

West Yorkshire Finding Independence Evaluation

December 2015 Briefing Paper

December 2015

Contents

Summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. MARB Research.....	1
3. Attendance and Purpose	1
4. Format and Nature of Meeting	4
5. Local Context.....	5
6. Effectiveness of the MARB	6
7. Impact of the MARB.....	7
8. Other Issues.....	10

Summary

This briefing paper summarises the key messages from research which has examined the operation and effectiveness of the Multi-Agency Review Boards (MARBs). The MARBs play a pivotal role in facilitating multi-agency case conferencing; improving the co-ordination of multiple service providers and ensuring services are delivered to clients in a personalised and flexible fashion. All MARBs comprised a range of service providers and commissioners and have an operational focus. The emphasis is on identifying cases for navigation and resolving difficulties relating to existing cases. Attendees value discussing and sharing intelligence about individual cases. Insufficient mental health representation has been an issue for some. Their presence in Wakefield and Bradford has been highly valued because it has furnished practitioners with detailed information on the nature and severity of presenting mental health issues.

The MARBs have been instrumental in facilitating service flex, getting providers to reconsider working with those previously banned from provision and refocussing support on the most vulnerable. There is much less evidence of impacts on organisational cultures and commissioning practices. Significant local differences may determine their ability to drive wider change. The MARB represents a new departure in some areas such as Calderdale whereas there was a strong pre-existing commitment to joint working and similar multi-agency panels in Leeds and Bradford. Consequently, it has been important to establish the legitimacy of WY-FI and the MARB in Leeds by conveying a clear message that it would 'add value' and not duplicate the work of others. The innovative nature of the intervention in Calderdale coupled with a less complicated landscape of delivery and the seniority of attendees may be more conducive to driving change in both organisational cultures and commissioning practices. MARBs are resource intensive and the long-term sustainability of the approach will depend on whether there are significant mutual benefits for partners beyond sharing intelligence about cases. It is in this context that MARB partners in Bradford have provided free training on topics such as legal highs and mental health.

1. Introduction

The West Yorkshire Finding Independence (WY-FI) project is part of the Big Lottery Fund's Fulfilling Lives programme which aims to improve the stability, confidence and capability of people with multiple and complex needs to lead better lives as a result of timely, supportive and co-ordinated services. The intention is that beneficiaries spend less time in prison, reduce drug abuse, are in stable accommodation and have better mental health. £112 million has been invested in 12 projects over an eight year period. Each has a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) lead organisation with a strong track record of supporting those with multiple and complex needs.

DISC is the lead organisation for the West Yorkshire Finding Independence (WY-FI) project and has been awarded nearly £10 million to improve partnership working and ultimately achieve a 'systems change' in the way in which people with multiple and complex need are supported. This third briefing paper synthesises the key issues emerging from a study of the operation of the Multi-Agency Review Boards (MARBs).

2. MARB Research

MARBs play a pivotal role in facilitating multi-agency case conferencing; improving the co-ordination of multiple service providers and ensuring services are delivered to clients in a personalised and flexible fashion. The present research sought to tease out differences in the operation and effectiveness of the five MARBs which cover very different landscapes of delivery. A key focus was to explore their ability to drive wider changes in the organisational cultures of service providers and commissioning practices.

The research has combined the observation of the operation of each MARB to gain a fuller understanding of how they function together with face-to-face and telephone interviews with the MARB Chair and Lead Navigators. It should be noted that it was not possible to conduct the observation of the Wakefield MARB within the timescales of this report.

3. Attendance and Purpose

The MARB brings together key statutory and voluntary sector organisations. Table 1 summarises the players in each area.

