

VULNERABLE ADULT RISK MANAGEMENT (VARM) POLICY

1.	Introduction
1.1	<p>The MK Together Management Board has agreed the need for a process to manage risks. This may arise within specific circumstances when working with adults deemed to have capacity to make decisions for themselves, but who are at risk of serious harm or death through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-neglect (Care Act 2014); • Risk-taking behaviour/chaotic lifestyles; or • Refusal of services. <p>The Milton Keynes' Vulnerable Adult Risk Management process has until March 2020 required professionals to complete a VARM referral that is then discussed at a large multi-professional meeting. The drawback of this approach was that the vulnerable person was not involved, there was no confirmation that mental capacity had been confirmed and actions were sometimes outstanding for several months.</p> <p>The aim of the VARM policy is to provide professionals with a framework to facilitate effective multi-agency working with adults who are at significant risk.</p>
2.	Vulnerable Adult Risk Management (VARM) process
2.1	<p>The VARM is a multi-agency adult assessment risk management process to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the relevant risks for the individual; • Discuss and agree agency responsibilities/actions; • Record, monitor and review progress with the agreed action plan; • Agree when the risks have been managed and evaluate the outcome.
2.2	<p>The VARM will only be called where the adult at risk does not fall within the existing multi-agency processes, or if it is felt that a VARM meeting will help to reduce the risk of serious harm or death. The VARM is not a substitute for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA); • Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC); • Channel (multi-agency meeting within the Prevent programme); • Formal adult safeguarding procedures.
2.3	<p>Each agency has a responsibility to ensure that their staff are aware of the VARM policy/process and of the need to contact their safeguarding lead/manager if/when the process is required. The agency that identifies the person at risk who would benefit from a VARM meeting will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking whether the criteria are met (see section 3.1); • Leading the process (see sections 4 - 6); • Co-ordinating multi-agency meetings as appropriate; • Maintaining records using the designated VARM Meeting Record; • Communicating outcomes.
3.	Criteria for a VARM

3.1	<p>All of the following conditions must apply for a VARM to be called:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The person has the mental capacity to make decisions and choices about their life; 2. There is a risk of serious harm (physical or psychological) which is life-threatening and/or traumatic and which is viewed to be imminent or very likely to occur, or death by self-neglect, fire, deteriorating health condition, non-engagement with services, or where an adult is targeted by the local community, is the victim of hate crime or anti-social behaviour or the victim of sexual violence. 3. There is a public safety interest; 4. There is a high level of concern from partner agencies.
3.2	<p>The principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) must be followed to establish whether the person has the capacity to make the relevant decisions. Further information and guidance on Mental Capacity Act (2005) assessments and best interests decision-making can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mental-capacity-act-making-decisions.</p> <p>It is essential that every effort is made to engage and involve the person deemed to be at risk throughout the process, where they will engage.</p>
3.3	<p>The VARM is an opportunity to ensure all agencies have offered the appropriate support/options to the person. All relevant legislation must be considered throughout the process.</p>
4.	<p>Preparation for a VARM meeting</p>
4.1	<p>Consent for holding a VARM meeting should be obtained from the person wherever possible, and the person should be encouraged to participate in the process (see What to Expect information leaflet). However, a lack of consent must not prevent the meeting from taking place.</p>
4.2	<p>Where the criteria are met and a VARM meeting is agreed, the lead agency will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the agencies to be invited to the meeting including non-statutory, voluntary sector and local community groups to facilitate the best opportunity to encourage positive engagement with the adult at risk; • Consider whether there are agencies not currently involved with the person that should be invited to attend; • Where children are part of the household or are linked to the person, Children's Services must be invited to the meeting and a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) completed; • Arrange a suitable venue and coordinate attendance; • Consider how the views of the person can be included - the person, or an appropriate advocate, may attend; • Consider the resources necessary, should the person wish to attend and has specific communication/physical needs.
	<p>See VARM Practice Guidance.</p>
4.3	<p>All partner agencies must ensure that an appropriate member of staff, with the required seniority to make decisions on behalf of their organisation, attends the VARM meeting.</p>
5.	<p>Chairing a VARM meeting</p>

5.1	The purpose of the meeting is to formulate a multi-agency risk assessment and identify actions to reduce the risk. The lead agency will Chair the meeting and ensure completion of the VARM meeting document at every meeting. See VARM Practice Guidance and VARM Meeting Record.
5.2	<p>The VARM Meeting Record must be circulated securely to all attendees within two weeks of the meeting: however, actions agreed must be initiated at the earliest opportunity by partner agencies.</p> <p>A copy of the completed VARM Meeting Record must be submitted to the Local Authority Safeguarding Adults Team (safeguardingadults@milton-keynes.gov.uk), who will collate records for the purpose of quality assurance and data collection.</p>
5.3	The meeting date can be brought forward if the situation changes at any time and it is the responsibility of the professionals involved to contact the Chair.
5.4	When all actions are completed for the identified risks, the VARM process must be closed. Where there is any disagreement about the process and/or proposed closure of the case this must be escalated to the safeguarding lead within the respective organisation(s) and the Milton Keynes Council Group Head Adult Services.
5.5	<p>Where the person refuses support and, despite all efforts, the risks cannot be mitigated, the following must be recorded on the VARM Meeting Record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action taken to date by each agency; • Rationale for closing the case; • Evaluation of the process; • Potential for future review.
5.6	Once the VARM process is closed it may be reconvened at any time and by any agency in response to the person's changing circumstances/risks.
6.	Death of a person within VARM process
6.1	<p>Where a person dies whilst within the VARM process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HM Coroner must be informed; • Consider a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) referral https://www.mktogether.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MKSB-SAR-Referral-Form_2019.docx
7.	Information Sharing
7.1	<p>Each agency needs to be aware of the principles of sharing information and be aware of the threshold of sharing information on a 'need to know basis'. Information provided and shared as part of the VARM process is done so for the purposes of Safeguarding Vulnerable adults with care and support needs as defined by the Care Act 2014 to protect these individuals and members of the public from harm. Full details about how we use this data and the rights of individuals have around this can be found at https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/safeguarding-people-at-risk/mk-together-privacy-notice-milton-keynes-council</p>

8.	Evaluation of the VARM, quality assurance and Governance
8.1	Each agency must maintain records of the VARM meetings in which they are involved. Agencies are responsible for collating and reporting information to the MK Safeguarding Adults Board as required.
8.2	At the conclusion of every VARM meeting the Chair and members must review the process and record the evaluation on the VARM Meeting Record.
8.3	Audit of the VARM process will be agreed via the Performance and Improvement Sub-Group of the MK Safeguarding Adults Board.
9.	References <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection Act (2018); • MK Together Information Sharing Protocol • Human Rights Act (1998); • Mental Capacity Act (2005) https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mental-capacity-act-making-decisions
10.	Supporting Documents <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. VARM Meeting Record; 2. VARM What to Expect information leaflet; 3. VARM Practice Guidance; 4. VARM Process Flowchart;