

VAWP Operational Group Wednesday 28th August 2019

Minutes

Present

Craig Thomson, Risk & Concern Manager, Police Scotland – **Chair**
Kate Blowers, Manager, Caithness & Sutherland Women's Aid
Maggie Hume, Trainer, Violence Against Women Partnership
Eilidh Moir, MARAC Coordinator - **Minute Taker**
Lorraine Revitt, Manager, Lochaber Women's Aid
Elaine Featherstone, Manager, Inverness Women's Aid
Jennifer Baughan, Detective Sergeant, Police Scotland
Jacquelyn Jennett, Area Care & Learning Manager North, Highland Council
Adele Newlands, General Manager, Ross Shire Women's Aid
Jean Macleod, Health Improvement, NHS Highland
Lyndsey Mateer, Highland Policy Officer, Highland Council

1. Welcome & Apologies

Chrissie Campbell, Service Delivery Officer, Victim Support Highlands & Islands
Gwen Harrison, Manager, RASASH
James Maybee, Principal Officer, Criminal Justice Social Work Services
Hame Lata, NHS

2. Previous Minutes & Matters Arising

Draft minutes from 12th February are approved.

No matters arising.

The Action Tracker was updated with the relevant updates from individuals in attendance.

3. Talk by Murdo Macdonald – Equally Safe Action plan.

This part of the meeting was cancelled and replaced with MARAC Steering as Murdo Macdonald was unable to attend. Murdo will be invited back to a future partnership meeting.

MARAC Steering

Eilidh Moir highlighted some potential risks and priority areas to be addressed along with some general updates:

- **Admin Cover for Annual Leave/ Training and other leave**

Admin Cover for MARAC had previously been covered by MAPPA Clerical Assistant – this worked well. Mairi Macpherson left her post at the end of March 2019 – Highland Council confirmed that MARAC Duties would not feature in any future MAPPA post advertised.

Eilidh Moir, MARAC Coordinator has Annual Leave scheduled for w/c 16/09/19 until 01/10/2019. Cover is yet to be identified.

Police Scotland has advised that due to current staffing levels they would be unable to cover during this time but would sanction emergency clearance to Police HQ if required to access the files required.

A further issue identified is that MARAC Data/ Files are still contained on Police Systems – only Police Scotland Staff are able to access the Mailbox and files required. Eilidh Moir advised that she is currently liaising with NHS IT to transfer all files across; a request was made several weeks ago.

An NHS MARAC Mailbox has already been set up and the new email will be marac.highland@nhs.net – the email will go live once the transfer has taken place.

An Options Paper was compiled that outlined 5 Potential Options for MARAC Administration cover, these are as follows:

- 1) Bank Staff Cover
- 2) Highland Violence Against Women's Cover
- 3) Recruit a MARAC Administrator
- 4) MARAC Cover/ Admin duties to be added to a new/ existing NHH post holder
- 5) Partner agencies to consider providing admin provision on an ad-hoc basis

Gillian Gunn had checked with the accountant and was advised that there is no money in the budget to recruit as potential increments of staff need to be taken into account. Gail Waters is on long term sick, Gillian Gunn is now in her new post and Maggie Hume has returned to her substantive post working 2 days per week which impacts of the VAWP providing the necessary cover.

The option of Bank Staff Cover has been progressed but not get agreed – Eilidh Moir is awaiting feedback to whether this may be a possibility.

It was suggested that the previous MARAC Coordinator could be approached to see if he was willing to cover on a consultancy basis.

[Action] Lack of MARAC Cover to be escalated to Cathy Steer, Head of Public Health

Victim Support Scotland Victim Support Scotland received redundancy notices on Friday; no formal statement has been received. There is a concern is the provision that is in place for Male Victims of Domestic Abuse/ IDAA Service for MARAC will continue.

[Action] – Chair (DI Craig Thomson) to contact VSS to clarify the situation with regards to IDAA support for Male Victims.

Lochaber MARAC Eilidh Moir raised concern about the lack of agency engagement in Lochaber – the lack of attendance is having a detrimental effect of the safety and wellbeing of high risk victims and their children. Effective and robust safety planning cannot be carried out with only 3 or 4 agencies in attendance.

