Liverpoo Safeguarding Children Board - Practitioner Information

Raising a concern about the safety and welfare of a child or young person using the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I make a referral to Careline about the safety and welfare of a child or young person in Liverpool?

Careline Hub will only accept written referrals from professionals submitted via the on-line Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) or a completed Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT).

The only exception to this arrangement is Section 47 Child Protection referrals, where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. In such instances, professionals should continue to make an immediate telephone referral to Careline 0151 233 3700, followed by an online MARF.

Professionals making Section 47 Child Protection Referrals are required to complete an online MARF within one working day of making a telephone referral to Careline.

In all other cases, before submitting a request for single assessment by Children’s Social Care, it is important that professionals consider whether a child’s and their family’s needs can be more appropriately supported through Early Help.

Before submitting a MARF it is important all professionals carefully consider the LSCB Responding to Need Guidance & Levels of Need Framework. Responding to Need and Levels of Need Framework

Professionals who submit a MARF and have not appropriately applied the Levels of Need Framework will be expected to initiate an Early Help Assessment. If an Early Help Assessment is not initiated within 10 working days, a member of the Early Help Hub will contact the professional to support them in progressing this.

Why do we need a MARF?

Recent Serious Case Reviews, local audits and Ofsted inspection activities have all highlighted issues with the type and quality of information shared by professionals who are raising concerns about the safety or welfare of children and young people.

The previous arrangement of telephoning referrals to Careline caused additional and unnecessary work in the system, which was already under stress due to the high volume of referrals. As a result, this caused delay for children needing help and support.
Sometimes, when a referral has been made over the telephone, vital information has not been captured at the first point of contact and subsequently, time was wasted seeking the additional information required to inform decision making.

Ensuring that concerns are clearly and explicitly written down means that there is accountability for the agency sharing the concern and consistency and clarity for Careline who are receiving the information. The quality of referrals should improve by the use of the MARF.

**Can I still phone Careline if I need some advice?**

A clear understanding about the levels of need is imperative as this will inform the referring agency whether the case does need to be stepped up to social care. However, referrers can utilise early help consultant social workers who can provide advice and guidance to agencies within their individual hub areas.

In addition, a referring agency holding concerns for a child/family and requiring advice – can also ask to speak directly to a Social Worker at Careline (On occasion the referrer may be told that a call back will be made owing to SW completing other tasks at that given time).

**Do I need consent to fill in and submit a MARF?**

Yes. As a professional you should work in a way that is open and transparent with families. Consent must always be obtained prior to a professional making a referral to Careline. However, if you are making a Section 47 Child Protection Referral and think that seeking consent may compromise the safety of a child you are not required to have consent and should share the information.

**What if I do don’t have consent?**

If no safeguard concerns are held for a family then consent must be obtained. If consent is not obtained and referrer remains concerned then a clear rationale must be provided to this effect.

**Where do I find a MARF?**


**What if I can’t answer all the questions?**

Please answer all questions as fully and clearly as possible. If you are unable to answer all of the questions please outline the reason for this. It may be that the referrer has never worked with the family directly and are unable to offer a clear insight.

**How will I know if there is already an open EHAT?**

The referring agency is ordinarily involved with the family – however, there may be occasions when a MARF is completed by a professional that has never worked with the family. On these occasions the referrer should be open and honest with the family advising that they feel support via social care is
necessary. It would be assumed that the referrer has already spoken with the family to clarify what agencies are involved with the family and the level of support being offered. It is important for the referrer to provide a clear rationale as to why the case should be escalated to social care. Ensure that the parent’s opinions on this are included.

**Why does it reference Level 3 as a drop down if Level 3 is Early Help?**

This will enable staff in Careline/Early Help Hubs to determine who is best placed to support the family and address current concerns as not all referrals will result in assessment within social care.

**What do I do if there is already and open EHAT and I want to escalate concerns?**

Consideration for escalation should have already been discussed with partnering agencies involved in the EHAT – There needs to be a clear reason why referrer and partnering agencies feel the case cannot be managed via the offer of Early Help.

If a case is open to an EHAT – referrer can speak with Early Help Hub whereby advice will be offered via a consulting social worker (CSW). If agreement is reached for escalation to social care then the CSW will advise accordingly but the referrer will need to make the referral as they are the agency with the most up to date information relating to the concerns.

**How will I know what’s happened with the information I have submitted in my MARF?**

The referrer will receive a reference number. This concern will be triaged by SW at Careline – Referrer will receive a call back from Careline SW as to what action is being taken.

**What should I do if I don’t receive feedback?**

Please contact Careline and provide the reference number for the MARF form completed. The Social Worker will provide a rationale for what action/decision making has been agreed on the case.

**What if I disagree with the decision at Careline? How do I escalate?**

If a referring agency is unhappy with the decision making, a discussion can be held with Careline Team Manager or Deputy Team Leader. If a resolution is not reached then the referrer should consult their own agency Escalation Procedures and if necessary the LSCB multi agency Escalation Procedures.
GOOD PRACTICE WHEN MAKING A REFERRAL

Make sure you gain consent:

Have you consent to share information about a child or young person with other settings? Gaining consent is good practice.

HOWEVER please be very clear!!

You do not require consent to share information:
- where you are concerned for the welfare of a child or young person or
- to gain consent would put the child or young person at risk of great harm.

To assist with decision making it’s helpful if you can include on the MARF:

- What action has previously and currently been taken to assist and support the family?
- Why are you referring? What has changed?
- What is working well? Try to record the protective factors alongside risk factors.
- What is it that the family is struggling with?
- What is it that you feel cannot be met by the offer of Early Help? Have you tried Early Help?

Please note: If the child/ren are already known to social services or are an open case then the agency will only need to enter the child’s name, address and date of birth and can omit all questions regarding the personal details of the child, parents and agencies involved.

Also, make sure you have included

- The parent’s views?
- The children’s views?
- Do you have consent to share this information? Careline can’t gather information or share with other agencies without this.
- The history of the child (if you know it).

Other things that are required:

- Gender
- Age – if you don’t know, can you give an estimate?
- Ethnicity of the family? Is English a second language
- Any specific needs identified? Eg disability?
- Religious background