



Warwickshire
Safeguarding



Vulnerable Adult Risk Management (VARM)

Practice Guidance

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Invitation and Support	4
3. Stages of convening a VARM meeting	4
3.1 Consultation with Line Manager	4
3.2 VARM Referral form	5
3.3 Agencies receiving an invitation to a VARM meeting	6
4. The VARM meeting	6
5. Agency Updates / VARM Closure	7
5.1 Reviewing the outcome	7
5.2 Further VARM meeting	7
5.3 Reason for Closure	7

1. Introduction

This VARM guidance seeks to provide Warwickshire with a multi-agency framework to facilitate the management of cases with adults **who are deemed to have capacity** and are experiencing an unmanageable level of risk that:

- does not relate to abuse or neglect by a third party
- that could lead to imminent serious harm, death or injury (including emotional/psychological)

Serious harm is defined as something that is life threatening and/or traumatic, and/or the person has suffered reduced capacity or quality of life and from which recovery, whether physical, or psychological, may reasonably be expected to be difficult or impossible.

Such circumstances might include:

- Self-neglect* in which conditions meet:
 - Neglecting medical needs
 - Hoarding behaviours that are a fire risk with clutter within the home of scale 7 or above
 - Poor electrical set up i.e daisy chain of extension cables, electrical appliances buried in their possessions that could lead to potential fire
 - Repeated behaviours that could lead to imminent serious harm
 - Lack of escape route from property
 - Environmental concerns and unsanitary conditions that could impact on the health of the adult and/or wider community
- Refusal and non-engagement with care and support services
- Frequent missing episodes
- Drug and alcohol dependence combined with other complexities or risky behaviours

**For meetings concerning self-neglect or hoarding, [The West Midlands Self-Neglect Procedure](#) should be referred to in the first instance*

Consideration should be given to determine if all other measures have been taken to identify and manage risk. This includes whether the case would be better considered at a MARAC or MAPPA meeting.

As a VARM meeting relates to community-based concerns it may often be appropriate for fire and rescue, police, housing agencies, probation, public health etc to convene a meeting.

Should the adult **not have capacity**, a VARM meeting would not be appropriate. In these situations the [best interest process](#) should follow.

2. Invitation and Support

A VARM meeting should not take place without the knowledge and consent of the adult, unless there are clear and justified overriding reasons, such as serious risk to life. Under normal circumstances, the adult should be invited to attend and be offered support to participate. This support may include the offering or arranging of an advocate on their behalf. **It is essential that all attempts are made to engage the adult.** The Warwickshire VARM [‘What to Expect’ leaflet](#) should be given to the adult or their advocate as an invite to attend the meeting as part of initial discussions. Within the leaflet are prompts for the adult to express their views, as well as information on what to expect.

Should this not be possible to do face to face, the adult should be contacted via telephone, the leaflet should be posted with a stamped addressed envelope and emailed to the adult so that they have an opportunity to return their comments.

The lead agency should allow time for the adult to respond with comments and ascertain if they or an advocate will be attending the meeting. Allowances for a ‘plus one’ should be made if this is the adult’s wish.

3. Stages of convening a VARM meeting

3.1 Consultation with Line Manager

The practitioner who raises the concern must consult their line manager or equivalent supervisor to suggest a VARM meeting should take place to manage the risks. If agreed, the below key steps should follow and be signed off by the line manager as completed, before notifying partners.

An easy-to-follow printable flowchart can be [downloaded here](#)

Key steps:

- Contact wsab@warwickshire.gov.uk for a unique reference number and co-chair details
- Confirmation that the adult has been informed of the meeting and their consent has been requested and this is evidenced
- Confirmation that the VARM has been explained to them in a transparent and clear way and they have been invited to take part
- The adult’s views and expectations have been considered
- Determine what access / support requirement are needed for the adult or other attendees to take part
- Ascertain what care and support the adult is receiving / has received to reach this point to reduce risk
- Ascertain whether any children or other adults are at risk
- Consider whether referral to another process would be more appropriate
- Consider whether the circumstances of the case engage the s42 enquiry duty.
- Confirm if a referral to the Fire Service has been submitted for a Safe and Well check*
- Identify which agencies need to be invited to the meeting
- Identify a Chair and an appropriate venue, date and time to hold the VARM

