

1 What is MASP?

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (PCSC) introduced a '[Serious Violence Duty](#)' which places a legal requirement on a range of authorities to collaborate to prevent and reduce serious violence by working together and sharing information, data and intelligence.

Multi-agency support panels have been established with the intention of providing professionals, particularly in education, with a forum to highlight concerns about children that may be vulnerable to being exploited and drawn into violent crime, knife crime, and gangs.

Panels focus on responding at the earliest point, seeking opportunities for primary prevention (stopping the problem occurring in the first place) and secondary prevention (intervening early to stop an emerging problem taking hold).

2 Who is on the panel?

Preventing the exposure of children to harm or exploitation cannot be tackled by a single agency working alone. As MASPs form part of local serious violence prevention plans, all specified authorities are represented on the panel; this means police, probation and youth justice services, fire and rescue, health, local authorities. Education is also represented as a relevant authority. Lancashire Violence Reduction Network and voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise partners are also invited to offer their support to provide the most comprehensive package of options as possible.

MASP is only one strand of the multi-agency contextual safeguarding approach and aligns with existing panels addressing the rising incidents of exploitation.

3 Child Exploitation

Criminal and sexual exploitation puts children at risk of serious violence. It is vital that people working in frontline roles effectively identify children who **may be vulnerable** to being exploited or are exhibiting early signs of exploitation or being drawn into situations that exposes them harm.

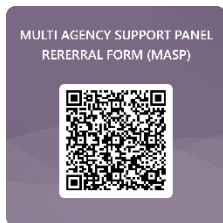
Child criminal exploitation isn't defined in law, but the Government's Serious Violence Strategy defines it as where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity in exchange for something the victim may need or want.

What can you do?

Referrals are encouraged at the earliest possible opportunity meaning that professional curiosity is key; be inquisitive and open minded.

Things to look and listen out for include unexplained gifts, new friends who are often older, increased secrecy, increased truancy, lack of interest in education, being asked or encouraged to commit crime, interest in weapons or violence, unhealthy change in attitude and language, substance misuse, new and expensive clothing.

Stop risk becoming reality by accessing the referral form [here](#).



7 Minute Briefing

An Introduction to Multi-Agency Support Panels (MASP)



6 Do you need parental consent to make a referral?

At the initial referral stage, **consent is not required** or relied upon for the purpose of sharing and processing a child's personal data. If you notice concerning behaviour, you do not need consent of a relative to share this information.

Whilst consent is one of the lawful bases set out in [UK GDPR](#), in the case of MASP the lawful basis for processing personal data is **public task**: the processing is necessary for you to perform a task in the public interest or for your official function.

The sole task of MASP is to prevent harm, promote welfare of children, and identify risk that is at such a low level that it may not yet be obvious to a single person or organisation.

4 Who is at risk?

It is recognised that children are being targeted at an increasingly early age within their neighbourhoods, peer groups and schools. All children and young people are at risk of exploitation regardless of their background, gender, religion or ethnicity. However, care experienced children, also known as looked after children are often at most risk.

Children can be exploited due to factors like vulnerability, poverty, lack of services, additional needs, trauma, poor mental health, substance misuse, home complexities, peer pressure, social media, and family complacency.

5 What is the process?

Referrals can be made by professionals with concerns through an online form hosted by Lancashire County Council. Each district panel will meet monthly to review and discuss cases. Referrers will be invited to attend or dial in to the panel and elaborate on their concerns, providing the most current context. The panel members will help the referrer develop an action plan to move their case forward in addition to being assigned actions to support the child, their family (where appropriate), and implementing any relevant universal place-based interventions.

MASP will align with existing multi-agency panel meetings including GENGA which responds to organised crime, MACE which is a multi-agency response for child exploitation, and child/adolescent anti-social behaviour/youth referral panel meetings.