Table 1: Key partners

District	Partners
Bradford	Housing Options, a local women's Service, Arch (substance misuse service), Horton Housing (social housing provider), Probation, the Police (IOM), Bevan House Homeless Team, navigators and representatives from mental health services.
Calderdale	Housing Options, the commissioner of Drug and Alcohol services, the commissioner of Housing Support, the chair of Foundation UK (who lead delivery of WY-FI in Calderdale), the Homelessness Service manager, a large social housing provider (Pennine Housing), the Community Rehabilitation Company and West Yorkshire Police Integrated Offender Management Team.
Kirklees	Local authority housing solutions, the commissioner of Supporting People; Probation; mental health (assertive outreach team); WY-FI Lead Navigator; two police officers (PC and sergeant); GP; Huddersfield Mission (support for vulnerable people); Lifeline.
Leeds	Housing Options (Leeds City Council), CRI, Forward Leeds (alcohol and drug service), Foundations (local charity), St Anne's (local charity), Leeds City Council (Strategy and Commissioning), WY-FI Navigators, WY-FI male engagement worker at HMP Leeds, West Yorkshire Police, Mental Health Crisis Team and Probation.
Wakefield	Vulnerable Adult housing provider, Probation, Police, mental health (South West Yorkshire NHS), Navigators, Local Rent Deposit Scheme, substance misuse service provider (Turning Point).

Bradford

The MARB is becoming increasingly effective as a core of the most committed agencies has been established. Some smaller CVS organisations have chosen not to engage because they were deemed to be *'insular and overly protective over clients'*. Nevertheless, very good engagement from mental health services has been secured largely due to positive appraisal of the intervention. The MARB fulfils a largely operational role in terms of discussing whether clients should be accepted to pre-navigation or navigation; and providing an up-date on service users currently in navigation.

Calderdale

Most of the attendees had previously worked together usually on a one-to-one basis. However, it was reported that the MARB had helped to **strengthen these relationships** by bringing services together as a panel on a regular basis. It also provides a **hitherto unavailable forum** for agencies to work closely together to support individuals with multiple and complex needs. Most of the key partners are represented with the notable exception:

- A **mental health representative** which was regrettable given the prominence of mental health issues in clients' lives and the lack of sufficient dual diagnosis services. This was variously ascribed to organisational and staff changes as well as general pressures on an already overstretched service. However, a meeting has been arranged between Foundation UK and mental health services to address this issue.

Kirklees

'Teething problems' were initially experienced getting the right people involved and there was **no mental health representative** for a considerable period. However, all key agencies are now represented at the MARB. As opposed to being concerned simply with information exchange and updates, the Kirklees MARB is intended to be a forum for agencies to work together to creatively find solutions and plan support for clients.

The format of the MARB has recently been changed. Previously navigators would bring cases to gain approval for them being admitted to the caseload. However, since MARB attendees trusted the professional judgement of navigators this was deemed to be an inefficient use of time. It was, therefore, decided that only new referrals and cases where there are particular concerns that require an input from a range of agencies would be discussed.

Leeds

The meetings have an **operational** rather than a strategic focus. In each meeting a small number of cases are highlighted for discussion where there is a concern or issue. Another purpose was to formally approve clients for case management. Referrals are no longer discussed because the recent rise in the number of referrals and navigators makes this impractical. Meetings take place monthly and most of the key partners are represented with the following exceptions:

- There is a need to get the **police representative** better involved following the retirement of the previous incumbent.
- For the first six months the MARB had no **mental health representative** but the mental health crisis team now attend. Although one interviewee felt that an additional mental health input beyond the crisis team would be helpful. There have been conversations with a psychologist who is likely to join the MARB in the near future.

Wakefield

The MARB meetings have an operational focus prioritising the management of the navigator caseload and facilitating service flex. Key activities include: discussion of new cases for the navigation caseload; review of existing cases; and discussion of support plans. The meetings take place monthly but may be moved to a bi-monthly basis partly because of the onerous demands that this currently places on navigator time. Most of the key partners are represented with the following exception:

- Turning Point is the **substance misuse provider** for Wakefield but rarely attend. They have been reluctant to sign the Information Sharing Agreement and were described as '*very territorial*'. Nevertheless, co-location has meant that this has not compromised the ability of the MARB to achieve service flex.

