools who will have access if they are using Hampshire County Council Networks. If you are a Head Teacher/ Designated Safeguarding lead from an Independent School or Academy within Hampshire and do not have access to the Child Portal, then you will need to make contact directly with CRT.

All other professionals should contact CRT using the Inter Agency Referral Form (IARF). Access to the (IARF) can be made through this link: [Inter-Agency Referral Form](https://forms.hants.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-7e6115a7-b0ba-484d-991f-084c1248ac72/AF-Stage-52cf8e73-0daf-47d4-bb55-0fdad856d3e6/definition.json&redirectlink=/en&cancelRedirectLink=/en)

**I am a professional who requires information from CRT as a matter of urgency, what should I do?**

If you work in an acute front line setting for example and need to confirm whether there are any known or open safeguarding concerns before you discharge a child to the care of a parent / carer, you can use the CRT professionals’ line or Out of Hours telephone number to establish this information. Both CRT & Out of Hours will be able to direct you to the allocated social worker if the child already has an allocated worker. If you decide that you are discharging a child and believe they require additional services / support, then you will need to complete the (IARF) and this will be processed by CRT.

**I am unsure whether to make a referral what should I do?**

Information to support you can be found on the Hampshire County Council Website [Report child abuse](https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/safeguardingchildren/childprotection/reportingabuse). If you have an immediate safeguarding concern for a child or young person that has suffered significant harm or is likely to suffer immediate significant harm, then contact should be made with CRT by telephone and supplemented with an [Inter-Agency Referral Form](https://forms.hants.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-7e6115a7-b0ba-484d-991f-084c1248ac72/AF-Stage-52cf8e73-0daf-47d4-bb55-0fdad856d3e6/definition.json&redirectlink=/en&cancelRedirectLink=/en). Also, further information regarding harm to a child can be found at the Hampshire Safeguarding Childrens Partnership website: [Hampshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership](https://www.hampshirescp.org.uk/) and the [Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children’s Partnership](http://www.iowscp.org.uk/)

**Should I let parents / carers know that I have contacted CRT to make a referral, or that I am concerned about the welfare / safety of a child?**

Yes, you should always make parents / carers aware you have contacted CRT due to concerns / worries about a child prior to contacting CRT. Whilst it is appreciated this may impact upon parental / professional relationships it is important that parents / carers understand your concerns and reasons why you have contacted CRT. However, DO NOT advise the parents of the referral if you believe that doing so would put the child at more risk of harm. CRT / MASH in this instance will be able to provide additional advice to you on an individual basis.

**Can I remain anonymous if I make a referral to CRT?**

Members of the public can contact CRT and remain anonymous if they would prefer. Whilst CRT / MASH will always do their utmost to keep the identify of individuals anonymous, there are on occasions times when the information provided by the referrer would lead the parent / carer to identify for themselves who they believe the referral has come from. CRT / MASH would not knowingly divulge this information however given any enquiries being made at a later stage in the process, the parent / carer may themselves identify the source of the referral.

Professionals are not able to remain anonymous if they are making a referral to CRT in a professional capacity. Professionals are expected to discuss referrals being made to CRT with the parents / carers involved prior to contacting CRT. Professionals should not discuss the referral with a parent / carer if the child is being placed at immediate risk of harm or has suffered significant harm.

**What is the preferred referral method into CRT for professionals?**

The preferred method for referrals is the use of the Inter Agency Referral Form (IARF). This can be found on the Hampshire County Council website. The IARF should be used for all enquiries about a child or family and is also to be used when making Child Protection referrals. On cases where immediate safeguarding / child protection concerns are evident , professionals are required to make initial telephone contact with CRT using the telephone number above and supplement the telephone call with a completed IARF: [Inter-Agency Referral form](https://forms.hants.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-7e6115a7-b0ba-484d-991f-084c1248ac72/AF-Stage-52cf8e73-0daf-47d4-bb55-0fdad856d3e6/definition.json&redirectlink=/en&cancelRedirectLink=/en)

**What is the telephone number for CRT?**

If you are a professional and have concerns because you think that a child might be being neglected and / or abused and you want to talk to someone or ask someone to find out what is going on, you should contact CRT on the following number:

* Hampshire Professionals Line **01329 225379** during office hours 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday
* Phone **0300 555 1373** at all other times to contact the Out of Hours service
* Hampshire parents / carers and or others phone **0300 555 1384** during office hours 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday
* IOW Professionals Line **0300 300 0901** during office hours 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday
* IOW parents / carers and or others phone **0300 300 0117** during office hours 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday
* Phone **0300 555 1373** at all other times to contact the Out of Hours service

**What happens after I have made a referral using the IARF / completed a telephone call to CRT?**

CRT staff will complete a full case summary on the information that has been provided in the IARF and or telephone conversation. CRT will complete the relevant risk assessments and will make a recommendation to the Team Manager for further enquiries to be completed in MASH, or the child’s case to transfer to Early Help, or to be closed.

