

## One Minute Guides - Inter-Agency Contact Form February 2020

### What is the IACF?

The form is used to record concerns about a child that need to be shared with Portsmouth's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to support decision making and information sharing, to ensure they receive the right help from the right agency at the right time.

### When should the IACF be used?

Professionals should use the PSCB Thresholds document to guide their decision making when determining the level of need or risk relating to a child. Wherever possible practitioners should discuss their concerns with their line manager and/or Safeguarding lead or contact MASH for a professional discussion. However this should not delay submitting the form to MASH. You should use the IACF when:

1. There is immediate risk of harm to a child and/or a professional believes a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm as a result of the care they are receiving.
2. The child is identified as in need or vulnerable. e.g. A child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority
  - A child whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired, without the provision of services
  - A child who has a substantial and permanent disability
3. Support is required to access Early Help Support Services and a more coordinated response is required from agencies.

The MASH will accept telephone **contacts** where there is an immediate risk to a child, but when they do so, you will be asked to complete the IACF within 24 hours. If there are concerns that a child is at immediate risk of harm **make direct contact** with the MASH by phoning 023 9266 8793 or 0845 671 0271 or Police (999 in an emergency) and complete this form once the immediate concerns have been addressed.

The IACF should be completed with as much relevant information as possible for children and families in need of help and support. Once complete this form may be posted, transmitted by fax, or sent as an email attachment from a secure email address:

**By email to: [MASH@secure.portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@secure.portsmouthcc.gov.uk) or [EarlySupportReferralPanel@secure.portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:EarlySupportReferralPanel@secure.portsmouthcc.gov.uk) where applicable**

**By post to: Portsmouth MASH, Civic Offices, Floor 4 Core 5/6, PO1 2EA**

**By fax to: 023 9275 4709**

## How to complete the Inter-Agency Contact Form

### Details of Person making the contact (page 1)

- Please complete all details about the person making the contact. It is important that there is a telephone number for the person so that they can be contacted on by MASH.

### Consent (page1)

- The form explains that before sharing the IACF with MASH, it is necessary to inform the parent of your concerns about the child and that you will be sharing that information with MASH. This is called 'consent'. The form highlights that in some situations where you might not seek consent (when a child is considered to be at risk of significant harm and you believe that seeking consent would increase this risk).
- There might also be a situation where you have made attempts to discuss the contact form with the parent but have not been able to speak to them and you feel that delaying sharing the form with MASH would increase the risk of harm to the child.
- Where there are exceptions to seeking consent, it is essential the referrer records on the IACF, the reason consent has not been gained e.g.: child at risk of immediate harm, attempts made via telephone and letter unsuccessful etc.
- Who can consent - A parent or carer with Parental Responsibility (PR): 1. Birth mother will automatically have PR unless her child has been formally adopted, 2. a person with parental responsibility awarded by the Court such as by the making of a Residence Order, Child Arrangement order or Special Guardianship order, 3. Birth fathers of children born after 2003 who are named on the birth certificate or whereby father has gained PR via the court (prior to 2003 parents would have needed to be married at the time of birth for father to have PR).

### Child and parent details (page 2)

- Please ensure that accurate details are given for the child including correct spellings of names and dates of birth.
- Please provide as much detail as possible about ethnicity, first language and disability. This is important in terms of identifying vulnerability but also in ensuring that communication is appropriate.
- Current contact details for parents also need to be accurate and up to date. This will ensure that there are no delays in contacting parents and that contact information is passed to correct Locality Teams.
- For information on whether a parent/carers has PR please see guidance regarding consent.
- Immigration status, e.g. Asylum seeker with temporary visa, indefinite leave to remain, visa expired or British citizenship?

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### Siblings (page 3)

- The form has space for 3 siblings to be added. These can be children living in the home and elsewhere. If there are further children to be included, please add additional fields.

### Current family home situation (page 3)

- Please include details of step-parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents who reside in the home or play a significant role in the child's life. This should also include regular visitors to the home such as step or half siblings or where there are friends or lodgers that provide considerable support to the family.

### Early Help Assessment (page 4)

- It is important to note if there an Early Help Assessment (EHA) in place, this could be the new EHA or a previous SAF (single assessment framework) or CAF (common assessment framework) and details of the lead professional.

### Reasons for the contact (page 4)

- Please use PSCB Thresholds document to guide your professional judgement in selecting the reason for completing the contact form:
  - I believe this child is at risk of significant harm - Significant harm could occur where there is a single event, such as a violent assault or sexual abuse. It can also be identified when there have been a number of events which have compromised a child's physical and emotional wellbeing; for example a child whose health and development is severely impaired through neglect.
  - I believe this child is in need or vulnerable - a level of complex needs where children may face a range of difficulties that are increasingly challenging.
  - I need support to access early help services for this child from the MASH - practitioners should have a discussion with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) if families require targeted or specialist help to ensure families who need a coordinated multi-agency response have access to the right services.
  - The MASH will consider the information on the IACF and what other information is known about the family and apply the threshold criteria to determine whether a social work assessment is necessary, whether the concerns are such to warrant a child protection enquiry or whether a coordinated multi-agency early response is most appropriate.

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### Current concerns for the child's safety and well being

- The concerns should be the CURRENT concerns for the child - specific facts - what you have seen, heard or have been told.
- Please include some detail about the prevalence (how long has it been going on and how regular is it?) and severity (how serious is the harm and the behaviour, how serious is the impact on the child?) of the concerns.
- When documenting current concerns record whether they have been witnessed first-hand or reported via a 3<sup>rd</sup> party.
- There is no need to include details regarding Portsmouth Children Social Care previous involvement as this information will already be known to MASH.
- Please attach any supporting documents used - for example the Child Sexual Exploitation toolkit, Neglect toolkit.
- Specific family factors that may impact on current parenting should also be included.
- Actions taken by referrer to address concerns - these should include speaking with parents, initiating EHA, holding Team Around the Family meetings, making referrals to other agencies.
- Any known risks to visiting the family- include any hazards to the environment, dangerous animals or persons who may pose a risk to professionals.

### Additional Information (page 4)

Use this box to add any important information that has not been previously added. This could include:

- Any communication issues such as English as an additional language and literacy difficulties.
- Work patterns - when is it easier to contact/ visit parents?

### Parent/guardian views of the contact (page 5)

- It is important to include the parent's views of the information in the contact and the contact being made. Do they agree with the concerns raised? Are they receptive of support? Are there any anxieties about the contact?
- The IACF should be shared with the child if appropriate. This will depend on nature of the information contained within the IACF and the age/ understanding of the child.
- Is it particularly important to state the views expressed by the child. This could include things like:
  - Are they happy to go home?
  - Are they worried or frightened about the contact being made?
  - Any feelings expressed towards others involved.

### For more information:

All documents (IACF, Portsmouth Thresholds document, Child Sexual Exploitation Toolkit, Missing Toolkit, Neglect Identification & Measurement Tool etc.) can be found on the PSCP website at: [www.portsmouthscp.org.uk](http://www.portsmouthscp.org.uk)