4. Format and Nature of Meeting

The observations allowed the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the various ways that MARBs operated:

Bradford

The MARB considered whether to progress four cases from pre-navigation to navigation. A navigator presented each case by detailing the referral agency, clients' history, presenting issues and the extent to which the client meets the four WY-FI needs. A discussion was then opened up to the floor. The chair concluded the discussion by asking if the case should be accepted onto navigation but played a leading role in the final decision. Discussion of each case lasted approximately 10-15 minutes. The MARB also fulfilled two further functions:

- A forum to discuss options for meeting clients **specific needs** e.g. around housing.
- As an **'early warning system'** to raise issues about any future changes of circumstance. For example, one agency voiced concerns about an ex-partner being released from prison. The police officer present offered to check police records to confirm the release date.

Calderdale

The Lead Navigator viewed the MARB as a means of **identifying cases to go into navigation** and resolving **operational issues** relating to existing cases. The Chair also felt that it played an important **strategic function** by engaging senior representatives and commissioners from services with the power and influence to bring about service flex and ultimately systems change.

Kirklees

Attendees are sent a client list about a week before the MARB so that they are prepared. The nature of the meeting was very friendly with minimal input from the chair. The focus was on discussing priority cases i.e. where something had happened or there was a particular concern. The discussion of each case usually lasted about 10-15 minutes. Each agency provided their perspective on each case before a course of action was agreed. On a number of occasions plans of action were jointly decided between two or more agencies. Furthermore, the **police played a fuller role** providing information on potential new referrals (type of offences committed, health issues; evidence on alcohol/drug use etc.).

Leeds

A **relaxed and friendly atmosphere** characterised the Leeds MARB. There was a similar format for each case discussed. The lead navigator gave a **short presentation** of relevant information on a case. The chair then asked follow-up or clarifying questions and then a general discussion took place among those participants who had some information about the client. Much of the discussion was about **information exchange** e.g. knowledge about a persons' recent behaviour/actions/whereabouts etc. The chair invited comment and discussion by asking questions such as: *'What's the trigger?' 'Can we connect anything to that?' 'Is there any way we can keep her safe?'* He would then provide an overview of the case and turn this into a practical action point.

5. Local Context

The MARBs cover very different **landscapes of service delivery**. Table 2 summarises some of the most salient differences. The MARB represents an innovation in some areas such as Calderdale whereas there was a pre-existing commitment to the approach and multi-agency panels in areas such as Bradford and Leeds. Consequently, it has been necessary to establish the legitimacy of WY-FI in Leeds by conveying messages to key stakeholders that the MARB would not 'tread on the toes of others' but rather would 'add value' to existing initiatives. Whereas in Bradford the poor performance of existing multi-agency panels meant that this was less of an issue. Calderdale MARB was valued as a means of bringing agencies together and underlining messages about the need to work holistically to address client needs.

Table 2: Features of the local context

District	Key Features
Bradford	<p>A commissioner is chair of the MARB which has helped to secure active engagement of service providers.</p> <p>The MARB is one of a number of multi-agency panels in the city but many are perceived to be not working well.</p> <p>There is a dual diagnosis service that has not engaged with the MARB.</p> <p>Territoriality is an issue especially with some smaller CVS organisations.</p> <p>Adequate support services (with the possible exception of housing for those with most entrenched problems) but a tradition of 'silo working' which means clients fall through the gaps.</p>
Calderdale	<p>The MARB provides a hitherto unavailable forum for agencies to work together.</p> <p>There are not enough services to support beneficiaries.</p> <p>The seniority of staff means that it is an effective forum for resolving case issues.</p> <p>Providers are made aware of the multiplicity of client needs which allows them to be viewed holistically.</p>
Kirklees	<p>Pre-existing partnership working in Huddersfield e.g. MARAC, high intensity user group and integrated offender management team.</p> <p>The geography of Kirklees (two main economic centres with a significant rural hinterland) might make systems change more difficult.</p> <p>Some territoriality and defensiveness expressed by existing service providers towards WY-FI: <i>'What makes you think you can do what we've been unable to do?'</i></p> <p>Some key workers from other agencies were unwilling to share client information.</p> <p>A lack of housing for people being released from prison was cited as a key issue.</p>
Leeds	<p>Pre-existing commitment to joint working which provides 'a good foundation for this to happen'.</p> <p>Established when similar multi-agency panels were perceived to be not functioning well.</p> <p>A clear message was conveyed that the MARB was going to 'add value' and not duplicate the work of others.</p> <p>Leeds is committed to systems change and upscaling the voluntary sector.</p> <p>WY-FI is strategically well positioned e.g. it is part of the dual diagnosis strategy.</p>
Wakefield	<p>Co-location of staff from many of the main service providers has helped partnership working.</p> <p>WY-FI is a development of the dual diagnosis service.</p> <p>The BME provider infrastructure is less well developed than some other districts. This means that accessing translation services can be difficult.</p> <p>Individuals in outlying communities are reported to be reluctant to travel to access services.</p>

