



Hull Multi Agency Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Panel (VARM)

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. (The Care Act Statutory Guidance, 2014 Chapter 14)

Difficulty in engaging with individuals who are pursuing high risk behaviours or not looking after themselves may have serious implications for an individual's health and wellbeing. It can also impact on the individual's family, local community and wider services.

The VARM Panel will consider cases in respect of adults aged 18 years or over, where existing mechanisms within agencies for resolving or minimising risk have not been achieved. Whilst many people are well served by current single agency and multi-agency working practices, there is a small but increasing number that require a different, more creative approach involving many agencies. It is also recognised that there are a small number of individuals who have multiple needs and may be at risk of significant harm but fall outside of the criteria for Adult Safeguarding enquiries or who have made a capacitated decision not to engage with enquiries.

The focus of the panel is on addressing the risk to the adult and in doing this will also consider other persons affected, the panel will enable better information sharing and risk management between agencies and facilitate better outcomes for people.

2. Purpose

The VARM Panel has developed from the need to establish a multi-agency way of supporting work on complex and/or high-risk cases, including but not limited to chaotic lifestyles, self-neglect, hoarding, fire risk, alcohol & substance misuse. The purpose of the VARM Panel is to facilitate, develop risk management plans, monitor and evaluate. The panel will support agencies in their work to lower and manage risk.

3. Objectives

- To share information to identify, clarify and agree on risk
- Promote safety and wellbeing of high risk adults in Hull
- Improve multi agency communication pathways
- To utilise resources more efficiently
- To develop risk management plans
- For those who are not engaging, co-ordinate a risk management plan to seize the opportunities that can enable engagement and/or monitor the well-being of the person.
- To improve agency accountability
- To share risk across agencies
- Identification of a lead/key worker

4. Background

A Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) was initiated in 2017 by Hull Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (HSAPB) following the death of a 27-year-old man referred to as Mr B. The final SAR independent authors report for Mr B was concluded in Feb 2019. Mr B had a history of offending and was well known to the criminal justice, offender management and substance misuse agencies in Hull. Mr B was released from HMP Hull on 21st September 2015 having served a short sentence for theft. On 20th January 2016 Mr B was found dead in a derelict house in Hull.

As a result of Mr B's death, HSAPB were required to consider if a SAR should be conducted. A SAR is a multi-agency review process which seeks to determine what relevant agencies and individuals involved could have done differently that could have prevented harm or a death from taking place. The purpose of a SAR is not to apportion blame but capture positive learning to improve systems and professional practice for the future.

In making a decision to initiate a SAR, HSAPB complied with the Care Act 2014, the main provisions of which came into force in April 2015. Under the Care Act, Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) must initiate a SAR when an adult in its area with needs for care and support dies or suffers significant negative impact as a result of serious abuse or neglect (known or suspected), and where there is concern that partner agencies could have worked more effectively to protect the adult (The Care Act 2014, section 44).

Mr B had been identified as having multiple care and support needs, and many agencies and professionals had involvement with Mr B over a number of years. This case was therefore chosen to be reviewed in that the death met the legal criteria. An independent lead reviewer was appointed by HSAPB to facilitate and lead the review.

The SAR was concluded in Feb 2019 and relevant recommendations were identified. Recommendations 1 & 3 are applicable to the setting up of a VARM Panel

Recommendation 1: HSAPB to include within the Hull Local Operating Guidance a section promoting the value and circumstances where it may benefit holding multi-agency strategy meetings or discussions to help safeguard adults.

Recommendation 3: HSAPB should develop policy, guidance and practitioner toolkits for use across the partnership to help protect adults at risk of self-neglect.

5. Core membership

The bringing together of a VARM can be for a number of reasons, it is therefore felt that a core membership is not always appropriate. Initially the referring agency will be the lead (this may change during the VARM meeting if deemed appropriate). The below whilst not an exhaustive list should be considered for invitation to any VARM held if it is felt that particular organisation can add value to the support being sought.

