



Derbyshire Safeguarding Adults Board

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Vulnerable Adult Risk Management (VARM)

Practice Guidance



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Supporting Documents

1. [VARM Policy;](#)
2. [VARM Meeting Record;](#)
3. [VARM What to Expect Leaflet.](#)

Guidance Summary

Criteria for a Vulnerable Adult Risk Management (VARM)

As agreed by the Derbyshire Safeguarding Adults Board, the agency identifying a risk(s) to the Adult will be the agency that leads and coordinates the VARM.

There may be cases where it is appropriate for the lead agency/chair to change during the process in order to promote the best outcomes for the individual. All relevant agencies involved in the VARM must be notified of any changes to the lead agency/chairing arrangements as soon as they occur.

Consent for holding a VARM should be obtained from the Adult whenever possible, and they should be encouraged to participate in the VARM process. However, a lack of consent does not prevent a VARM from taking place. Under common law a person may act to prevent serious harm from occurring if there is a necessity to do so.

In order to consider a person for a VARM meeting **all** the following criteria should apply:

- A person **must have capacity** to make decisions and choices regarding their life;
- There is a **risk of serious harm or death** by self-neglect, fire, deteriorating health condition, non-engagement with services or where an Adult is targeted by local community, is subjected to Hate Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour or sexual violence - and they do not meet the criteria for Safeguarding; Serious harm means death or injury, whether physical or psychological, which is life threatening and / or traumatic and which is viewed to be imminent or likely to occur in the future.
- There is a **potential risk to the health and safety of others in the community**. This could be due to fire risk, cuckooing, drug dealing, hate crime and other crimes committed which could make others feel unsafe in the area; environmental health concerns such as vermin, excess rubbish and unsanitary conditions and any other issue which could impact on the health and safety of neighbours, visitors, the wider community or professionals who need to enter the property to provide a service.
- There is a high level of **concern from partner agencies**.

Any agency can initiate a VARM meeting. The expectation is that, where appointed, the VARM champion/safeguarding lead within the organisation will exercise professional judgement when referring a case to the process.

The DSAB VARM administrator should be informed of all VARMS initiated via email - DerbyshireSAB@derbyshire.gov.uk

The VARM, 'What to Expect' Leaflet should be completed with the Adult or their advocate, and the VARM Meeting Record used by the lead agency to inform and invite partner agencies to a VARM Meeting. It will also be used to record risks, actions outcomes and reviews for the whole process.

Section 1

Invitation to Attend a VARM Meeting

The lead agency is responsible for arranging and chairing the VARM meeting and any subsequent review meetings. It is essential that attempts are made to include full participation of the Adult's views, whether these are given directly or through an advocate.

Think about any barriers that may impact on the Adult's ability to attend the meeting, for example:

- Venue accessibility;
- How the adult can be included in the meeting process;
- Are there any risks / concerns to consider?

The 'Working with You to Keep You Safe VARM Meeting What to Expect' Leaflet acts as the invite for the Adult or their advocate to attend the VARM meeting and provides an opportunity for them to give their views. It can be discussed with the Adult either at a face to face meeting prior to the VARM Meeting or posted to the Adult with a stamped addressed envelope for them to return their comments. The Chair should allow time to seek the Adult's views and ascertain whether the Adult will be attending the VARM meeting. It is important to make reasonable adjustments to support the individual to be able to attend their own VARM meeting. It is helpful if the VARM Leaflet is sent to the VARM Administrator to enable the VARM Working Group to learn from them and improve provision for service users.

The nominated Chair will complete '**Section 1**' of the VARM Meeting Record form, paying close attention to appropriate & meaningful information regarding professional concerns, the views of the Adult (where known), and the initial risk(s) identified. The Record should include:

- The Adult's history & current situation;
- The Adult's views & expectations;
- Work has already been undertaken to reach this point/ reduce the risk;
- Agencies which need to be invited / form part of the VARM process;
- An appropriate venue, date & time to hold the VARM meeting;
- The identified risk of serious harm or death;
- How the views of the person can be included. The person, or an appropriate Advocate, may attend.

It is the Chair's responsibility to circulate the VARM Meeting Record to partner agencies using a secure email account or secure delivery. It is recommended that 10 working days are allowed for partner agencies to prepare information and assess any risks prior to the VARM meeting.

The DSAB VARM administrator can be asked to take minutes at VARM meetings. Requests can be made via email DerbyshireSAB@derbyshire.gov.uk

Receiving an Invitation to Attend a VARM Meeting

Agencies receiving an invitation to attend a VARM meeting must:

- Gather information held within their organisation about the Adult;
- Take reasonable steps to gather further information if required;
- Liaise with the Chair or Lead Agency to confirm attendance or submit a detailed information report to support the VARM process.