6. Effectiveness of the MARB

The MARBs are now well established and appear to be working well:

Bradford

The MARB is effective in terms of facilitating genuine partnership working between key local service providers. Attendees were reported to feel a sense of **ownership**. Nevertheless, some partners such as Bridge (the lead delivery partner), Mental Health, Arch (substance misuse) and criminal justice services are more committed. There are mutual benefits for partners beyond sharing intelligence about clients. MARB partners have, for example, also exchanged **free training** to enhance their respective skills. Bridge have trained mental health representatives about legal highs and received mental health training in return.

Calderdale

The MARB had helped to **raise the profile of WY-FI** and **overcome initial uncertainties** about the project. Agencies **worked well together** and relationships were being **strengthened**. The **seniority of staff** was instrumental in resolving issues relating to cases. This meant that attendees could ensure that any actions arising from the MARB were swiftly acted upon. It plays an important role in bringing agencies together to support individuals and enables clients' circumstances to be seen **holistically**. This prevents needs being overlooked especially where clients are referred to a service that can deal with only one of the presenting issues. Nevertheless, effectiveness has been compromised by the manager for the Homeless Service who refuses to countenance that there are rough sleepers in Calderdale other than through their own choice. This has implications for the development of an adequate service for rough sleepers.

Kirklees

The MARB appears to be functioning well. The Chair is conscious that attendance entails a significant cost to attendees and is careful to ensure that it is worthwhile. A front-line officer from the assertive outreach team attends the MARB. However, a key interviewee expressed reservations about whether discussions were transmitted upwards because the representative **lacks the necessary strategic influence**. A **GP** from a surgery caring for those who have difficulties accessing mainstream health services (the homeless, sex workers etc.) has started attending and this is viewed as being very beneficial. Among other things, it has allowed the GP to share information with the **police representative** which would not have happened without the MARB.

Leeds

There was a perception that the MARB is successful. *'It feels good, people want to attend and they get something out of it.'* The chair sought to create a working environment that is conducive to collaboration and **avoids potential points of tension**. This translated into avoiding using the meeting to make decisions about whether to accept clients for navigation. *'The last thing I want is people sitting there, asking them to make a judgement with limited information.'* The chair sought to create an atmosphere where: *'They are able to refuse if they want to but I create a culture where it's not expected and it doesn't happen often'*. The MARB does try to **link in with other meetings**. A navigator fed back details of a discussion in a city strategy

meeting and the chair reported discussions that had taken place in the WY-FI local meeting.

Wakefield

The MARB appears to be highly successful at facilitating partnership working and service flex. Getting the right people around the table has been crucial as has the **co-location** of services in Grosvenor House. The **police** and **probation** have played particularly strong roles. The former have been invaluable at sharing intelligence regarding the potential risk to staff posed by some beneficiaries; screening some referrals out of the process and even accompanying navigators on some appointments. The police representative has recently left but his replacement was described as equally supportive. **Mental health services** have played a full role and have been able to provide background information regarding mental health conditions and signpost staff to available sources of help.

MARBs are resource intensive but may have to become permanent if WY-FI is to have a lasting legacy. Yet the long-term **sustainability** of the MARBs was questioned. Some interviewees argued that the MARBs may be sustainable because the model is popular and has generated significant buy-in. However, this will be determined by local stakeholder perceptions of their utility and should not be taken for granted. In contrast, some questioned whether there would be a continuing need for the MARB. It was, for example, suggested that the conversations that currently take place around the table could, in time, happen directly between key individuals. However, this may be undermined by the constant changes in the service landscape and key personnel.

