

Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership



Safeguarding Children - Gloucestershire Front Door Services including the MASH

The Front Door Service is the main way to raise new concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing in Gloucestershire. It brings together professionals from different services—like health, police, and education—to look at each concern and decide what help is needed. The team works quickly and fairly to make sure children and families get the right support, whether that's early help or more serious action. The service only deals with new concerns, not cases already being supported by social care.

Contents

Safeguarding Children - Gloucestershire Front Door Services including the MASH	1
Core Functions of the Front Door Service	2
Key Activities and Functions.....	3
1. Multi-Agency Collaboration.....	3
2. Screening and Decision-Making	3
3. Front Door Contact Process.....	3
4. Daily Oversight and Risk Management	3
5. Child Exploitation Screening.....	4
6. Information Governance	4
7. Quality Assurance and Governance.....	4
8. Operation Encompass – Summary.....	4
Child Protection Referral Flow Chart – Gloucestershire (2025).....	5
1. Identify Concern	5
2. Consider Early Help.....	5
3. Immediate Risk of Harm	5
4. Make a Referral.....	5
5. Provide Key Information.....	5
6. Sharing Information.....	6
7. Follow-Up	6

Core Functions of the Front Door Service

1. Initial Screening and Triage

- Receives contacts from professionals and the public regarding concerns about children.
- Screens these contacts to determine whether they meet the threshold for Early Help or statutory intervention (Level 3 or Level 4 needs¹).

2. Safeguarding Decision-Making

- Facilitates multi-agency discussions to assess risk and determine the appropriate response.
- Uses Gloucestershire's Levels of Intervention Guidance² to inform decisions.

3. Referral Pathways

- Directs contacts to:
 - **Early Help**³ for lower-level needs.
 - **Children's Social Care** for higher-level safeguarding concerns (S17 or S47 Children act 1989)
 - **Emergency Duty Team** for out-of-hours concerns.

4. Information Sharing

- Ensures timely and proportionate sharing of information between agencies.
- Operates under a Data Sharing Agreement (Gloucestershire Information Sharing Partnership Agreement GISPA⁴) to comply with legal and ethical standards.

5. Exclusion of Open Cases

- Only deals with children not already open to a social worker.
- Refers ongoing cases directly to the allocated social worker or team manager.
- Receives and responds to partner agency enquiries seeking confirmation of whether a child has an allocated social worker, and if so, provides the relevant contact details.

6. Anonymous Reporting

- Allows members of the public to report concerns anonymously, with procedures in place to gather sufficient information for follow-up.

7. Participation in Safeguarding Forums

- Represents Children's Social Care at multi-agency safeguarding meetings (e.g., MARAC, MAPPA) where there is no current involvement.

MARAC – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

A meeting where agencies share information about high-risk domestic abuse victims to create a coordinated safety plan.

MAPPA – Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements

A framework for managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community.

¹ Statutory Intervention would be either Section 17, Child in Need or Section 47 Child Protection Plan

² gloucestershire-levels-of-intervention-v6-1-.pdf

³ <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gscp/professional-resources/early-help-targeted-support/>

⁴ [GISPA](#)

Key Activities and Functions

1. Multi-Agency Collaboration

- MASH includes professionals from:
 - Children's Social Care
 - Police
 - Early Help
 - Education Directorate
 - Domestic Abuse Services (GDASS)
 - Gloucestershire Health Trusts
 - Drug and Alcohol Services (VIA)

Remember: The Front Door Service is the main way to get help or raise concerns about children in Gloucestershire. It ensures families get the right support at the right time.

These agencies work collaboratively within the MASH to share information securely and make robust decisions regarding safeguarding concerns for children. The list may evolve over time due to contract reviews or legislative changes.

2. Screening and Decision-Making

- All new contacts are screened using Gloucestershire's **Levels of Intervention Guidance**.
- Contacts are triaged and assigned a **RAG rating**:
 - **Green**: Early Help response (within 72 hours)
 - **Amber**: Potential safeguarding concerns (up to 72 hours)
 - **Red**: Immediate child protection concerns (within 4 hours)

Explanation: Every contact is reviewed and given a colour rating: Green for early help, Amber for possible safeguarding concerns, and Red for serious concerns needing urgent action.

3. Front Door Contact Process

- Handles concerns from professionals and the public (including anonymous reports).
- Only reviews cases not already open to a social worker.
- Uses the **Multi-Agency Request Form (MARF)** for referrals.