** Warwickshire Fire and Rescue are of particular importance where there is an adult hoarding items or there is an increased risk of fire. Properties high on the clutter scale present a high risk to any fire officer in attendance to an incident. A safe and well check is key for these individuals prior to VARM involvement. Agencies can refer the adult for a safe and well check by completing [this referral form](#). It is often the case that people are more willing to allow the Fire Service into their property than any other professionals.*

During the introduction stage of implementing the VARM process, the lead agency should contact [Warwickshire Safeguarding Business Team](#) to establish who from the below will be supporting as co-chair:

Jackie Channell – ICB

Ian Redfern – Social Care and Support

Maxine Nichols - CWPT

The interim co-chairs will support lead agencies for the initial 6 months and thereafter, the referring agency will be required to chair from within their respective organisations. A helpful guide on 'What makes a Good Chair' can be [downloaded here](#).

3.2 VARM Referral form

The referring agency should gather proportionate and relevant information on the adult in the VARM referral summary form. **Due consideration should be given to ensuring the voice of the adult is reflected clearly in the recording.** This document will need to be signed by a supervisor / line manager.

The [VARM referral summary form](#) should then be circulated password protected via secure email to the identified members of relevant organisations (email template can be [downloaded here](#)) along with a [confidentiality agreement](#) and a [meeting agenda](#).

There are a number of agencies and organisations that may also be helpful to include in the meeting to support development of the risk management plan. A directory of contacts can be requested from the [Warwickshire Safeguarding Business Team](#).

Quoracy:- At the meeting there should be a representative from each of the following sectors to meeting to be quorate:

- Health services
- Social Care and Support
- Mental Health services
- Police (subject to case requirement)

The following agencies should be routinely invited to VARM meetings:

- Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Housing Service from the appropriate district and borough council

3.3 Agencies receiving an invitation to a VARM meeting

Recipients of the referral summary form should confirm their attendance with the coordinating lead agency and take reasonable steps to complete the referral form to the best of their knowledge prior to attending the VARM meeting. This information is to be brought with them to support the development of the risk management plan.

4. The VARM meeting

The purpose of the VARM meeting is to clarify whether any further action can be taken and making necessary arrangements, focusing on supporting the adult's on-going wellbeing and safety. The meeting should be flexible and risk-assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Chair is responsible for leading the meeting, aided by the meeting agenda and [VARM Crib Sheet](#).

The lead agency holds responsibility for minuting the meeting using the [minutes template](#), completing the VARM [Risk Management Plan](#) and sharing the outcome with agencies and the Adult. The minutes should be clear and concise throughout the process, reflecting the key decisions, by whom and the underlying rationale and any agreed timescales.

Key actions to be completed within the meeting:

- Produce a SMART multi-agency risk management plan which:
 - Fully explores the risks known to the group
 - What is important to the adult / do they understand the risk?
 - Rate the risk on the scale (reflection of likelihood of harm)
 - Note actions to reduce the risk and define timescales
 - Note any conflicts of opinion
- Agree contingency and escalation plan
- Agree on-going action monitoring arrangements
- Set date for the review meeting (if considered appropriate)
- Share copy of the risk management plan with the adult and attendees
- Retain a copy of the meeting record on the adult's file.

It is the responsibility of the attendees to carry out their actions within the agreed timescales.

5. Agency Updates / VARM Closure

5.1 Reviewing the outcome

Where the timescales have been agreed during the VARM meeting, the lead will need to review the actions and agreed outcomes within the risk management plan. Upon receipt of action updates, the lead agency will decide whether a further meeting is required and identify the timeframe in which this is to happen.

5.2 Further VARM meeting

Should a further VARM meeting be held, the initial steps of notifying the adult and establishing if the adult is still deemed to have capacity should be followed. Within this reconvened meeting, all actions should be reviewed to ensure they are still relevant, timescales adjusted and all changes to the risk management plan must be clearly documented and agreed by all members.

5.3 Reason for Closure

If the risks are fully mitigated or reduced as far as possible, no further VARM meetings are needed.

Where the adult is not engaging; this should be noted and the views of each agency, in respect of closure, should be documented. There may be occasions when all of the concerns and risks identified may not be addressed. It is essential to take reasonable steps to reduce and recognise any risk to life or serious harm.

It is important to ensure that professionals do not allow the case to be closed simply because the adult is not accepting the plan.

Upon closing the VARM meeting, the [outcome form](#) should be completed, approved and signed by the chair and returned to [Warwickshire Safeguarding Business Team](#).