7. Impact of the MARB

The MARBs have been instrumental in facilitating service flex; getting some providers to reconsider working with those previously banned from provision; and refocussing support on the most vulnerable (see Table 3). There is less evidence that this is having an impact on organisational cultures or commissioning practices. Although the indications are that the innovative nature of the intervention in Calderdale coupled with a less complicated landscape of delivery and the seniority of attendees may be more conducive to driving wider changes.

Table 3: Examples of service flex

District	Examples of service flex
Bradford	<p>Housing Options provide assessments in prison; allowed WY-FI to drop into the services; and agreeing to see clients who had been barred in order to discuss Housing Benefit claims as long as the navigator is present. This has transformed the opportunities for some: <i>'some individuals who have been locked up for 20 years are now getting housing'</i>.</p> <p>Mental health services have assessed clients pre-release despite them missing previous appointments that would have led the service to stop working with the individual. They have also provided advice on how to work with, and what support exists for clients that present mental health issues that are not severe enough to receive mental health service support.</p> <p>A willingness of mental health services to provide informal outreach services e.g. in cafes, homes etc.</p>
Calderdale	<p>Housing Options providing bonds to tenants who had been evicted because of anti-social behaviour to enable them to secure another property with a different provider. Previously, evicted tenants would not have been given this opportunity and would usually have had to present as homeless to get temporary accommodation.</p> <p>A social housing provider has agreed that tenants who lose tenancies due to anti-social behaviour will be given another chance after six months if they prove responsible tenants in private rented accommodation. In the past, they would have not taken the risk of housing this tenant again. It should also be borne in mind that social housing offers more security and better quality accommodation. <i>'Having your own one-bed flat with your own front door provides more opportunity to change your life.'</i></p> <p>A recovery support agency agreed to re-engage with a chaotic heroin user who had missed multiple appointments in order to help them attend a GP appointment to get their script. This may mean that services are more understanding of, and responsive to, client needs.</p> <p>The offender service has agreed to waive the usual 12 month limit on support for WY-FI clients. This is vital because 12 months is insufficient time to work with the most chaotic individuals as it may take all that time to build a relationship and stabilise clients by attending to housing and welfare needs. In the past, this meant that the service withdrew at precisely the point when the client was ready to benefit from the intervention.</p>
Kirklees	<p>Probation make an allowance when people have breached if they are WY-FI participants.</p> <p>WY-FI clients can access a GP appointment quickly or will 'red flag' them if necessary.</p> <p>People have been placed into temporary accommodation when they might not strictly meet the necessary criteria.</p> <p>The commissioner has ensured that where funding requirements prevent people being supported have been sidestepped. For example, clients are not supposed to be working with two similar projects funded through Supporting People.</p> <p>The Police have exercised some flexibility with regard to 'disruption visits' if individuals are working well with WY-FI.</p>
Leeds	<p>Probation now give participants more time before they are recalled. A woman was referred into a special programme for prolific offenders leaving prison who did not formally qualify which gave her support when she was particularly vulnerable.</p> <p>Another service provider had previously said that they would never work with some individuals again but have done so with the support of WY-FI.</p>
Wakefield	<p>Probation are more reluctant to breach individuals if they miss appointments.</p> <p>A Vulnerable Adult hostel has reduced the rent for beneficiaries on benefits from £85 per fortnight to £30.</p> <p>GPs are more understanding of beneficiaries missing appointments and are more reluctant to strike them off.</p>

A range of other impacts were identified:

Bradford

The MARB has reduced the number of multi-agency panels working in the city as less effective ones have been subsumed. This has reduced duplication, increased effectiveness and prevented staff being overburdened. Partnership working has been facilitated through regular face-to-face contact which builds trust and provides a foundation for effective joint working. This has also helped to dispel initial suspicions that WY-FI would simply take clients away from existing services. The MARB may change **organisational cultures** as examples of flex become routine, and services become more attuned to working with those with multiple and complex needs. Local service providers were reported to be looking at policies as a result of the MARB- although specific examples were not given.

