Introduction

There has been a significant amount of change in relation to Education Safeguarding and School Attendance over recent months. The purpose of this bulletin is to update you on recent developments, including changes to personnel and practice.

The Croydon Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was launched on 14th October 2013 and has been the main driver for change. MASH is a multi-agency approach to safeguarding, which aims to strengthen safeguarding practice across the borough and ensure that safeguarding referrals are managed effectively.

Responsibility for education safeguarding in the Council is now within the Learning Access team, as is the practice in most other boroughs, with John Leese appointed as Lead Officer for Education Safeguarding and School Attendance. John is responsible for the education safeguarding function within MASH and will be able to provide strategic advice on safeguarding matters.

Many of you will have worked with Rita Ali, Improvement Adviser Safeguarding, who has now left the Council. The support that Rita has given to schools has been valued by many headteachers and I am sure you would want to join colleagues in the Council in thanking Rita and wishing her well.

A list of contacts is provided at the end of this bulletin on page 5 to make sure you are able to access the support and advice you need according to the circumstance. Do please make active use of the MASH education role.

Linda Wright
Head of Service for Inclusion, Learning Access and SEN.

Croydon Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

We will be shortly recruiting a full-time permanent MASH Education Officer, but in the interim Asma Ahmad is fulfilling this role. The current priorities around the role are:

1. Raising awareness of MASH processes and procedures within education establishments (4-18)
2. Supporting Schools and Academies in reviewing Safeguarding Practices and Procedures and introducing improvements where necessary.
3. Successfully contribute to the MASH Intelligence Gathering and Assessment Process, ensuring the needs of the child remain at the centre of any decisions.
4. Raising awareness of MASH processes and procedures within the Council’s Learning and Inclusion Department.
5. Represent Education on Safeguarding Multi-Agency Panels
6. Participate in learning and development opportunities in order to secure the best possible practices for all those involved in Education Safeguarding
Asma’s immediate priorities are to get to grips with the MASH process, but our aim is to shortly deliver MASH briefing sessions aimed at all education providers in Croydon. We will also look to meet individual schools to talk about their recent experiences of MASH, what worked well and where can MASH provide schools with a better service.

In the meantime please feel free to email Asma via MASH.Education@croydon.gov.uk

**Children Missing from Education (CME)**

A review of CME practices and procedures in Croydon was undertaken during the last academic year, taking into account statutory guidance from the Department for Education. Amended guidance for education providers on defining and reporting Children Missing from Education will be released shortly, however the major changes are:

- Education Providers are required to notify the Local Authority when a child has been continuously absent for 10 days or more and the Education Provider has been unable to confirm the reason(s) for absence or the location of the child.
- A Child defined as Missing from Education cannot be removed from the roll of an Education Provider unless notified by the Local Authority that they may do so. The Local Authority will also state the date at which the child may be removed from roll.
- A new Children Missing from Education / Removal from School Roll Form has been introduced.

If you have any questions about Children Missing from Education, please feel free to contact childrenmissingfromeducation@croydon.gov.uk.

**School Attendance – Statutory Intervention**

**Croydon Penalty Notice Code of Conduct – In force from 1st September 2014**

As you may be aware, the Local Authority has recently been consulting with schools in relation to an amended Penalty Notice Code of Conduct. The final version of the code of conduct has now been released and the major change is around Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave during term time. A penalty notice can now be issued for any child taking 10 sessions or more of unauthorised leave during term time without having to take into account the child’s attendance prior to the period of leave.

A new Penalty Notice Request form has also been introduced, and all new requests should be submitted to our new email address: EducPenaltyNotices@croydon.gov.uk.

Please also use this email address for any questions or queries you have in relation to Penalty Notices.

**Staged Approach to Poor Attendance – Released April 2014**
This approach is the framework to which the Local Authority performs its statutory duties in relation to pupils with poor attendance. As you will be aware, Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the model requires schools to ensure that families with pupils with poor school attendance have benefitted from the offer of Early Intervention before a Stage 3 Statutory Intervention Request can be made to the Local Authority. As well as attempts to engage parents via Stage 1 and Stage 2, the child’s attendance in the last 12 weeks should in most cases be below 80% attendance with at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence.

Stage 3 interventions adhere to Criminal Procedure and Investigations, gathering evidence in compliance with Police and Criminal Evidence legislation, including audio recorded interviews with parents and the taking of witness statements from education providers.

If you would like further information, advice and guidance in relation to the staged approach to poor attendance or find out how to make a Stage 3 intervention request, please contact john.leese@croydon.gov.uk.

**Child Poor Attendance Statutory Returns**

Firstly, thank you to all the schools that returned all the requested information on children with attendance below 85% between the start of the Spring Term and the first half term of the Summer Term. We will be contacting schools shortly in any circumstances where follow-up actions or further information is required.

We are working to try and streamline the process prior to the date of next return which is 10\(^{th}\) January 2015. Details on this return are below:

- **Statutory Return Period:** Autumn Term (September to December 2014)
- **Return Date Deadline:** Friday 10\(^{th}\) January 2015
SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS

Safeguarding – Immediate Concerns
If any professional working with children has immediate concerns for a child’s safety, a timely referral should be made to the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 0208 726 6400 or by completing the relevant referral form which can be found here; www.croydon.gov.uk/childreferral

I’m not sure whether or not to refer to MASH
The MASH Consultation Line is staffed by Social Workers from the MASH team and can provide you with advice and guidance on whether or not to make a MASH referral. You can contact the MASH Consultation Line on 0208 726 6464.

If someone has made an allegation against you or a staff member
If someone has made an allegation against you or a staff member you must immediately contact Steve Hall, LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) on 020 8726 6000 extension: 84322 who will advise what action to take. You must not begin any investigation until you have spoken to the LADO.

I made a referral to MASH but I’ve not heard back OR I need information about Children’s Social Care involvement about a family
The MASH Education Officer can provide you with information about the progress of a MASH referral as well as letting you know who the allocated social worker is:

Asma Ahmad – Interim MASH Education Officer
MASH.Education@croydon.gov.uk
0208 604 7370 (ext. 47370)

I’m not happy about the support provided or decisions made by MASH and/or Children’s Social Care
The MASH Education Officer will endeavour to help explain to you the decisions made by MASH following a referral you have made. When this is not the case we can also direct you to other colleagues within the MASH or Early Help Services who may be able to help.

We unfortunately cannot respond to concerns regarding the practices / decisions of Children’s Social Care; however, we can try and help direct you to the right person.

Please contact MASH Education in these circumstances.

I’d like to find out more about Safeguarding/Child Protection Training
Please contact Mike Smith for further information about training. You can contact Mike via michael.smith@croydon.gov.uk or 020 8726 7483 (Ext 15483).

Details are also available via www.croydonlwb.org.