9 Core agencies are expected to attend MARAC; agencies attendance for the last 3 months is as follows:

27/06/2019 – Police, LWA, HC Housing and LHA

25/07/2019 – Police, LWA and Health Visiting Service (observed by Safelives)

22/08/2019 – Police, LWA, CJSW and Health Visiting Service

[Action] Eilidh Moir to circulated MARAC Representative List to Jacquelyn Jennet to confirm and clarify the representatives from Education and Social Work.

Skye MARAC Referrals have reduced significantly with the meetings often cancelled due to no referrals. There have been a total of 4 referrals from the beginning of 2019 - these have come from Police, Highland Council Housing and Adult Social Work.

Maggie Hume advised that there had recently been a request from Social in Skye for RIC Training.

MARAC Observations & Baseline Report (Safelives) Safelives are carrying out observations of all Scottish Maracs, providing local tailored feedback as well as compiling a national report of strength and areas of development for Scottish Maracs. In Highlands & Islands, over the last month, Jenny Smith, MARAC Development Officer (maternity cover for Anna Smith) has been observing the Western Isles, Orkney, Shetland, Inverness and Lochaber, Skye and Ross-shire Maracs.

Observations are still to be carried out in Western Isles and Caithness & Sutherland (an observation was unable to be carried out due to there being only 1 case on the Agenda therefore these Observations are to be rearranged).

Observation Reports have been received for Orkney, Shetland and Inverness Maracs.

Eilidh Moir advised she would be using the feedback to implement some of the suggested improvements and compile the MARAC Action Plan for 2020/2021. Jenny Smith highlighted that from what she has seen so far she was generally impressed about how the MARAC's are working across H&I and there was just fine tuning required rather than an overhaul of current practice/ process.

Common Themes in the reports so far...

Current referrals are sent out with the MARAC Agenda to all agencies – this practice is not in line with the Safelives Model and it is felt that the agencies should not get sight of referrals before the meeting. This was discussed previously with Safelives and the reasoning behind it being: Agencies were able to put safety measures in place sooner, MARAC discussions would take longer and the information on the referral would be shared with reps in attendance at the meeting anyway.

One of the issues is that not all individuals/ agencies receiving the MARAC papers attend the meeting which is in issue in terms of GDPR and safe info sharing. Eilidh Moir states that she had gained some views from some of the representatives attending MARAC and there are various viewpoints.

There was some discussion with the meetings and it was felt that some individuals felt receiving the referrals prior to the meeting was essential to put safety planning in place prior to the meeting which would keep victim's safer.

Other individuals felt that the referring agencies should be making contact with other agencies prior to the MARAC meeting itself to ensure that necessary information is shared in relation to the risks identified therefore it is unnecessary to share the information contained in the initial referral with other agencies (apart from the IDAA) prior to the meeting.

Further discussion and consideration is required. Eilidh Moir suggested waiting until the majority for the Safelives Observation Reports had been seen/ considered and she would outline the pro's and con's/ Safelives guidance and agencies views in a document that could be considered fully and further action/ change in procedure agreed.

[Action] Eilidh Moir to write a paper outlining the pro's and con's in relation to the dissemination of MARAC referrals prior to the meeting.

In relation to MARAC Actions, they are currently not given a specific time frame to be completed. This has already started to be implemented with the Chair asking for those offering actions to indicate a specific time frame to complete the action.

Agency Attendance

It has been noted that there is an increase of victim and perpetrators in Housing Association tenancies. In some cases there is no attendance from the Housing Associations or written updates provided.

Lyndsey Mateer advised that she would be meeting with all HHR partners to address this issue. In relation to MAPPA, there is one housing point of contact and this works well as MAPPA is on a statutory footing.

MARAC is not yet statutory and it is proving more difficult to get the attendance required from each of the Housing Associations as there is not a protocol in place

Maggie Hume Advised that Albyn Housing Association has approached VAWP for training in December in relation to MARAC/ Risk Assessment.

