

All Wales Hate Crime Research Project: Event Report
Hate Crime and Multi-agency working: The Way Forward
1.30pm, Thursday 5th May 2011
Race Equality First, Cardiff

Introduction

This event, held in partnership with South Wales Police, explored opportunities for developing the model of the MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference) that has been created to address domestic abuse cases to tackle hate crime.

31 representatives from 21 organisations attended the event (see APPENDIX A). The audience included representatives from key agencies that could potentially attend a hate crime MARAC if one was established and organisations that work with people who may be victims of hate incidents/crimes.

Aims of the event:

- To consider support for a MARAC pilot project in Cardiff
- To gain input from stakeholders on the question of how the model that has been developed to address domestic abuse can be transferred to hate crime
- To increase stakeholders knowledge and understanding of the MARAC process

1. Speakers

Jan Pickles (OBE), Welsh Assembly Government

Jan led on the establishment of the first domestic abuse MARAC in Cardiff in 2003. She gave a presentation on the history of the domestic abuse MARACs.

Key points:

- From a practitioner perspective, the MARAC process gives professionals the confidence to assess risk, share information about victims and perpetrators and manage and guide the victim.

- From a victim perspective, the MARAC can streamline, fast track and prioritise high-risk domestic abuse cases. Research has shown that the process has reduced repeat victimization. The MARAC offers victims practical interventions and someone to fight their corner, helping to free them from fear.
- For the process to work well Jan recommended that actions must be realistic (SMART), evaluation processes should be embedded, and it should be chaired by someone at Inspector level or above.

Chief Superintendent Neil Kinrade, South Wales Police

Chief Superintendent Kinrade gave a presentation about the Fiona Pilkington case and South Wales Police's involvement with a new project to identify and support vulnerable victims of anti-social behaviour.

Key points

- The Pilkington family was failed by multiple agencies. There was a lack of communication between the different agencies dealing with Fiona and, as a result, the family's overall vulnerability was never taken into account. It can be debated whether the Pilkington family experienced ASB or hate crime, but since a lot of ASB targeting is against disabled people there will be crossover with hate crime.
- South Wales Police, along with seven other police forces in the UK, has signed up to a Home Office project to help identify vulnerable victims of ASB. ASB will be categorised in 3 areas: personal threat, public nuisance, and environmental. All local authorities in the South Wales Police area have now signed up to the information sharing protocol for the Safer South Wales ASB Data Management System.
- The project will establish ASB Units. These units will instigate vulnerability risk assessments (VRA) on victims of ASB, local police/partner action plans will be created, and vulnerable and repeat victims may be referred to a multi-agency ASB Management Forum (similar to a MARAC). There will be problem-solving partnership solutions in hotspot locations. This process aims to improve victim case management, to keep victims updated and support them appropriately.

2. Workshops

Dr Mair Rigby, Project Officer for the All Wales Hate Crime Research Project, gave a short presentation summing up the 7 steps of MARAC and the minimum requirements for setting up a MARAC (see APPENDIX B).

Key points:

- A hate crime MARAC would be a multi-agency meeting with a common risk assessment and high risk victims of hate crime as its focus
- The aim would be to build as comprehensive a picture as possible of the risks the victim is facing and to put SMART action plans into place
- The victim should be at the centre of the process

Attendees were divided into groups and asked to respond to three questions:

1. What benefits would a more formal multi-agency approach to tackling hate crime have for your organisation and beneficiaries?
2. What challenges do you foresee in transferring the model of the domestic abuse MARAC to hate crime?
3. Next steps: how do you think we should progress this work?

Question 1: *What benefits would a more formal multi-agency approach to tackling hate crime have for your organisation and beneficiaries?*

- There could be a benefit in expanding what's already in existence, e.g. the Cardiff Multi-agency Race Forum and the ASB problem-solving group. There could be a core group, plus a MARAC for the high risk cases. The Council already has close relations with the Police, a system to risk assess repeat complaints, and Cardiff also has the Multi-agency Race Forum.
- There could be benefit in involving more organisations in a hate crime forum/partnership e.g., social services, education, probation, and this would help get a better picture of vulnerability. For example, when the agencies are brought together, a single victim or perpetrator may come up several times.

