



*"To be at the heart of safeguarding excellence"*

## **EVOLUTION: Frequently asked questions**

### **Why do I need to this?**

As a member of a police force in England and Wales you have a statutory requirement under Section 10 Children Act 2004 to co-operate with the local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

You have a similar and near identical statutory duty to co-operate with the local authority to safeguard vulnerable adults under Section 6 Care Act 2014.

Notifying need, harm and risk by way of form 3924 is how you are fulfilling the legal requirement (in part) to cooperate in these very important duties.

### **What is a threshold?**

The term "threshold" refers to the point at which Children's Social Care are likely to accept a referral for a child, young person or their family and links directly to the partnership Levels of Need document –Levels 1 to 4 and inter-agency safeguarding procedures.

### **Will MASH make the threshold decisions and transfer work to the teams?**

Yes, the process for MASH applying the thresholds will remain the same.

### **What is EVOLUTION?**

It is **not** a risk assessment tool. The prompts are designed for use by all front line safeguarding partners and by professionals throughout their professional practice for both children and vulnerable adults.

EVOLUTION is a mnemonic and the prompts ensure professionals are able to consider and articulate what they have seen, heard, smelt, understood etc. (evidenced) following attendance within households and when interacting with members of the public in any setting. The prompts ensure nothing is inadvertently missed and that practitioners are considering the known, evidence based, triggers of need, harm and risk in all situations even when the professional has a multitude of other tasks to consider or maybe under significant stress and personal threat, such as social workers and police officers. It was designed to be easy to use.

EVOLUTION is also designed to form part of a whole-system approach within a safeguarding partnership. It should be used by those within MASH settings to strengthen the analysis of gathered information by giving a framework for further research across professional domains and information databases.

Please be mindful that EVOLUTION is not a tick box exercise and never should be used as such. Remember to state the purpose for your attendance at the particular incident. Don't make assumptions, base your findings on factual information and use the EVOLUTION prompts to help you to record the need, harm and risk elements observed or reported to you.

Use them to articulate your concerns even when you cannot fully identify an area of need, harm and risk but your professional experience and knowledge is making you suspect things are not as they should be within a given prompt area.

### **Does EVOLUTION replace the DASH form?**

No it doesn't.

The DASH form is designed to be predominantly victim (male and female) focussed for incidents of domestic abuse and violence. Forms 3924 for both children and adults are designed to identify need, harm and risk to the vulnerable in society regardless as to whether they are a victim of crime or not.

### **Do I need consent to complete a 3924?**

No you don't.

Police officers have a duty to protect life and prevent crime. It is acknowledged across society in the UK that the police service will identify individuals and families to the appropriate statutory body when they believe there is an unmet need, harm or risk so that these might be considered and acted upon if appropriate. It is your local authority who has the statutory responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults to whom and them alone you should report. The form 3924 is for their knowledge and consideration after the police service has completed it.

You may wish to advise the individual that you are going to notify the local authority of what you have seen or/and or heard but you do not need their consent to submit the form 3924.

### **Do I need to do a form 3924 for each child if for example there are 5 in a household?**

No you don't. You only have to do one form 3924 providing they reside at the address you attend.

### **Where do my forms 3924 go to and what do they achieve?**

Your information provided on the form 3924 and with EVOLUTION as an aid will start the understanding within the partnership of need, harm and risk picture. Your work will be analysed in the MASH again using the prompts and a fuller partnership picture created. This will enable all services to target interventions at those in need, suffering harm or at risk. It will also ensure help is provided at the earliest opportunity to children, adults and families. EVOLUTION will ensure that you communicate with your partners in a common language. They will be using it in their professions across Surrey.

Your use of form 3924 and the evolution prompts is your way of obtaining a service for children, vulnerable adults and families. You can make a difference and EVOLUTION will help you to do it.

### **Where is the MASH located?**

The MASH operates from Guildford Police station at present.

### **What is a MASH and how do I connect to it?**

MASH brings together key safeguarding partners such as social work, health, education, housing and the police into a secure and integrated work space to share information in a dynamic way in relation to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The

holistic information picture this creates enables a better analysis and understanding of need, harm and risk. This underpins the decisions local authorities have to make to safeguard children and vulnerable adults and ensures all interventions are appropriate and proportionate.

This integrated working and effective information sharing ensures need, harm and risk is identified as early as possible and aids the early intervention agenda. MASH was specifically developed to drive the early intervention agenda as well as ensure immediate and proportionate interventions through the best use of all partnership information.

MASH should connect to both statutory and non-statutory services at all levels to allow concerns of all levels to step up or down to the most appropriate and proportionate service. The coordination of cases stepping down to Early Offer of Help (EOH) and Troubled Families programs can be successfully managed within the MASH environment.

MASH is also being rightly used to identify specialist areas of risk such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), radicalisation (Channel) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

### **What is Early Help and how do I fit into it?**

Early Help is the term used to describe arrangements and services that identify the need for help for children, young people and families as soon as the problems start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future. EVOLUTION forms part of a whole-system approach within a safeguarding partnership as it will prompt you to highlight immediately those who need help, support or even challenge to their behaviours not just victims. It encourages and supports frontline officers to collect and articulate evidence to support decision-making and assessment by using their professional judgement and discretion. It is an aide to professional practice. Your information provided on the form 3924 and with EVOLUTION as an aid will start the understanding within the partnership of need, harm and risk picture and assist with the right support, right action at the right time.