[Action] Maggie Hume and Lyndsey Mateer to liaise re. planned and future training for housing staff.

MARAC Action Plan Updates

Deputy MARAC Chairs/ Chair Training Safelives delivered Marac Chair Training in Inverness on the 4th June. This was delivered at £45 pp (subsidised Government Rate) which was funded by the HVAWP/ MARAC. There was initially quite a bit of interest in the Chair's Training initial however only 6 individuals attended: Marac Coordinator, Social work (Skye); Women's Aid; Housing Service x 2 (Inverness, C&S); NHS – Public Health (leaving post). There were a number of people that withdrew for the following reasons: sickness, capacity, managers feeling that it would be a conflict of interest and HVAWP not agreeing to paying travel/ accommodation.

Eilidh Moir feels it would be beneficial to have a deputy Chair in each of the 7 MARAC areas.

There is currently no Chair Trained Reps in Lochaber, or Shetland and Orkney.

Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) has nearly been completed – Eilidh Moir will send round the updated version in the next few weeks for comments and approval.

The MARAC Operating Protocol is the next document to be updated and this will also sent this round in due course.

Retention of Information requires to be discussed and clarified. Safelives have highlighted that MARAC does not own the information shared and that the information is owned by the agencies that share the information therefore considerations need to be put in place. For example, some MARAC areas are destroying referrals, agendas and minutes after a 12 month period - Referrals, minutes and action plans relating to each case will be destroyed when the case is detagged at the 12 month point. Names and dates of birth of victims, perpetrators and children will be held for 10 years for the purpose of monitoring and identifying repeat victim and perpetrators.

Eilidh Moir feels that 12 months is too short a period but welcomed comments for others.

Kate Blowers advised that Women's Aid have agreed 5 years.

Maggie Hume advised in her previous role as coordinator information was held in line with Police retention policy and when in changed to the Council it changes to the council information retention policy. As MARAC is transferring to NHS systems it may be best to al line with the NHS information retention policy.

[Action] Eilidh Moir to liaise with NHS Data Protection Officer for advice to Data Retention.

RIC/ Referral Training - As previously mentioned, Eilidh Moir and Lynsdey Mateer are planning to deliver focused training sessions to Housing Staff on completing the DASH RIC and MARAC Referral. Eilidh Moir is currently writing a half day training session which can be adapted to suit all agencies.

Maggie Hume advised there have been some interest/ request from Skye to deliver this type of training also.

'Train the Trainer' for MARAC Representative Training October 2019 Eilidh Moir advised she is attending this training with a view of being able delivering this training across the Highlands and Islands – offer more consistent training perhaps on an Annual basis to begin with.

4. Use of VAW partnership monies

Jacquelyn Jennett advised that she had received a few proposals in relation to bids for the VAWP underspend:

- 1) Criminal Justice Team – preventing abuse in relationships with a proposed cost of £16,000 (staffing costs). A 9 week voluntary programme with Action for Children facilitating. It would require 4 Support Workers and would run for a period of 7 months. A non-court mandated perpetrator programme.
- 2) Murdo Macleod - Equally Safe Partnership Group
Highland Council are a pilot authority for equally safe at work.
A survey was completed with a good return with some interesting and positive results. It was highlighted that staff felt they could seek support from their Manager. It has been identified that more work could be done about letting people know about it – making it available for all partner organisations and third sector agencies - making individuals aware that are in employment aware and conscious of their rights and support and advice that is available.
£20,000 to help with funding for Equally Safe Radio/ advertising Campaign.
- 3) Inverness Women's Aid (IWA) bid for £21,500 or £43,000
Elaine Fetherston sent round the proposal prior to the meeting. IWA have an ongoing gap in CYP support capacity. Funding was lost for a CYP post – view of funding a mixed/ therapeutic post for children and families. This post is being trialled at it works well – IWA have currently being paying the post out of reserves. Funding would help to develop the post and keep it until more substantial grant funding is found.

After further discussion, Elaine Fetherston stated she would rework the IWA proposal to give more costings options and to indicate which HAWP strategic objectives the work would align to.

