

Report for the Kent Community Safety Partnership

MARAC – A summary of the multi- agency event and proposals for the future

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The Multi-Agency Risk assessment Conference (MARAC) process was established to allow for the best possible safety planning for victims of domestic abuse who are considered to be at high risk of experiencing further significant harm/injury. The MARAC process in Kent and Medway is now well established with a monthly meeting held for all local authorities and the unitary authority. These meetings are well attended by staff from numerous partner agencies as well as representatives from the third sector organisations who support victims of domestic abuse.

The MARAC meetings are organised and chaired by Kent Police. To enable this there is an establishment of 3.0 FTE Area MARAC co-ordinators and 0.5 FTE strategic MARAC co-ordinator. The cost of the provision to Kent Police is £131,062 per year. In addition to this the chairing of the meetings is carried out by either a Det Sgt or a Det Inspector.

The MARAC co-ordinators are responsible for arranging the meetings, collating the minutes and actions, distributing these and collecting progress against the actions. As the meetings are all monthly this is a perpetual role of preparing for the next meeting as soon as the previous one is consolidated. The MARAC co-ordinators are also responsible for carrying out training in partner agencies to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the referral process.

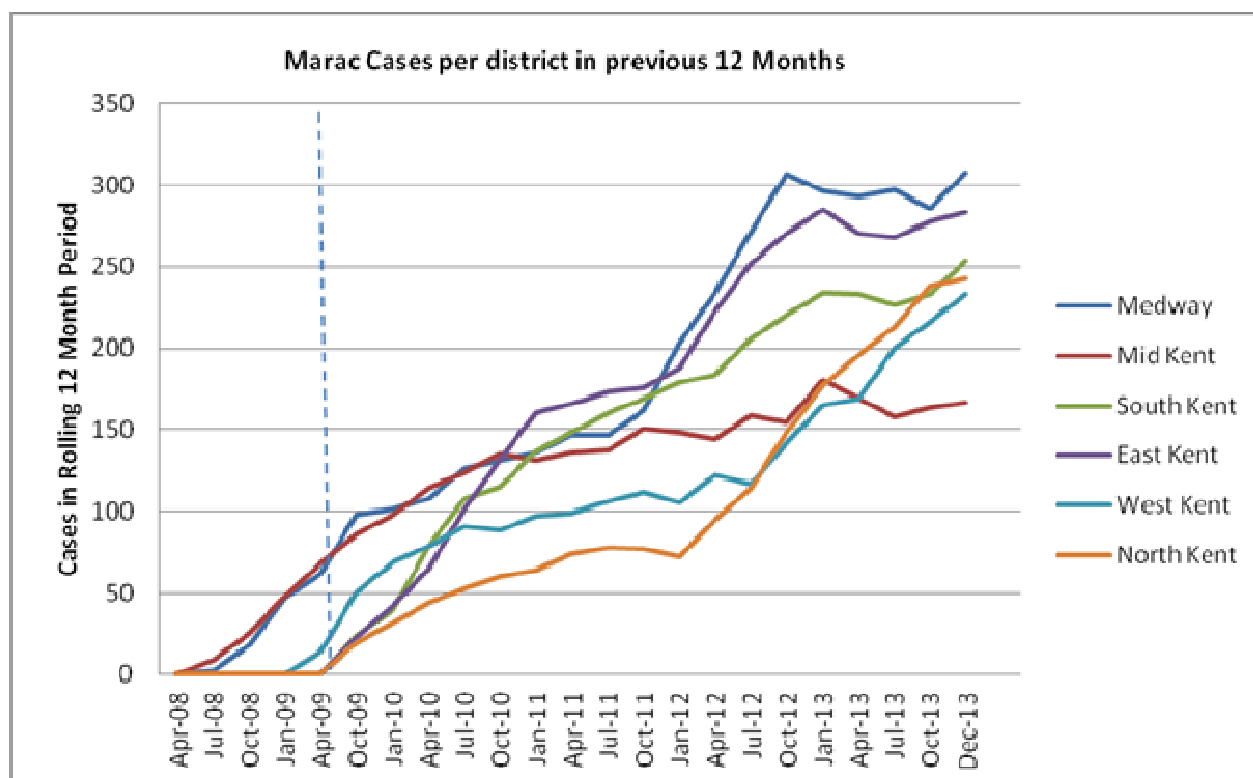
The success of the MARAC process is well documented by CAADA. The Kent and Medway approach appears to have captured this successful model. However, greater professionalism and awareness of domestic abuse in all agencies and the wider public is manifesting itself in an increasing number of cases appearing at each MARAC. The first quarter of 2013 saw an average of 108 cases per month; in the last quarter of 2013 this had increased to 145. This is in line with the national experience and does not represent a comparative anomaly.

Although the number of cases are increasing this can be viewed as positive in that we are identifying more victims who should be a part of the process who may have previously been overlooked. This success is supported by the fact that CAADA would expect to see between 28 and 40% of cases as repeat whereas the rate in Kent is at 24%.

Recognising that MARAC is reaching a critical strain both in its management and coordination, but equally in the demand upon all agencies to support the MARAC process, a Multi-Agency workshop was arranged to review the MARAC process.

