

Hertfordshire MARAC Business Continuity – Coronavirus

Introduction

Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership is aware of the increased pressures coronavirus is having on agencies. The challenges are expected to continue as the outbreak worsens bringing continued change to the national and local response and service delivery.

These are unprecedented times and we want to work as flexibly and fluidly with partners to do our very best to ensure the safety of those experiencing domestic abuse.

In order to best respond to these challenges we want to ensure we continue to provide the highest level of support to keep victims and survivors of domestic abuse as safe as possible. We know that isolation is a tactic often used by perpetrators of domestic abuse to limit victim's ability to seek help and support. Social distancing and self-isolation will enable perpetrators to use this tactic more effectively. It will impact victim's ability to seek help and support. Based upon emerging evidence China we can expect an increase in the severity and frequency of domestic abuse. This is likely to mean an increase in police incidents, harm or homicide and as such maintaining safety and access to support is paramount. MARAC is critical to this.

MARACs are critical in the prevention of homicide and reduction in risk of harm to those at highest risk due to experiencing domestic abuse.

We know that the ability for partner agencies to attend face-to-face MARAC meetings due to self-isolation, sickness and individual agency continuity responses to the virus will impair the ability for us to continue operating MARACs in the way in which we are used to.

For the MARAC Sub-Group we can expect a shift to virtual approaches in order to risk manage and safety plan for victims of domestic abuse in the least disruptive way. It is likely that these will change and evolve to respond to the changing landscape.

What are we doing?

In response, we have developed the current continuity plan (see flowchart) to balance the needs of victims and the ability of agencies to continue. This is now implemented and being closely monitored by a core group of members of the MARAC sub-group. To summarise this means:

- MARAC meetings will not take place face-to-face for the foreseeable future
- MARAC will move to an arms-length approach; with MARAC Team members using previous meeting dates/times to conduct MARAC business electronically and remotely. This remote activity will include representation from our IDVA service.
- MODUS will be utilised in the same manner as usual for publication of case lists, minutes and actions.
- Hertsmarac@herts.pnn.police.uk to be used for the submission of referrals, MARAC Information Sharing Research Form, action completion notifications and action follow ups.

Key process points for MARAC Strategic Leads and Reps

- Ensure the case list is accessed promptly upon receipt of email notification

- The MARAC Information Sharing Research Form **MUST** be used for all submissions, with any proposed actions for your agency, on time (minimum 2 days before scheduled date of the MARAC)
- Information to be relevant, proportionate and concise. Only need to complete information in the sections of the form that pertains to your agency.
- Ensure minutes are accessed promptly upon receipt of email notification
- Read the minutes carefully and identify any actions your agency can undertake to mitigate and manage risk
- Email the MARAC Team with all your agency identified actions and progress update/completion of agency actions promptly.

What do we need to do next?

1. **Strategic Leads and Sub-Group Members** are required to ensure ALL those that need to be aware of the continuity plan and changes within their agency are notified of the continuity plan for MARAC accordingly and as soon as possible.
2. **ALL Strategic Leads** are asked to ensure ALL MARAC reps within their agency are made fully aware of the current changes and plans, and understand the changes and requirements, and share this accordingly as soon as possible.
3. **All partners should have in place deputy MARAC reps and strategic leads:** to build resilience in the process and respond to changes in service delivery, and staff availability due to redeployment, isolation or sickness.
 - a. These should be sent to the MARAC team as soon as possible.
 - b. Any changes to current or future reps should be sent to the MARAC team as soon as possible
4. A **core 'governance' group initiated to monitor and reassess ongoing MARAC practice and the continuity arrangements:** made up from MARAC Sub-Group Members so that we respond to the changing needs and circumstances to ensure safety of victims is upheld and support needed provided in a safe manner.
 - a. Membership will consist of Police, Adult Care Services, Children's Service, IDVA, Probation, Health and Strategic Partnerships Team.
 - b. The group will convene on a weekly basis via tele/conference call initially with frequency reviewed and amended according to changes in need.
 - c. Membership will be reviewed and changed according to need.

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality remains paramount. The existing MARAC ISP will remain in place and all agencies are duly reminded of their duties in adhering to it.
- All agencies must ensure that homeworkers have secured systems and means to hold, access and share all MARAC information and documents in a secure manner. No MARAC related information is to be held insecurely or on personal computers, without encryption or passwords. No Login details or passwords should be stored on any personal computer.
- All participants of core 'governance' group tele/conference call **MUST** use headphones if they are not calling from a suitable and secure office location or do not live alone.
- Tele/conference calls should be made via secure platforms without ability to record or upload/back up to a cloud.
- Any breaches **MUST** be reported to the MARAC Team as soon as they are known to enable policy and procedure review and amendment.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING DURING THIS DIFFICULT TIME

Herts MARAC COVID-19 BCP

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Hertfordshire MARAC Business Continuity: Flowchart