**Torbay Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Referral form, Signs of Safety Guidance**

Torbay Children’s Services are working to incorporate and embed the Signs of Safety model throughout all work carried out on behalf of children and their families, including the initial referral into the MASH. Whilst some partners are becoming more aware and have a better understanding of the Signs of Safety model, we understand that this is still early days and many still do not. Therefore this guidance should be used alongside the MASH referral form, to begin to consider Signs of Safety when making a referral into the MASH.

Signs of safety is about family members and professionals (schools, health visitors, police, social workers, doctors etc) working together to meet children and young people's needs in the best possible way. It puts children, young people and their carers at the heart of the work.

Families play a key part in working alongside professionals, making it clear about the worries and concerns for their child (who is worried and why), identifying the things that are going well in the child's life (strengths), and agreeing what needs to be done to build on the strengths and reduce worries.

The benefit of Signs of Safety is to make sure that the voice of the child, young person and family is fully heard. In addition, the strengths within the family are clearly identified and included throughout the work. At the time of making a referral, as well as professional concerns, ensure that families are asked what they are worried about, what is going well and what they think needs to change. When completing the MASH referral, the views of both professionals and families should be included in the form, even if these are in conflict.

Complicating factors should also be considered; these are factors that are not currently causing concern for the child, but may impact now or in the future on the parents or carer’s ability to meet their child's needs and ensure that they are not at risk of harm.

It is also important that professionals, when submitting the MASH referral form consider and respond to the scaling question. This is beneficial to give an indication of how worried you are about the child or young person, after consideration has been given to the areas mentioned above. Where appropriate, it is also important to ask others involved the scaling question and note different responses.

This can also be used as a positive way to begin work with the family even before the referral is submitted. For example, the professional is able to explain to the parents what they would need to see for the score to move up the scale, and families can also tell professionals what would need to happen for their score to increase. It is interesting to see how scores may vary between professionals and different family members, exploring possible reasons for this.