Presentation to Police Regional Leads and Stakeholders for Domestic Abuse, 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 2020.

Project Update

Domestic Abuse: Responding to the Shadow Pandemic (ESRC grant Ref: ES/V00476X/1) led by Professor Sandra Walklate, Professor Barry Godfrey, and Dr. Jane Richardson. University of Liverpool.

Focusing on MARACs

Analysis here based on 26 questionnaire responses from 25 different police forces supplemented by 21 interviews with DA leads from 21 different forces.

Headline finding

All questionnaire respondents (from 25 forces) commented on the significance and value of being able to maintain inter-agency working using online platforms. The enthusiasm for maintaining virtual meetings ranged from the practical (it was much easier to get everyone in the same room, at the same time, with no travelling issues to negotiate), to perceived improvements in the quality and efficiency of the meetings.
Specific findings

1. Improved participation from, and better inter-agency working with, partner organisations. Respondents told us, for example, that agencies engaged better due to having more time and flexibility, decisions were faster, and relationships improved, for example:

‘ … it improves the quality of relationships because you got the same faces able to go to the meetings on a pretty regular basis. So you get to know them better.’ (Female respondent, large, rural force).

“We've reduced the bureaucracy, so that's increased capacity within police resources and we've also found that the third sector organisations are much more much more supportive of this 'cause it's less impactive on their resources, very, very tight resource.” (Male respondent, small rural force).

2. Improved quality of meetings, in terms of participants being better prepared, other agencies playing more of a part (rather than being police-led), and an increased willingness to engage inside and outside of the meeting, for example:

"The quality of information is most definitely improved. And actually the input into each meetings improve so, so that is a win". (Female respondent, mid-sized, mixed force).

"…I found very, very focused people would only have 2, 3, 4, 5 minutes to talk about what was going on. They absolutely got straight to the to the crux of it. And people listened as well. So what came out of that for me was understanding each other better.."  (Female respondent, mid-sized, mixed force).
“Just a simple benefit is that if you're sitting in a in a meeting like this that you have your files available to you and you can just go and look something up, or you know or send that action, do that that email then and then there's no there's no waiting for that because we have so much more participation and better participation, people have more time, we get more information.” (Female respondent, mid-sized, mixed force)

3. Advantages for victims; for example:

“24 hours, max of 72 hours rather than 14 days, to deal with a case.” (Male respondent, small rural force).

“But you know the feedback that we've had on it is that can respond much quicker to victims in terms of putting support services in place” (Female respondent, large, urban force).

“The advantages are massive especially to victims and families, so they're getting a much quicker service. They're getting support quicker 'cause there's a requirement that actions will be completed on a weekly basis rather than, you know. There's almost on the monthly side. It was almost seven weeks before somebody might get some service, and by that point within their own life, the cycle would have moved on and they might not be interested in receiving that support.” (Male respondent, small rural force).

As one respondent pointedly stated:
"Any risk where we’re sitting waiting for a huddle of people for a week is, well, frankly it's it's outdated and well I was going to say negligent, but it's certainly it's not acceptable. If you've got children and victims in a situation that where they need support now, it should be done in a timely fashion. We should be responding at pace." (Female respondent, large, urban force).
Practice implications:

1. Where possible and practicable, moves towards the use of MS Teams (or the equivalent secure platform) for MARAC business continue.
2. That appropriate infrastructural IT support is provided to enable this to happen where it does not already exist for all partner agencies.
3. Importantly, where partner agencies are inhibited through lack of infrastructural IT systems, Police and Crime Commissioners are encouraged as a matter of urgency to fund the development of such systems as appropriate.
4. Depending on local force demands, MARACs meet at least weekly to ensure a timely, informed, and targeted response to high risk victims.
5. As far as possible, unless particular local situations prevent it the same MARAC practices should be adopted within each police force, and across all police forces.
6. That ongoing efforts to ensure the attendance of all relevant agencies are sustained.

Further information.

Working papers and policy recommendations all free to download are available here:

https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/law-and-social-justice/research/coronavirus-research/the-shadow-pandemic/working-papers/

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Thank you