Calderdale

The MARB was effective in giving service users '**another chance**'. It also provides valuable space to discuss individual cases which helps service providers better understand **client histories** and how presenting issues have developed. '*Services often don't know what's gone on in the past. I can give the whole picture, it's not just looking at individuals behaviour*'. Some were reported to be more willing to work with chaotic individuals. The strategic focus of the MARB and the seniority of attendees facilitated **organisational change** because: '*these are the people who will change organisation cultures and commissioning*'. This is also starting to benefit non-WY-FI clients. Housing Options now show greater empathy and flexibility for all individuals with more entrenched problems.

The MARB has helped service providers to **refocus on supporting the most vulnerable clients**. Delivering contracts within a target-driven environment can lead to 'cherry picking'. The MARB does not apply the same pressures and this allows providers more time to deal with complicated cases. It also provides a safe space for asking commissioners for more support. This point was also made in Leeds. More broadly, the Calderdale Chair observed that WY-FI felt like '*a breath of fresh air*' as it removed the competitive pressures for securing contracts that sometimes makes collaborative working difficult. '**System change**' might happen as one of the local commissioners has raised the possibility of embedding the model in future contracts. The expectation would be that organisations delivering services funded by the Council would convene multi-agency panels to discuss cases and promote joined-up working.

Kirklees

The MARB is not limited to providing a forum for information exchange but allows agencies to work together to find solutions and plan support. It was pointed out that if cases were straightforward there would be no need for the MARB. A significant amount of groundwork had been undertaken with local service providers to overcome **territorial behaviour**. It had been necessary to convey the message that WY-FI will not poach clients but would help participants engage better with existing service providers. Interviewees reported that it was deemed unrealistic to expect the MARB to have any impact on **organisational cultures** or systems change at this juncture.

Leeds

A primary role of the MARB is to encourage providers to flex their services and having a local authority commissioner around the table was viewed as a pre-requisite. Both

interviewees could point to instances of **system flex** with regard to how agencies amend their criteria to accommodate the needs of clients. An interviewee reported that: *'Lots of really good stuff happens'*. The MARB may be starting to have an impact on **organisational cultures**. However, this was primarily in terms of getting providers to reconsider working with those banned from existing provision and being willing to exercise flexibility. A key interviewee argued that the ability to gain a better understanding of service user needs and offer creative solutions for these individuals was just as important as effecting 'systems change'. *'How we interpret people's stories and offer solutions'*.

Wakefield

Service providers are working well together and sharing information about beneficiaries. WY-FI has been highly effective at getting service providers to flex in order to better meet the needs of beneficiaries. This was reported to be hugely beneficial for individuals. Nevertheless, practice has underlined a number of points:

- The process of changing entrenched patterns of behaviour is a **long-term process**. The current model is hugely demanding in terms of the experience, skills and time of navigators.
- Practice often needs to go beyond the individual beneficiary to include **family & friends** in order to effect lasting behaviour change.
- For some the gains might appear to be **modest** e.g. keeping individuals out of prison for a few months longer or slightly fewer visits to A&E.
- The scope for effecting wider changes in organisational culture might be limited. The view was expressed that system flex was benefitting individuals but service changes were not being **routinised** and thus had little impact on **organisational cultures**.

8. Other Issues

Interviewees highlighted a range of wider issues:

- In Leeds the view was expressed that DISC have conveyed a message that all of the localities need to be operating in a similar sort of way. This was contested with interviewees arguing that they need to be different. In addition, the emotionally demanding nature of the navigators work meant that the project could utilise more clinical support.
- It had proved difficult to replace a navigator and recruit an administrator in Kirklees. The Locality Group was also not operating effectively and that consequently some functions had transferred to the MARB. Some disquiet was also expressed about the paperwork associated with the navigation process which can be difficult to complete within the specified time frames. Assessment/paperwork fatigue was also an issue for some participants.
- Year two targets were reported to be too high in Bradford and Kirklees given how intensively the project has had to work with individual clients. The navigator team are highly experienced and the view was expressed that the role is not suitable for someone to progress directly through the service user-peer mentor- trainee route.
- Wakefield interviewees expressed some disquiet about the perceived lack of BME beneficiaries. Some doubt was also expressed about the long-term sustainability

of such a resource intensive approach to meeting the needs of those with multiple and complex needs.