It was agreed that as some individuals not in attendance at the development day and were not aware of the opportunity to submit a proposal the date for submission would be extended until the end of September 2019 (27/09/2019). This would allow proposals to be discussed an extraordinary panel meeting in October. Proposals must be creative and in line with the VAWP Plan.

Kate Blowers suggested some of the money could be used to address some of the issues of MARAC in more rural areas. Kate Blowers also advised Education is an area where funding could be used – Donna Manson is keen to work with children in schools.

Jacquelyn Jennett advised she didn't think that the council should be given funding to do something that is something in their statutory responsibilities. There is going to be a role created regarding the structure of the school curriculum in its entirety.

Jennifer Baughan advised there had been a specific piece of work done in Nairn Academy where Jo Sykes had input with CYP's which could potentially be developed across all schools in Highland. Posters were created with the voice of young people. This would be separate and in addition to PSE but this would need to be costed out.

Lorraine Revitt reported on the work LWA had done with Primary 7's in relation to International Day of the Child. Healthy Relationship Work was carried out and there was a separate day where professionals and children were invited to work together.

Lorraine Revitt highlighted that there is a plan to support and sustain Women's Aid groups and funding has been consistently cut with no other alternative than to cut service delivery hours and suggested that each Women's Aid group be awarded some funding to make up the shortfall in funding.

[Action] Women's Aid Groups and Jennifer Baughan to meet to discuss progressing proposal for potential school input.

[Action] Jacquelyn Jennett to liaise with Cathy Steer in relation to budget regarding underspend.

5. Feedback from VAWP development day and decision making about the format going forward.

DI Craig Thomson advised that a meeting took place to discuss the need for a MARAC Steering Group in each of the MARAC areas and also set up a separate Advisory Group which the Steering Groups could feed into to share best practice etc. Documents were disseminated in relation to the suggested agenda of the Steering Group and Terms of Reference both of which are currently still in draft form.

It has been suggested that the Operational Group and Violence Against Women Partnership are combined to form one single group and in order to ensure \Marac continues to be delivered effectively a separated subgroup created specific for Marac Steering.

There will be 5 sub-groups that will feed into the Partnership group, these include:

- Prevention and Education Group
- Learning and Development Group
- Service Provision/ Development for Children and Adults affected by GBV
- Perpetrator Group
- MARAC Steering

Maggie advised attendance is poor and the subgroup, actions are not being completed and progress is slow. It has been a challenging 9-10 months for all and the master plan is thought to be too long and may not be achievable.

Maggie Hume disseminated copies of the notes of the development day. It was suggested that each of the sub groups to be more focussed by adopting the child protection committee model.

[Action] To identify the most appropriate representatives to sit within each of the subgroups.

6. VAW Training Update

Maggie Hume had report a VAW Training Update – the report was distributed to those in attendance.

Maggie highlighted some positives and challenges.

Challenges included financial constraints in individuals attending training sessions with some course having to be cancelled due to low uptake; accessibility of Learn Pro; lack of administration support and uncertainty of the Training Officer Post impacting on the developing of the programme for 2020/21.

Highlights include: colleagues trained to co-deliver training sessions; delivery of bespoke training sessions; Training officer trained in co-delivery of DA Matters.

Maggie updated the meeting on the tasks ongoing which are highlighted in the report that was prepared – VAW Training Updated at August 2019.

AOB

Jacquelyn Jennett informed the group that Gillian Gunn had resigned and there is a now a space for someone to sit on the Licensing Forum – sexual entertainment/ licensing.

The Manager of RASASH was nominated for this – Jacqueline to contact Gwen to see if she would be interested in representing the VAWP,

Jacquelyn Jennett advised participatory budgeting money was available for local communities to put in bid. 1% of the council budget is to be handed over for participatory budgeting to target the most vulnerable members of society who are unable to have a voice.

Pablo is the council rep and it was suggested that he be invited to speak at a future meeting.

Future Meeting Date

20th November 2019 agreed as a substitute to 21st November 2019.

It was agreed that an extraordinary meeting be scheduled on **Tuesday 8th October** – Time and venue to be confirmed.