CRT will record all information that is provided to the service. CRT will create an electronic file for the children concerned where the referral information will be stored electronically. Therefore, if you contact CRT for any reason you will need to be aware that any information you have provided will be documented accordingly.

**How quickly are IARF submissions triaged by CRT?**

For all matters where the child is not at immediate risk of harm, then the IARF should be used and submitted to CRT. All IARF’s are electronically sent to the CRT inbox where you will be provided with a reference number. You will also be given the opportunity to save a PDF version of the completed IARF for your records.

The inbox is staffed by CRT staff between the hours of 08:30 – 17:00 Monday – Thursday and 08:30- 16:30 Fridays. All IARF’s are triaged by CRT staff as they enter the email inbox during the above hours. If you submit an IARF outside of these hours, then they will be triaged the next working day. If you are wanting to make a child protection referral, then this **MUST** also be telephoned through to CRT via the professional line / Out of Hours telephone number to avoid any delay with the case waiting to be triaged.

Following the triaging of the IARF, CRT will seek to deal with your enquiry as soon as possible. IARF’s will usually be managed within 24 – 48 hours, however during peak busy periods this time may increase. CRT will contact you if they require additional information in order to process your IARF.

**Will feedback on my IARF / telephone referral be provided?**

Where a child’s case has been managed in CRT and closed at that point, feedback will **NOT** be provided to the referrer. Where a decision has been made and the case transferred into MASH (see further information below), you will receive feedback on the following:

* For cases that have met threshold for a MASH investigation and the decision has been made to close the child’s case, the referrer will receive a letter which will advise the child’s case has been closed to MASH. (provided a correct email address has been given)
* If the child’s case meets the criteria for either a S.47 or S.17 Child & Family Assessment and progresses to one of the district teams for an r assessment, then the relevant Child Assessment and Safeguarding team (CAST) or Disabled Childrens Team (DCT) will contact you to advise you of this. Feedback will be not be provided by CRT/MASH.

**Will I receive feedback about a child/family that I have sent an IARF on and the decision is to transfer the child’s case directly to Early Help?**

You won’t receive feedback from CRT on anything they do. You will only receive feedback on a referral if it goes on to MASH an if MASH resolve the matter and close it.

**Multi Agency Safeguarding HUB (MASH)**

**Who are MASH and what do they do?**

The MASH team are Qualified Social Workers co- located with CRT. Both teams work in conjunction with one another to safeguard children. The MASH team will only receive cases from CRT where concerns for children are evident and further investigation is required. MASH will provide triage and multi-agency assessment of all safeguarding concerns in respect of vulnerable children. It brings together professionals from a range of agencies into an integrated multi-agency team. The benefit of the MASH team is it will gather information from the various computer systems managed by each individual agency within the MASH, where this information will then be shared in a timely and effective way to inform the decision making on cases. Other agencies who work within the MASH team include Adult Services, Hampshire Police, and Health services. The Children’s Services element of MASH is staffed by qualified social workers who will analyse all of the information they have gathered as part of their enquiries and will make a recommendation for cases to be closed, transferred to Early Help services and/or transferred to the relevant district for assessment under S.47 or S.17 Children Act 1989.

**What are the MASH Timescales for completing enquiries?**

Social workers in MASH have up to 48hrs to complete all the necessary enquiries on children’s cases allocated to them. Prior to the end of the 48hrs, a management decision will be made to either close the child’s case with no further involvement and/ or transfer to Early Help or one of our district teams for assessment.

**What if the case is immediate safeguarding and or the child has suffered significant harm under S.47 Children Act 1989?**

MASH will prioritise all cases where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. In these circumstances, referrals will be made quickly to partner agencies within the MASH where a strategy discussion will be held. All strategy discussions are held within a 2-4-hour timeframe and the referral information and risks to the child will be fully considered by partner agencies. All strategy discussions are held in MASH and are led by a Team Manager from Childrens social care. For cases that are outside the usual working hours of MASH and the child is deemed to be at risk that evening; a strategy discussion will be undertaken with a Team Manager from Hampshire’s Out of Hours service alongside available partner agencies in MASH. For children that are not deemed to be at immediate risk of significant harm the strategy discussion will be undertaken the next working day.

**Will MASH share my referral information with parents / carers?**

MASH are expected to make contact with parents / carers and or significant others where concerns for a child have been raised. Therefore, if you as a professional have made a referral please expect this information to be shared with these individuals. Professionals are expected to discuss referrals being made to CRT/ MASH with the parents / carers involved unless the child is being placed at immediate risk of harm or has suffered significant harm.

