

# Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



**Nottingham**  
**City Council**

Reference Number:

4765

Author:

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Department:

People

Contact:

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Subject:

Increase social work posts within the MASH

Total Value:

366,000 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

To increase the staffing budget for social worker posts within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by £366,000 (Executive Decision); and

To create, and recruit to 8 additional Grade I social worker posts within the MASH and amend the grades of the 2 existing social worker posts within the MASH from Grade H to Grade I (Non-Executive Decision under Delegation 16).

**Reasons for the Decision(s)**

The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was established in 2016, it provides a single point of access in Nottingham City for concerns and requests for support in relation to vulnerable children and young people who have complex needs or might be at risk of harm. The MASH is a team of Children's Social Care staff and co-located safeguarding partners, with access to information who work together to triage these concerns and requests and make decisions about the most appropriate pathway or outcome.

The purpose of the MASH is to ensure that all contacts are dealt with in a timely and consistent manner in line with the Threshold of Need document. The core ethos of the MASH is that children and their families receive high quality information and, where necessary, support and protection provided by children's services and other agencies or professionals. The MASH provides information to support professionals including telephone discussions related to safeguarding concerns.

In November 2021 a diagnostic was undertaken by our partners in practice Essex who identified a number of areas for improvement. Further review work was undertaken in February 2022 which led to the MASH Improvement Plan. The improvement plan has four key areas, Practice, Partners, Culture and Processes. We have recently increased capacity with the procurement of an agency team of social workers and an additional team manager. We are starting to see some improvements, but it is recognised that children and their families are waiting too long for a service or support. The current staffing levels within the MASH do not meet the current service demand. The core team is made up of alternatively qualified workers. This cohort of staff have considerable knowledge and skills, however, following feedback from our partner in practice (Essex) and through benchmarking work we consider that the service would benefit from the addition of social work posts within the MASH to compliment the roles of our alternatively qualified staff. The creation of 8 additional social worker posts will see a total of 10 social workers based within the MASH. This would see our staffing levels increase to bring us in line with regional partners. Our research supports that most other LA's within the region have a higher ratio of qualified social workers based within their front door services. It is envisaged that as we move through our improvement journey with a greater knowledge and experience within the MASH we will start to see sharper decision making that enables families to access our early help offer and support outside of the Local Authority thus reducing the demand in the Duty Assessment service and more importantly, reducing families contact with statutory services unnecessarily. Increasing capacity should also allow us to respond to requests for help and support in a timelier way, again ensuring that families receive the right support at the right time. Moving forward we aim to respond to all contacts within one working day in line with statutory guidance.

**Other Options Considered:**

To retain current staffing within the MASH - this option was rejected because the posts are required as part of improvement work.

**Background Papers:**

None

**Published Works:**

None

**Affected Wards:**

Citywide

**Colleague / Councillor Interests:**

N/A

**Consultations:** **Date: 23/05/2022**  
**Unions: Unison, GMB, Unite**  
**Matter has been discussed at JCNC and collective consultation x2.**

**Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.**

**Crime and Disorder Implications:** **No impact**

**Equality:** **EIA not required. Reasons: This decision does not relate to new or changing policies**

**Decision Type:** **Portfolio Holder**

**Subject to Call In:** **Yes**

**Call In Expiry date:** **21/11/2022**

**Advice Sought:** **Legal, Finance, Human Resources**

**Legal Advice:** **A fair and sensible recruitment process should be engaged to fill the new posts. This may mean that backfill posts also require recruitment, if successful candidates are already employees. Any agency cover staff will required to be notified of the vacancies and their engagements terminated properly where required.**  
**The cohort of permanent employees will be increased, thus increasing the staff numbers who have employee status and therefore particular employment rights.**  
**Advice provided by Alexa McFadyen (Senior Solicitor) on 08/11/2022.**

**Finance Advice:**

The current budgeted establishment is £0.684m. There is an additional Team Manager funded from Small Steps Big Changes, increasing the staffing costs to £0.744m.

- . Current Staffing Structure
  - o 3x SW Team Managers
  - o x2fte 2 included in the establishment
  - o x1fte funded from Small Steps Big. Changes
- . 1x EH Specialist
- . 2x Social Workers Level 3
- . 10x Family Support Workers-Level 3 (1 post is used for No Recourse to Public Funds)
- . 2x Family Support Workers-Level 2

The proposed changes increase the budgeted establishment to £1.050m. The total staffing costs including the funded Team Manager post is £1.111m.

Proposed new structure:

- . 3x SW Team Managers
  - o x2fte 2 included in the establishment
  - o x1fte funded from Small Steps Big. Changes
- . 1x EH specialist
- . 10x Social Workers (AP Level)
- . 10x Referral Information Officers (Family Support Workers-Level 3 1 Post used for NRPF)

The net increase of the proposal is £0.366m and reflects increasing both numbers from 2fte to 10fte and grades of social workers from H to I reflect the required level of experience. Some of the increase is mitigated by the deletion of x2fte FSW posts. There are no redundancies as the service is recruiting to a vacant level 3 post and it is expected that the current Level 2 worker will be successful in securing this post.

The aims outlined in the proposal are a key part of the transformation plan, and therefore the initial funding is included in the transformation financial assumptions. This is available until March 2024; however, the service is requesting a permanent change to the structure on the basis that the transformation across Children's will lead to efficiencies in other areas allowing the reallocation of budgets to fund thereafter.

Advice provided by Clare Rickett (Senior Commercial Business Partner, Children's and Education) on 06/09/22

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**HR Advice:**

**Management need to ensure that the proposed posts are correctly evaluated through Job Evaluation.**

**Management will need to engage with HR to adjust the structure and increase the establishment of posts.**

**Management will need to ensure that recruitment is conducted through the appropriate processes, including redeployment consideration if appropriate. Management should be aware that the selected post-holders should commence on a starting salary of Level One within the respective grade, unless the appointed colleague is already in employment at the Council and on Level 2 of the same grade, in which case the employee would be matched over at the rate of pay they currently receive.**

**Management must ensure there will be appropriate support and development plans for the new post-holders once appointed in line with managing performance.**

**Advice provided by Aadil Bhatti (HR Consultant) on 02/09/2022.**

**Signatures**

<b>Cheryl Barnard (Portfolio Holder- Children, Young People, Schools)</b>
<b>SIGNED and Dated: 11/11/2022</b>
<b>Catherine Underwood (Corporate Director for People)</b>
<b>SIGNED and Dated: 11/11/2022</b>