

A case management tool: Clare's Law app, Sarah's Law app and multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) app

The development of three apps to automate case management of the disclosure process and the administration of MARAC cases.

First published
30 July 2025

Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational Prevention
Topic	Child sexual exploitation and abuse Violence against women and girls Vulnerability and safeguarding
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Region	North East
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	June 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Offenders Victims Women

Aim

The initiative aims to:

- provide a repository of information for ease of access and improve workflow
- create a process that can keep pace with the rapidly expanding apps
- monitor the number of applications and their outcome
- monitor MARAC actions to ensure that they are appropriately allocated and actioned
- support the complaint resolution unit (CRU) by supervising the processes from beginning to end

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- improve compliance against targets set out by the Home Office
- improve performance in relation to applications by reducing the time taken to process applications in line with Home Office guidelines
- reduce the amount of time spent on administrative tasks and to increase time spent on service delivery
- improve access to key metrics around performance and progress including:
 - volume of applications

- progress data – how long to process stage by stage and allocation
- outcomes including decision making and rationale
- staff workload and progress
- identify delays and obstructions in the process

Description

Clare's Law and Sarah's Law

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare's Law, was introduced across all forces in England and Wales in March 2014. The scheme enables the police to share information with (potential) domestic abuse victims about their ex-partner or partner's previous abusive offending.

The Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme, also known as Sarah's Law, allows members of the public to register a child protection interest against an identified individual who has (potential) unsupervised access to a child or children.

Under both of these schemes, there is an obligation by police forces to follow procedures to ensure that any information is shared within 28 days from the initial application. Within Durham Constabulary this is managed by the CRU who previously used spreadsheets to manually input information. This process placed additional strain on already stretched resources and the timescale to turn around requests could exceed 28 days, meaning a delay in the identification and management of risk.

MARAC

A MARAC is a meeting where information on the highest-risk domestic abuse cases are shared with representatives from the police, child protection, probation services, health, independent domestic violence advocates (IDVAs) and housing practitioners. Within Durham Constabulary these meetings occur every Tuesday and Thursday. In the previous approach, prior to the meetings the force collate referrals from the high-risk police domestic abuse reports. For each case, CRU staff

conducted research using police records and information from partner agencies. Each case was managed using shared folders containing the information obtained from the research. This meant that users were having to switch between forms and folders for information relating to individual cases which could not be easily accessed for auditing and performance purposes. During the meetings an approach was agreed for each case with various actions being allocated out to individuals or agencies.

Clare's Law, Sarah's Law and MARAC app

Durham Constabulary worked with Microsoft partners Robiquity to develop three apps using Power Platform. The Clare's Law and Sarah's Law apps fit into existing business processes where applications for disclosure are triaged initially by the control room following contact either by telephone or via the force website. The triage exists to determine whether there is any immediate risk to any person that requires faster or more positive action.

If the application is not deemed to be urgent an incident log is created and shared with CRU. It is then reviewed to ensure that it appears to meet the criteria for disclosure under the schemes and is recorded in the app. The record provides a repository for all the information generated at each stage of the process. Once recorded in the app, the information enters the workflow and is managed by a CRU supervisor. Research is conducted by the CRU and the relevant information is attached to the record. It is then reviewed by another member of the CRU who will decide and record how much or whether any information can be shared with the enquirer. If the force are unable to share information, the applicant is informed, and the record is closed. Where information can be shared, the app creates a disclosure document and the record is allocated to a domestic abuse innovation officer or safeguarding investigator. They will then provide the disclosure and conduct an appropriate risk assessment and safety plan for the applicant. Once disclosure is completed, the record is closed in the app.

A dashboard enables the force to see each case at each stage of the process to ensure that performance can be measured against Home Office guidance. This has proven to be effective for day-to-day supervision and wider audit and inspection purposes.

The MARAC app for information to be inputted and managed centrally, rather than using several forms and folders. Once inputted rationale around suitability for the MARAC referral can be recorded, research can be added, meeting notes and actions can be viewed for accountability.

The app will also notify users of actions. The dashboard is capable of tracking current outstanding work and actions.

All three apps are easy to use with minimal training required. Training is managed by the CRU team to ensure new users are quickly on boarded.

Funding

£60,000 was awarded by the County Durham Serious Violence Strategic Board to Durham Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The grant initially focused on the apps for Sarah's Law and MARAC but was extended to include Clare's Law.

Overall impact

Due to the complexity of the project process and the number of people involved, a formal evaluation could not be conducted. However, estimates and observations of the overall impact have been collected based on feedback from users of the apps and descriptive figures, such as case numbers and average disclosure times.

- Performance against the Home Office guidance has improved. Previously figures show that applications could take up to 64 days to process. Since the apps have been introduced this has reduced to 14 days for Clare's Law and 10 days for Sarah's Law.
- Although the time saved varies by case complexity, users of the apps report a reduction in time spent handling cases. It is estimated that based on current demand, the apps have provided an annual saving of approximately 660 hours.
- In the second half of 2024 there has been a significant increase in the number of Clare's Law and Sarah's Law apps due to increased accessibility due to changes in the force website and significant national publicity of the schemes. Similarly, there has been a focus on pushing more cases through MARAC. The app has allowed the CRU to keep pace with these increases in demand which is a clear demonstration of the efficiencies the apps have provided.
- The workflow is supervised by the CRU supervisor who has stated:

"Since the introduction of the apps, I have seen a significant improvement in the number of disclosures we are completing within the 28-day timescales. The apps make it so much easier to see exactly what stage an application is at, who it is allocated to and how many days it is at.

You can see exactly what is happening with each application by just a click of a button. The system is extremely user friendly and has had such a positive impact across our team and the process a whole."

Learning

- The apps are easy to access for those granted permission and is administrated by CRU management meaning that users can be added and removed as required.
- The design of the apps allows for applications and cases to be processed in a linear fashion clearly showing when each stage is complete and allowing allocation to the appropriate resource to complete the next stage. Data entry is kept to a minimum.
- The Robiquity team spent a considerable amount of time with front line practitioners and managers to understand the current processes, challenges and requirements. The sound understanding developed is central to the delivery of an effective product.
- The Robiquity work has been so well received that work is ongoing to implement further solutions in other business areas.
- Robiquity also used some of the time to develop the skills of in-house power app development team.
- One key area of focuses has been agreeing this with the business leads and supplier to prevent any misunderstanding or requests outside of that scope which may hinder progress. In this case, scope was exceeded however it did not impact upon delivery time, quality of project relationships.

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