Note: The Adult may attend the meeting, but consideration should be given to whether their full or partial attendance is necessary. and it is recognised that there may be some circumstances where it is not appropriate for the Adult to attend. For example, there may be occasions where full disclosure by professionals may increase the risks or impact on the Adult's ability to engage with the process, or where the Adult's presence may impede candid discussion between professionals. In such circumstances, a pre-meeting might be helpful, prior to the arrival of the Adult.

The Chair should consider the method of recording the minutes of the pre-meeting and each agency must give consideration to confidentiality and data protection issues.

Each agency should consider professional representation; ideally by someone with the appropriate knowledge and expertise in their field and the authority to make decisions on behalf of their agency.

Section 2

The VARM Meeting

The nominated Chair is responsible for chairing and coordinating the VARM meeting. 'Section 2' of the VARM Meeting Record Form provides an aide memoir for the Chair as to what needs to be covered in the meeting. The Chair is also responsible for completing Section 2 of the form.

Introductions The Chair will introduce all attendees, clarifying roles and the agencies represented. They will also introduce the Adult or their Advocate if they are in attendance. The chair will read out the VARM Information Sharing Confidentiality Statement, which makes specific reference to the legal basis for the information sharing in relation to VARM. The Chair will confirm any apologies received and whether a report has been submitted from the agency not in attendance.

These details will be recorded on the VARM Meeting Record Form.

Is the Adult present? Whilst efforts should be made to have the Adult present at the meeting, at times this may not be achievable or appropriate. The details of a representative/Advocate should be recorded, including the nature of the relationship to the Adult.

The Chair should consider the appropriateness of the representative/Advocate in attending the meeting. The representative/Advocate should be appointed or permitted attendance on the basis of 'best interests'.

N.B. The VARM meeting may highlight or raise sensitive, confidential information which may not ordinarily be accessible.

The Chair and those in attendance should consider the value of information sharing on a case-by-case basis, having careful regard to the context of the risk or cause for concern. For example, matters of fire risk may not require disclosure of the Adult's health needs or specific diagnoses. However, factors affecting the Adult's ability to escape fire (e.g. their mobility) may be relevant when considering risk reduction

Does the Adult understand the purpose of the meeting? All reasonable efforts should be made to explain the reasons for the meeting (i.e. professional concerns) to the Adult. This may be explained in writing; however, an additional verbal discussion might be helpful.

What is important to the Adult at risk/What is important for the Adult at risk? This section requires the Chair (and those attending) to provide a distinction on what is important to the Adult and factors which professionals feel contribute to the identified risks.

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It provides an opportunity for everyone present to indicate what they think it is important for the VARM process to achieve. This may reflect actions raised in the protection Action Plan. It also provides an opening to explore different, and potentially conflicting, points of view. Effort should be made to negotiate outcomes, but not at the expense of hazard/harm mitigation. For example, in the case of a hoarder, the Adult may want to keep belongings in their home that present a fire hazard. However, the objective of professionals might be to encourage de-cluttering (by regulatory intervention or otherwise).

Description of risks (including a risk rating): Set out the risks known to the group. It may be necessary to write a short explanation of the risk and the hazard to which the risk relates. The 'risk' may be harm from fire. The 'hazard' may relate to a dangerous electrical installation (electrical fire). For example:

- Risk of fire from old electrical installation;
- Risk of infection from poor hygiene and lack of washing facilities;
- Risk of scalding given excessively high water temperature;
- Risk of a fall given poor balance and the absence of a hand rail;
- Risk of malnourishment given difficulties purchasing food due to immobility and financial difficulties.

Rating the risk: Each specific risk should be rated by the most appropriately qualified attendee. The rating does not require complex calculation but should broadly reflect the likelihood of harm given the circumstances of the Adult.

If possible, the group should refer to any known guidance, codes of practice or evidence-base. However, risk rating research should not be necessary for this task.

Actions to reduce the risk: The Action Plan is a list of activities agreed during the meeting which may reduce the Adult's exposure to harm.

The extent to which risk is reduced will initially depend on the predictions (and professional expertise) of those attending the meeting, and whether the agreed actions are successfully achieved. For this reason, the impact of the actions listed must be evaluated by agencies present, and the need for any VARM Review Meeting considered.

The plan may include a diverse list of actions, some which directly reduce risk (e.g. installing a smoke alarm for fire hazards) and others that may seem less tangible (e.g. financial advice).

The meeting record should specify the individual/agency that has been tasked with an action and any anticipated completion or review dates.

Description of conflict identified: Conflict of opinion may arise for any number of reasons. This is an opportunity to describe the nature of the conflict and the persons/agencies involved. For example, a Fire Officer or Environmental Health Officer may demand the removal of materials from a hoarded property for the purpose of fire prevention and/or vermin management, but another attendee may feel that this is a violation of the lifestyle choices of the Adult.

