



Background

Decades of safeguarding inquiries and reforms have identified the same core issue: professionals across agencies lack real-time visibility of each other's involvement with children and adults at risk.

Multi-agency safeguarding has progressed from being "everyone's responsibility" toward requiring a "collective responsibility", as Ball, McElwee and McManus (2024) argue, one built on:



Shared evidence



Accountability



Data visibility

✗ Yet **no coherent framework exists** to evidence the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements.

Approach

The **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Tracker (MAST)**, developed by **Policy in Practice**, addresses this gap by providing a secure, interoperable system that makes agency involvement visible while maintaining robust information governance.



MAST is a digital tool that **securely links headline data across safeguarding partners**, giving practitioners daily-refreshed, real-time visibility of safeguarding activity across the last 12 months.



Partners retain control of their data while enabling authorised professionals to see where others are involved.

Developed through sustained collaboration between Policy in Practice and safeguarding boards in **West Glamorgan**, MAST demonstrates how coordinated governance and shared standards can unlock safe, privacy-conscious data sharing at scale and turn the principle of collective safeguarding responsibility into daily practice.



Results

Evaluation of the live pilot in **West Glamorgan** demonstrates both tangible efficiencies and transformational change across agencies:

Key numbers



£2 million
estimated annual savings across partners



£130,000
avoided costs per council from reduced high-cost placements



4+ hours
saved per referral through faster access to information



Over 1 million
cross-agency interactions made visible across safeguarding partners

Beyond the numbers

MAST has shifted practice **from reactive** case management to **proactive, intelligence-led safeguarding**. Practitioners report being able to:



Spot risks earlier



Understand complex family networks in context



Collaborate confidently across traditional service boundaries

MAST as a system has helped:



Strengthened inter-agency trust



Reduced referral fatigue



Improved data quality by minimising duplication and transcription errors

Crucially, it has reframed data sharing as a safeguarding enabler, not a compliance burden, fostering a culture of shared accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

By **embedding daily data flows** and **transparent governance**, MAST is also **raising digital maturity standards** across the safeguarding sector.

It provides a common data language for multi-agency partnerships, allowing leadership teams to analyse trends, identify hotspots and plan preventive action rather than respond to crises.

Impact



MAST demonstrates that **secure, interoperable data sharing is achievable within existing legal frameworks**.



By showing who holds which piece of the safeguarding puzzle, it **builds trust, reduces administrative burden**, and allows professionals to **focus on people** rather than processes.



As deployment expands across Wales, MAST provides a **scalable model for integrated, privacy-aware safeguarding** that can inform national interoperability policy and inspire similar approaches internationally.



Its deployment complements interoperability initiatives such as WCCIS, creating a foundation for an **all-Wales model of secure, real-time safeguarding intelligence**.