4. Daily Oversight and Risk Management

- **Daily Harm Outside the Home Meeting**: Reviews cases of missing children, exploitation risks, and police custody incidents.
- **Police-led Daily Vulnerability Meeting**: Assesses police incidents to identify early intervention opportunities.

Explanation: Special meetings may be held for children at risk of exploitation, frequently missing, in police custody, or affected by domestic abuse.

5. Child Exploitation Screening

- Uses a **Child Exploitation Screening Tool** to assess risk levels (mild, moderate, significant).
- Coordinates responses between CE Coordinators, Police, and Social Workers.

6. Information Governance

- Operates under a **Data Sharing Agreement** to ensure lawful, secure, and proportionate information sharing.
- All staff are vetted and trained in data protection practices.

7. Quality Assurance and Governance

- Weekly multi-agency audits to evaluate decision-making and outcomes.
- Oversight by the **GSCP MASH Subgroup** and **Operational Group**.
- Regular review of operating principles and performance data.

8. Operation Encompass – Summary

• Purpose:

To ensure that schools and early years settings are promptly informed when a child has been exposed to a domestic abuse incident, enabling timely and appropriate support.

• Key Arrangements:

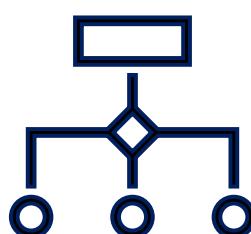
Police share information about domestic abuse incidents involving children directly with Education settings.

Each setting has a trained Key Adult (Designated Safeguarding Lead) who receives and acts on the information to provide support for the child as required.

The initiative covers all domestic abuse incidents, not just those resulting in criminal charges.

Explanation: Schools are informed when a child has been exposed to domestic abuse so they can offer timely support.

The flowchart below outlines the step-by-step process for making contact and submitting a referral through Gloucestershire's Front Door Service.



Child Protection Referral Flow Chart – Gloucestershire (2025)

1. Identify Concern

- Any professional or member of the public who has concerns about a child's safety or welfare should take action.
- Concerns may arise from:
 - Direct disclosure by the child
 - Observations of behaviour or injuries
 - Information from others

2. Consider Early Help

- If the concern does not indicate immediate risk, consider support through Early Help.
- Use the Graduated Pathway⁵ to assess and respond to need:
 - Level 1: Universal
 - Level 2: Additional
 - Level 3: Intensive
 - Level 4: Specialist

3. Immediate Risk of Significant Harm

- If a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, contact Children's Social Care or the police without delay.
- Use the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) or Front Door team.

Explanation: MASH brings together professionals from different organisations (like health, police, and education) to share information and make decisions when there are concerns about a child's safety.

4. Make a Referral

- Submit a referral via:
 - Online referral form⁶ (Gloucestershire County Council website)
 - Telephone (for urgent cases)
 - Secure email (as per agency protocol)

5. Provide Key Information

Include:

- Child's name, DOB, address
- Parent/carer details
- Nature of concern (facts, not assumptions)

⁵ [Gloucestershire Early Help Strategy](#)

⁶ [Request support from Children's social care and Early Help – Gloucestershire Forms](#)

- Any known vulnerabilities or previous concerns
- Actions already taken

6. Sharing Information

- Where you are concerned about a child's welfare seek agreement from the parent or guardian to discuss personal information with the Front Door, unless it would place the child at further risk. Use the Gloucestershire Levels of Intervention Guidance⁷ to assist you here.
- If you believe a child is being significantly harmed or at risk of being significantly harmed, you do not need permission to share information with the MASH⁸

7. Follow-Up

- You may be contacted for further information or to attend a strategy discussion.
- The child may be assessed under:
 - Section 17 (Child in Need)
 - Section 47 (Child Protection)

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Useful Documents

- [Information Sharing – Guidance For Practitioners](#)
- [Mash Operating Policy](#)
- [Gloucestershire-levels-of-intervention-](#)
- [Gloucestershire Early Help Strategy](#)
- [Joint Targeted Area Inspection – Gloucestershire Front Door Services](#)

Links

- [Request support from Children's social care and Early Help – Gloucestershire Forms](#)
- [Contact Children and Families Services | Gloucestershire County Council](#)
- [Front Door Services | Gloucestershire County Council](#)
- [Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

⁷ [levels-of-intervention.pdf](#)

⁸ [Information Sharing Guidance for Practitioners](#)