Where the referral has been made by a member of the public MASH will always do their utmost to keep the identity of individuals anonymous, however there are on occasions times when the information provided by the referrer would lead the parent / carer to identify for themselves who they believe the referral has come from. MASH would not knowingly divulge this information, however given any enquirers being made at a later stage in the process, the parent / carer may themselves identify the source of the referral.

**If I am contacted by a MASH Social Worker what should I do?**

It is very important for MASH to gain as much relevant information as possible. MASH will endeavour to contact a range of professionals / parents / carers to discuss the nature of the concerns and to identify how support can be provided to improve the outcomes for children. Therefore, if you are contacted by MASH given the strict timeframe it is important that you share your views and information with the Social Worker as quickly as possible so that all risks can be fully considered.

**Do staff in MASH/CRT visit families?**

No – staff working in CRT / MASH are all office based and have the role of receiving information from every agency and analysing any potential risks. They then make decisions in respect of the most appropriate intervention for a child’s identified needs. Where a child / family require a visit from a social worker as part of an agreed intervention, this visit will be conducted by one of the district-based social workers.

**Do MASH social workers case hold?**

MASH social workers will only hold cases for a maximum of 48 hrs. They do not hold cases any longer than this period. If a family requires further assessment work, then this will be allocated to a district based social worker who will complete any further assessment and if relevant, work who other agencies and the family to agree a plan of support.

**If a child’s case is in MASH can I contact the social worker directly?**

All social workers in MASH have their own direct dial telephone numbers / emails. Should you need to contact MASH social workers in relation to a case they are working on, then you can contact them directly via email and or individual telephone numbers. MASH Social workers will provide these to you when they contact you.

If a case has been closed to MASH but additional concerns have then been identified, then these new concerns will need to be re referred via CRT using a new (IARF). MASH social workers are unable to take new information on closed cases and will re direct you to CRT.

**General Questions:**

**How do I access counselling services?**

Local support and counselling services that may be available to you in your area can be found here at the [Hampshire’s Supporting Families Programme](https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/supportingfamilies) and includes information on how to refer to those individual services.

**Do Children’s Services offer respite care?**

Hampshire Children Services can support in offering respite care. Respite care is usually a form of short-term substitute care for children with significant disabilities or a serious health condition and is provided by someone other than parents or the carer of the child. It may be a one off or form part of a support package based on the needs of individual children and their families. Consideration will be given to the likelihood of respite care being available to you as part of the assessment of a child’s needs.

**What is a PREVENT referral?**

PREVENT is the name given to a national strategy which aims to stop people becoming involved in extremism or radicalisation. If you have concerns for a young person being at risk then you should complete the Inter [Agency Referral Form](https://forms.hants.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-7e6115a7-b0ba-484d-991f-084c1248ac72/AF-Stage-52cf8e73-0daf-47d4-bb55-0fdad856d3e6/definition.json&redirectlink=/en&cancelRedirectLink=/en). Further information for PREVENT can be found at the [Hampshire PREVENT Partnership Board Website](http://www.hampshirepreventboard.org.uk/).

**If a case is open to Early Help who should I contact if I am concerned about a child?**

Where a child is open to the Early Help Hub then contact should be made with the relevant Early Help Hub worker to discuss the situation in the first instance.  If you believe the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, then contact should be made directly with CRT.

**Where can parents / professionals go when they don’t agree with a MASH decision?**

If you do not agree with a decision and process, in the first instance please contact CRT and ask for a review of the case emphasising the concerns you have raised. Should this not resolve the concerns you can request a team manager makes contact to discuss the decision with you.

If you still have concerns you can follow the Hampshire or Isle of Wight Safeguarding Partnership’s escalation procedure at [Joint Working Protocol for the Professional Challenge and Resolution of Professional Disagreement](http://hipsprocedures.org.uk/skyyty/safeguarding-partnerships-and-organisational-responsibilities/joint-working-protocol-for-the-professional-challenge-and-resolution-of-professional-disagreement)

**Making a comment, suggestion or complaint about CRT / MASH.**

How to make a comment, suggestion or complaint and what happens next;

Should you remain dissatisfied with the service you have received from CRT or MASH and despite speaking with a team manager you feel your concerns have not been resolved, then you are able to contact the Hampshire County Council Complaints Team. Details on how to escalate a concern and raise a complaint can be found at the following link: [Making a comment, suggestion or complaint](https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/contact/commentsandcomplaints)

You can make a general enquiry using our [enquiries form](https://forms.hants.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-d5782370-8ffc-4d69-b61b-e282456a47dc/AF-Stage-e293088e-451a-4769-a9ee-e980b26b172f/definition.json&redirectlink=/en&cancelRedirectLink=/en) or by emailing [info@hants.gov.uk](mailto:info@hants.gov.uk)