The workshop was held on the 24th March 2014 and was attended by 30 people. These individuals represented the Police, KMPT, CAADA, KCC, Oasis, Maidstone BC, NHS, Medway Council, Sanctuary, CXK, Rising Sun, Probation, NKWA and Victim Support. Representation was given at all levels from operational officers to senior managers and commissioners.

The figures below demonstrate how the MARACS continue to expand across Kent. To show accurate comparative data, The 6 regions are kept as they were established in 2008/9, based on Police Basic Command Units.



MARAC Current State

The workshop reviewed how the current system worked and the issues that arise. It was generally acknowledged that the current process works well. However there are a number of current and emerging issues. The key issues are:

- Too many cases at each meeting, so meetings are longer as there is resistance to having more frequent meetings.
- Lack of resilience of staff to attend the MARACS (not keeping pace with growth and demand), effecting staff ability to attend existing meeting structure
- Lack of sufficient contractual hours for the MARAC co-ordinators
- Frequency of meetings agreed as too infrequent for volume of cases but staffing not equipped to service higher meeting demand
- Lack of co-ordinator time for training, as time is having to be devoted to administration to manage the volume of referrals

- police No one professional lead within the
- Quality of cases presented is variable
- Sporadic attendance by some
- services, some critical to decision making
- Evidence of some duplication and
- over-processing
- Inappropriate referrals because
- some agencies have not developed structures or trained their staff sufficiently to deal with lower levels of risk (Medium or Standard) so MARAC referral becomes a default option
- Police ownership. This should be
- partnership owned
- Poor meeting facilities in some cases
- (especially where some MARACS are all day meetings)

It must be noted however that the current MARAC process is overall effective. However, addressing these issues will help address efficiency and the implementation of a standard process across the county, and will ultimately better safeguard victims of domestic abuse.

Moving towards a better MARAC future ideal state

The workshop then looked at how a MARAC would be operated in an ideal world. This was done to help the attendees identify the key areas that should be focused on to improve on the current process.

This was followed up by an exercise to identify what changes could be made to the current process if all partners were in agreement. The exercise was used to produce a number of key points. These key points are to be used in guiding the consultants that are reviewing the MARAC process to move towards the ideal solution.

- All agencies need to ensure sufficient expert resources to support medium and standard risk DA as well as high.
- The formal implementation of a MARAC governance structure
- The appointment of joint chairs to represent the police and other agencies
- The possible movement of co-ordinators into a centralised team
- A re-assessment of which cases are heard at MARACs with regard to safeguarding activities already carried out.
- Restricting MARAC activity to two DIs within the police based in the East and the West of the county.
- Coordinators and administrators as distinct roles (currently coordinators also administrate)
- Establish the ideal staffing resource level to provide the administration support and MARAC co-ordinator roles

- DA training carried out multi agency rather than single agency inputs
- The co-ordinators to have training skills/knowledge and possibly a recognised qualification
- Publication of the outcomes from MARACs

The recommendations focused on the growing pressure felt by the co-ordinators due to increasing case numbers, the almost complete ownership of the process by the police and the logistics around the meetings. If these areas can be addressed and improved upon it will enhance the effectiveness of the MARACs for the agencies, victims and perpetrators.

In view of the increasing number of cases contrasting with budget cuts to all agencies, it is recognised that beyond the strong moral argument to increase resources committed to MARAC, the process and the contributions by all partners will need to be reviewed and will require a compelling business case in order to be prioritised over competing priorities.

Interim Measures and Proposal

Alison Gilmour, Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Coordinator, and myself have spoken with the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group, to raise the impending crisis of demand outstretching the capacity to coordinate and administer the volumes of cases.

As a result of this and discussions outside of that meeting, £34500 has now been secured from Public Health, Kent Fire and Rescue, Kent County Council, Medway Council, and Kent Police. Part of this money will provide one additional post for up to 12 months administrative support to MARACs across the county. This post is currently being developed and advertised by Kent Police. This should allow MARAC to be successfully administered for the rest of the financial year, and keep pace with volumes of cases being considered.

In order to take the recommendations from the MARAC event in March to develop a sustainable model which provides appropriate safeguarding for domestic abuse victims and their families I and Alison Gilmour have met with an independent consultant to request they develop the business case for the CSP and KMDASG to consider.

Once the consultant is instructed, a steering group will be established with key stakeholders to develop terms of reference for the consultant to work to, and to ensure the finished product reflects the ambition of the workshop. It is intended that the final report be completed by December and will be presented back to both the KMDASG and the CSP, in order to consider any financial implications in planning for the next financial year.

Request of the KCSP

1. To note the contribution made by CSP agencies in support of the MARAC workshop
2. To note and accept the key findings of the MARAC workshop (current state, below).
3. To note the recommendations of the event, and the interim position described for the rest of 2014 /15 FY

4. To note the proposal to develop a multi-agency business case to describe a costed model (or range of models) that will address these recommendations, together with the benefits for each agency
5. That the CSP membership support the establishment of a steering group to develop, oversee and agree the business case proposal