### **What does a MASH do?**

Co-located agencies in the MASH securely share information and together make decisions around all safeguarding issues about children, vulnerable adults and victims of domestic abuse in Surrey.

### **How do I do a Risk assessment?**

To do a risk assessment, you need to understand what, in your business, might cause harm to people and decide whether you are doing enough to prevent that harm. Once you have decided that, you need to identify and prioritise putting in place, appropriate and sensible measures.

#### **Start by:**

- Identifying needs, vulnerability and or risk.
- Identifying who might be harmed and how.
- Evaluating what you have identified and then decide on the appropriate response, taking into account what you have identified and are already in place.
- Recording your assessment
- If a previous risk assessment was made, review this and start the update from when the last risk assessment was made.

- Undertaking a holistic assessment of need, harm and risk requires the collation and consideration of all history recorded on each family member, including any siblings of the subject child, and on the parents as children. When receiving new concerns, current information needs to be carefully integrated with the history contained in previous child concern reports, notifications, investigation and assessments and other file material available. Past concerns may have been about similar or different harms and may not have met the threshold for a notification. This previous decision making should not influence the assessment of the current harms but will assist in identifying risk and protective factors and indicators of a pattern of cumulative harm.

### **What should I include in my risk assessment?**

Your risk assessment should include consideration of what might cause harm and how. You also need to identify the people who might be affected. You should be able to show from your assessment that:

- proper system checks were made
- all people who might be affected were considered
- all significant risks have been assessed
- the precautions are reasonable
- the remaining risk is low
- needs identified

### **What do I need to record?**

You need to record:

- your engagement with the referrer to gather information about their concerns - the who /what / where / when
- critically review all file material and record the significant findings - what is the need, vulnerability or risk element identified from your system checks
- what further action is needed and on the basis of the guidance from the Levels of Need document (level, 1,2,3,4) and your professional judgement
- details of any particular people who you have identified as being especially at risk

Information gathering is a continual process, with new information needing to be incorporated with what is known. It is important that professional curiosity too is shown on queries that you may not be able to immediately answer from system checks but that partners possibly can assist with from what they know.

Always remember that the receipt of new information on a case may require a review of decision-making and a reassessment. Be clear and concise.

### **What is the relationship between abuse and harm?**

Where abuse is an action against a child or an adult, harm refers to the detrimental effect or impact of that action on the child or adult. Therefore, to assess harm, parental actions, behaviour, motivation, or intent are identified to determine the impact for the child/ adult, which may be cumulative in nature.

For statutory intervention to occur, there must be information to suggest that the child or adult has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm and may not have a parent / carer able and willing to protect them from the harm.

The level of harm must have a detrimental effect of a significant nature on the well-being of the child/ adult, and the harm must be identifiable or observable through physical, emotional and / or psychological impacts.

Harm may have been experienced by the child/ adult in the past, and / or is being experienced now. It may also be assessed that there is an unacceptable risk of harm to the child/ adult in the future, due to insufficient protective factors existing to ensure children / adult's safety and well-being.

### **What is harm?**

Harm can be defined as 'any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's/ adult's physical, psychological or emotional well-being.' Harm may be caused by physical or emotional abuse, neglect, and/or sexual abuse or exploitation.

### **What is a protective factor?**

A protective factor is a factor that may influence or reduce the likelihood of future harm by interacting to support, enhance or develop a parent's capacity, motivation and/or competence to meet the child's protective needs.

### **What is a risk factor?**

A risk factor is a feature found more often in abusive families than in the general population which may indicate a heightened likelihood that a child / adult may be harmed in the future.

### **What is a Strength?**

A strength is defined as positive characteristics within a person that may lead to better outcomes for the person over time. Strengths are not considered as protective factors as they do not mitigate against risk of harm.

### **How do I determine the level of harm and future risk of harm?**

Following completion of EVOLUTION prompts (alongside the use of the Levels of need document guidance) your analysis questions should summarise:

- whether the child/ adult has been harmed and/or is likely to be harmed in the future
- whether the child/ adult is at risk of immediate harm, with their immediate safety threatened
- the level or degree of harm experienced previously, currently, and likely to be experienced by the child/adult in the future, giving consideration to the child's/ adults vulnerability
- whether there has been a detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's/ adults well-being, or there is an unacceptable risk of this occurring in the future

- Whether there is a parent/ carer able and willing to protect from harm.

In using their professional judgement, practitioners need always to take into account the context of the situation, as well as such protective and resilience factors. Decisions relating to the type of intervention necessary must be evidence based, using professional judgement, backed up by consultation and supervision.

### **What is the Levels of Need document?**

The levels of need document is a partnership document. The SSCB ensure that practitioners are able to identify the level of need of a child or young person (in the context of their family, environment and experiences). This document provides simple guidelines on how to respond with the most appropriate and proportionate intervention at the right time.

The levels of need document is co-produced with partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors, and children, young people and families. The guidance provides a number of potential indicators that may highlight additional needs across a broad spectrum, and can be used to enhance collective understanding of need, harm and risk. Whatever their level of need, children and young people should always have access to universal services, and for most children this will provide all the opportunities they need to reach their potential. However, there are times when their needs mean they require an enhanced level of support, either due to their own increasing complexity of need, or the impact of external factors.