- Adult Social Care, Hull City Council
- Community Safety Partnership
- Environmental Health, Hull City Council
- Housing Options, Hull City Council
- Humberside Fire & Rescue
- Humberside Police
- Hull University Teaching Hospital
- Humber NHS Foundation Trust
- Clinical Commissioning Group
- City Health Care Partnership
- Yorkshire Ambulance Service
- General Practitioners
- Care Providers

Agreed reps are to be of sufficient seniority to commit their agency to actions and arrange for these to be carried through post-panel. If they are unable to attend, they will send a well-briefed colleague to represent them or if this is not possible, they will alert the Chair prior to the panel. If this is not possible, written feedback on the specific case should be provided prior to the panel to help inform the discussion and actions.

6. Criteria for cases to Team Around the Individual Panel

- Clear evidence must be shown by professionals currently working with an adult that all attempts to engage with the individual have been made and multi-agency management is required for the case (**except in cases of immediate high risk where professional judgement is required**).
- The professional considers the adult may be at risk of significant harm but the Adult safeguarding criteria has not been met.
- The individual concerned is deemed to have Mental Capacity and:

- . Is at risk due to severe self-neglect/self-harm
 - . Has Risk Taking Behaviours
 - . Is Change Resistant
 - . Is refusing to engage in services
 - . Is subject of Abuse by a third party but is not willing to engage in safeguarding or services
 - . Is a 'frequent caller' to services
 - . Where a single agency is struggling to maintain a high risk situation alone
- Anyone can present a case to the VARM Panel where there is a complex or challenging risk issue and where guidance and decision making is needed.

7. VARM Panel arrangements

It should be noted that the VARM Panel will act in an advisory capacity and will make recommendations on what would be reasonable in terms of managing risks while balancing the rights of all concerned. As such it will not seek to reverse decisions that may have previously been agreed, it will offer a reflective space for consultation, reconciliation, problem solving and agreement in cases where the level of risk raise concerns. The panel has no specific budgetary or official decision making powers.

The Lead Agency will be responsible for chairing the VARM Panel and production of any documentation arising from the meeting. There is a single referral document where the referrer provides a case summary, all relevant details and presenting issues will be sent prior to the meeting. The agency making the referral will present the case to the panel followed by focused consideration of risk, options and solutions before agreeing actions. Agreement will be reached during the meeting on the frequency of subsequent meetings in order to monitor agreed actions/outcomes. The panel representatives/agencies agree to take responsibility for delegated actions and principally support the referring agency with managing risk.

8. Data protection/information sharing/confidentiality

The VARM Panel is not a public forum and attendance is limited to those agencies who are able to provide a contribution to cases. Discussions at panel may involve the presenting agency and guest attendees in dealing with issues that are sensitive and/or controversial, or that fall under the Data Protection Act. Therefore representatives will need to ensure discretion and care in performing their duties and responsibilities so that confidentiality is maintained. This responsibility for confidentiality is extended to all panel attendees.

The Humber Charter Information Sharing Protocol/Agreement https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Humber_Information_Sharing_Charter_HIG01_V09.pdf will govern information sharing and data protection for the VARM Panel. All representatives will adhere to the strict data protection requirements set out under this protocol and not divulge information to anyone outside of the panel or partners from which information is sought. This is with the exception of colleagues who are employed by the agency presenting the case to the panel and are dealing with the case internally.

Whilst consent of the individual presented to the VARM Panel is always desirable, it is recognised that this may not always be achievable in practice. It is also acknowledged that cases presented to the panel are likely to fall into a category of risk where consent by the individual may be overridden, namely: in the public interest and/or risk of life/serious harm. Consideration should be given however to inviting the individual subject of the VARM to attend.

9. Equalities

The panel shall value equality and diversity within the community and work for the elimination of discrimination against anyone based on: race, colour, ethnicity, age, disability, national origins, sexual orientation, faith, gender, marital status or income.

10. Partnership

Panel representatives should at all times show respect and courtesy in their dealings with each other and those presenting cases, and seek to take a collaborative solution focussed, problem solving approach to find ways of improving each individual case.

11. Governance

Lead Agencies will inform the Hull Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (HSAPB) of any VARM meetings being conducted in relation to those individuals resident in Hull.

12. Venue for meetings

To be confirmed by the lead Agency.

13. Capturing learning

Each VARM meeting will include time to consider any learning. The objective of this discussion will be to capture best practice, reassess risk and organisational learning. It is the responsibility of panel representatives to communicate best practice and systemic learning within their own organisations as it is identified. The circumstances and methods used to resolve or advance cases will be documented by the administration support and used to inform wider learning.

