

To: HOUSING & COMMUNITY SAFETY POLICY BOARD

On: 14 MARCH 2017

Report by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

**Heading: RENFREWSHIRE MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE (MARAC)
AUDIT BY SAFELIVES**

1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides an update to the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board on the outcomes and observations raised by a recent audit of the Renfrewshire MARAC process which was carried out by SafeLives as part of the Scottish MARAC Development Programme.
- 1.2 The audit was carried out in October 2016 a year after MARAC in Renfrewshire was established, with the audit being carried out by SafeLives, a national charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse.
- 1.3 SafeLives provide practical tools, training, guidance, quality assurance, policy and data insight to support professionals and organisations working with domestic abuse victims. The aim is to protect the highest risk victims and their children – those at risk of murder or serious harm.
- 1.4 The audit looked at all aspects of the working of the MARAC and covered the areas highlighted below, with observations, recommendations and examples of good practice being noted where appropriate:
 - Identification of domestic abuse
 - Referrals
 - Multi-Agency engagement
 - Support for victims
 - Information Sharing
 - Action Planning
 - Number of cases
 - Equality
 - Operational Support
 - Governance

- 1.5 Overall the audit was very positive and demonstrates the strong approach and excellent partnership working that is delivering real meaningful results in relation to tackling domestic abuse in Renfrewshire.
- 1.6 The audit report has been reviewed by the Gender based Violence Strategy Group and an action plan is currently being created to ensure recommended improvements are implemented. Progress against implementing the action plan will be overseen by the Community Safety and Public Protection Steering Group.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board:
- (i) notes the findings of the recent audit of the Renfrewshire MARAC process which was carried out by SafeLives as part of the Scottish MARAC Development Programme.
 - (i) notes the identified areas of good practice.
-

3. Key Findings of Audit

Identification of Domestic Abuse

- 3.1 The report highlighted that the cases being considered by MARAC are relevant and do focus on cases where domestic abuse, that can pose a clear risk to the individuals involved is being considered. Referrals come largely from independent advocacy services and the Police, which reflects national trends.

Referrals

- 3.2 It was identified that the majority of cases were referred within the recommended timeframe and that all victims had the option of receiving support from an Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate (IDAA).

Multi-Agency Engagement

- 3.3 The audit noted that the meeting is well attended by the relevant partner agencies and showed a positive commitment of the agencies to addressing domestic abuse.
- 3.4 Cases involving children were heard first which allowed the children's representatives to leave early, demonstrating best use of professionals' time. **(Identified as an area of good practice).**
- 3.5 It was observed that at the particular meeting attended by the auditors there were no representatives from Housing or Children's Services. With the two services being considered core services within the MARAC process it was noted that this may have a detrimental effect on the information sharing within the MARAC meeting were this to be a regular event.

Support for Victims

- 3.6 All victims are offered the opportunity of support from an IDAA, with an area of good practice being identified that a number of IDAA services were in attendance, ensuring that victims have a choice of representation. **(Identified as an area of good practice)**

- 3.7 A development area was suggested around establishing what feedback the victim would receive from MARAC. This has been incorporated into the improvement action plan.
- 3.8 The report highlights that all representatives demonstrated a real understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse. **(Identified as an area of good practice)**

Information Sharing

- 3.9 There is an up to date Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) which governs safe information sharing and is reviewed regularly. **(Identified as an area of good practice)**
- 3.10 It was generally noted that the level of information sharing was appropriate, relevant and risk focussed.
- 3.11 It was highlighted at the meeting that there was some discussion on corrections to the referral list (dates of birth, last contact etc). It was suggested that this should be clarified in advance of the meeting to ensure all representatives can prepare appropriately. This has been incorporated into the improvement action plan.
- 3.12 Nationally, MARAC's are struggling to have health professionals represented at the table and it was highlighted as an area of good practice that the Renfrewshire MARAC had ensured a health representative attends. **(Identified as an area of good practice)**
- 3.13 Although the health representative was in attendance, an area for future development would be around securing attendance from GP's and or A&E at the meeting.

Action Planning

- 3.14 It was recommended that timescales should be attached to all actions to increase the accountability of the MARAC.

Number of Cases

- 3.15 There is no cap on the number of referrals within Renfrewshire so the MARAC will be able to develop should the number of referrals increase. Although it was noted that the MARAC may encounter issues if the numbers increase significantly, this was seen as good practice.

Equality

- 3.16 In cases where victims had protected characteristics the Renfrewshire MARAC made additional efforts to ensure services understood the additional risks and barriers the victims may face e.g. the IDAA services have strong links with local LGBT specialists. This was also seen as good practice.

Operational Support

- 3.17 The operation of the Renfrewshire MARAC is one of its primary strengths with the Coordinator ensuring processes are closely aligned with the SafeLives model.
- 3.18 SafeLives are building a national picture of data to allow local comparisons and analysis and notes that Renfrewshire has been submitting data for almost a year which is another area of good practice. **(Identified as an area of good practice)**

Governance

- 3.19 It was noted that there is a clear commitment to MARAC in Renfrewshire, with the Chief Officers Group considering it one of its strategic priorities which demonstrates a

commitment to continual improvement and quality assurance which is considered an area of best practice. **(Identified as an area of good practice)**

Implications of this Report

1. **Financial** - none.
2. **HR and Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community Planning**

Safer and Stronger Renfrewshire – The work undertaken by the Renfrewshire MARAC with regards to high risk victims of domestic abuse aligns directly with the Safer and Stronger outcomes of the Council Plan.

A Greener Renfrewshire – none

Renfrewshire forum for Empowering Communities – none

4. **Legal** – none
5. **Property/Assets** – none
6. **Information Technology** – none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health and Safety** – none.
9. **Procurement** – none.
10. **Risk** – none.
11. **Privacy Impact** – none.

List of Background Papers - none

Author Oliver Reid, Head of Public Protection
e-mail: oliver.reid@renfrewshire.gcsx.gov.uk