- There would be a benefit in having a shared hate crime risk assessment for all organisations and in particular in agreeing on a definition of “high risk”.
- Since the MARAC is an auditable process, it is likely to be more effective at managing victims, to result in more rapid agreements, improved communication and better problem solving.
- A MARAC (or something similar) could allow more organisations to be part of it (e.g. older people’s organisations) because more partners would get involved in a case that one organisation may know about.
- A more formal process could lead to easier follow-up and getting actions out of people because formal action plans would hold people to account.
- Some organisations would like to see a network in place to ensure that their referrals are taken seriously.
- Increased victim confidence would be likely to result from a better service and access to advocates.
- A more formal process could help raise awareness that there are different strands, and could promote a more intersectional approach which takes into account different aspects of a victim’s identity.
- There could be a benefit from more communication between different strands and they could learn from each other.
- It was stated that elder abuse should be included in a multi-agency hate crime forum.
- It was thought that Independent Advocates would be key to the process and that their existence would be beneficial.

Question 2: *What challenges do you foresee in transferring the model of the domestic abuse MARAC to hate crime?*

- Resources would be an issue - the domestic abuse MARAC is very resource intensive.
- Is the MARAC model (which deals only with domestic abuse) suitable for hate crime, which has 5 monitored areas? How do we assess risk criteria for 5 kinds of hate crime and would it mean that there would be too many agencies involved to make it workable?
- It may be a challenge to convince practitioners that a more formal process would be worthwhile. Practitioners in various areas would need to be educated about hate crime and the MARAC process.
- Who would take the place of the Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates who are crucial to the functioning of the Domestic Abuse MARAC. It was also noted that advocacy is very resource intensive.
- Where would it be based? The Domestic Abuse MARAC is based in the Police Domestic Abuse Unit, but there is no similar unit for hate crime. Would it be based with the Minority Support Unit or the Hate Crime Officers or somewhere else?
- What definition of hate crime would be used? Would it be the ACPO definition which is based on the victim's subjective experience, or would practitioner views be taken into account – considering that a lot of victims do not identify themselves as experiencing hate crime. There is also the Home Office definition, "Hatred is the targeting of individuals, groups and communities because of who they are".
- The issue of crimes and incidents could be problematic. Someone might only be experiencing "low-level" incidents, but still could be very high risk (e.g. as in the Fiona Pilkington case). A hate crime MARAC would have to take account of this.
- Hate crime victims' low confidence in the criminal justice system and tendency not to report could make it a challenge to engage them in the process.
- It was suggested that we might have to lower the risk threshold for victims of hate crime because it's unlikely that there will be as many very high risk cases for hate crime as there are for domestic abuse

- A question was raised around the concept of vulnerability – people may not want to be categorised as “vulnerable” and it’s important not to make assumptions
- It was noted that there would be more perpetrators to discuss at a hate crime MARAC, but the process focuses on victims. It was felt that some more research is needed on this issue.
- The issue of intersectionality was raised – how would the MARAC address victims’ multiple identities?

Question 3: *Next steps: how do you think we should progress this work?*

- The right agencies would need to sign up to the idea of a multi-agency partnership/MARAC. It would need organisational buy-in.
- An appropriate lead organisation would need to be decided – the Community Safety Partnerships were suggested.
- It was felt that a hate crime MARAC would need a champion, a person or organisation prepared to go to lengths to push the agenda forward.
- The idea would need to be presented at the right meetings.
- It was felt that there would be work to be done with the Courts – the victim-centred definition of hate crime is a problem once a case gets to Court.
- Develop Independent Hate Crime Advocacy because this will improve victims’ confidence to go forward with the process

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APPENDIX A

List of organisations present:

Age Cymru

Cardiff Community Housing Association

Cardiff Council

Cardiff University

Cardiff and the Vale Coalition of Disabled People

Disability Wales

Displaced People in Action

ESOL Service

LGBT Excellence Centre

Mencap Cymru

Race Equality First

Safer Wales

South Wales Police

South Wales Police Minorities Support Unit

Taff Housing

Tai Pawb

United Welsh Housing Association

Vale of Glamorgan Council for Voluntary Services

Victim Support

Wales Strategic Migration Partnership

Welsh Assembly Government

APPENDIX B

7 steps of MARAC

1. Identify victims
2. Risk assess
3. Referral process
4. Each agency researches each case
5. Meeting and information sharing
6. Action planning
7. Follow up

Minimum requirements for setting up a MARAC

A lead organisation to chair the meetings

A risk identification tool

An information sharing protocol

An operational protocol

A steering group

A coordinator

Nominated leads based in each agency