



Our ref: LH/TS

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Dear colleagues

## **RE: Revised Multi-Agency Request Form (MARF)**

Following my letter earlier this year advising you of changes that were being planned to Sandwell's Multi-Agency Request Form (MARF), I am now writing to confirm those changes. The updated Form is attached, along with a 7-minute briefing that sets out what has changed, and why.

Whilst the 7-minute briefing is self-explanatory, I want to draw your attention to three key matters to note:

- firstly, that this form is no longer a 'referral' to children's social care, but a 'request' for services from children's social care. This important distinction reflects the shared responsibility that all agencies have to keep children safe even once a MARF has been submitted, ie the completion and submission of a MARF is not a handover to children's social care, but instead is a request for statutory social work services as part of a continuum of support;
- secondly, that the agency making the request must speak to the parents/carers about their concerns to obtain consent before submitting the MARF. From 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, Sandwell Children's Trust will only accept a MARF where consent has been obtained. There may be exceptional cases where this is not possible, and this is described in the attached 7-minute briefing;
- finally, it is important to ensure that information on the MARF provides sufficient high-quality detail about the concerns an agency has, that those concerns can be evidenced, along with a description about the early help that has been provided, and an explanation of how the concerns meet the threshold for statutory social work intervention.

In response to consultation, the MARF has been simplified, with background and supporting details and information provided through web links. These changes have been made with the agreement of the agencies involved in Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership. The Partnership wants to ensure that the right help is made available at the right time for children by the most appropriate agencies. To achieve this, we need to ensure that the high numbers of inappropriate and poor-quality MARFs being submitted are reduced and that our collective provision of early help services and the use of the Early Help Assessment process is increased.

Please ensure that you take time to familiarise yourself with the revised MARF and read the 7-minute briefing and talk to your colleagues to raise awareness and understanding within your own organisation and in your joint work with other agencies.

With very best wishes.



Lesley Hagger (she/her)  
Independent Chair, Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership