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Legal Powers and Duties considered: Those in attendance should consider any legislation, policies or codes of practice which might be relevant to the case. Duties, with associated powers, should be identified and statutory interventions specified within the Action Plan.

Agencies may have discretionary powers which could be applied, and these should be recorded, where appropriate, even if not enacted. In all cases, any impact on the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 (e.g. Article 8 - the right to respect for private and family life) must be taken into account. This includes where a third party is affected directly or indirectly by the behaviour or life choices of the Adult.

There is an assumption that VARM Chairs will be aware of applicable legislation which may include:

- Human Rights Act 1998 – European Convention for Human Rights;
- Mental Capacity Act 2005;
- Care Act 2014;
- Mental Health Act 1983;
- Public Health Act 1936;
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System Regulations 2005;
- Environmental Protection Act 1990;
- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004;
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Outcome of the Meeting: The Chair should verbally summarise the recorded risks and agency actions identified. It is the responsibility of the individual agency to ensure agreed actions are completed within the timescale identified, and the impact on the identified risk is evaluated.

The Chair may task an action to an agency if they are absent or unable to attend. It remains the responsibility of the individual agency appointed, rather than the Chair, to complete such actions.

A decision may be made during the VARM that another pathway is more appropriate to manage the risks. Examples of these might be Care Act 2014, Mental Capacity Act 2005, Mental Health Act 1983 or any other statutory legislation. For example, those present may identify that the Adult meets the criteria for safeguarding procedures. In these cases, it may be necessary to close the VARM and conduct a meeting under Safeguarding procedures.

Where it is identified that the risks have been reduced or removed, a decision will be made that the VARM can be closed. This needs to be recorded in the 'Section 4' Closure of VARM part of the form.

Review Meeting Required: The Chair will decide whether a further meeting is required, and the timeframe for this to happen. It is more than likely that a Review Meeting will be required to record actions taken and evaluate the impact of these on the identified risks. The Chair will need to consider whether any other agencies could usefully contribute to a Review Meeting and invite them accordingly.

The Review Meeting may decide that the Adult no longer meets VARM criteria. In such cases, the



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VARM process should close and the decisions should be recorded appropriately in Section 4 of the form.

Following the VARM Meeting:

It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure that Section 2 of the VARM Meeting Record Form is completed accurately and circulated to invited agencies (whether in attendance or not), using secure email. Where a minute taker has formally recorded the meeting, the minutes should be included in the free text box within the Meeting Record.

The Chair must identify how information from the VARM will be shared with the Adult and should communicate details of any review meetings to the Adult or their Advocate using the guidance detailed in this document.

Section 3

VARM Review Meeting

The Chair responsible for the VARM Review Meeting should record updates in the 'Section 3' Update and Actions section of the VARM Meeting Record,

Agency Update: Each agency will provide an update on the impact of agreed actions taken and details of any outstanding actions. It is the responsibility of each of the attendees, and not the Chair, to follow up and complete actions assigned to them.

Additional actions: VARM attendees may identify appropriate actions in addition to those specified in previous meetings. Any additional actions that may be required should be recorded in this section, with details of the individual / agency responsible for the action and the agreed time scales. This section of the Record should not include outstanding actions.

The Chair will decide whether a further Review Meeting is required and make the necessary arrangements (if applicable). See guidance below on recording Closure of VARM.

The Chair will circulate the updated VARM Meeting Record form.

Section 4

Closure of VARM

The Chair should complete this section when it has been agreed that the VARM process can be closed.

Date of closure: This identifies the date that the VARM process concludes. This does not prohibit the re-opening of a VARM should it be necessary at a later point.

Reason for closure / update from Chair / Evaluation of Meeting: This gives the Chair the opportunity to summarise and conclude discussions and actions agreed, as well as any legislation applied, in reaching the conclusion of the VARM. VARM meetings are often complex by nature and any conflicting views, lack of engagement by the Adult, or other relevant factors should be detailed by the Chair. The Chair can also comment on shortfalls and triggers for re-referral into the process.

Where an Adult chooses to remain in a situation that places them at risk from identified harms this should be noted. The views of each agency in respect of the VARM closure and details of the risks which remain should be documented. It is recognised that it may not be possible to address all concerns/risks identified, but the role of VARM is to ensure that each agency has taken all reasonable steps to support the Adult to recognize and reduce risks of death and serious harm.

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Glossary

Acronym	Description
VARM	Vulnerable Adult Risk Management.
Risk	The term used to judge the likelihood of harm.
Adult	The person at risk of harm or death.
Advocate	A representative for the Adult.
Attendee	An appropriately appointed/invited professional representing an organisation at the meeting.

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