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# Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference

DI Ronan McManus – MARAC Chair

Hazel North Stephens – MARAC Coordinator

## What is MARAC?

- A meeting that facilitates a multi agency strategic response to cases where domestic abuse victims have been identified at high risk of serious harm or homicide.
- The MARAC is attended by representatives from a range of agencies including police, health, child protection, housing, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), probation, mental health and substance misuse and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- At the heart of a MARAC is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim to be able to identify and manage the risks, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety

# Aims of MARAC

- To reduce the risk to high risk victims of domestic violence and abuse.
- To share relevant information to increase the safety, health and well-being of victims, adults and their children.
- Make links with other public protection arrangements in relation to children, perpetrators and vulnerable adults
- Determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community.
- Reduce repeat victimisation
- Improve agency accountability
- Improve support for and the safety of staff involved in high risk domestic abuse cases

## The need for a Multi Agency Approach

- Within the context of domestic abuse it is recognised that no one partner holds all the information required to effectively assess the needs of victims and their children, or to fully assess the risk of serious harm of murder to victims.
- The responsibility to take appropriate action rests with individual agencies; it is not transferred to the MARAC.
- Agencies should **not** wait until a case has been discussed at MARAC before taking necessary action or giving advice or access to services. It would be far more relevant for a victim to receive help prior to the meeting and information regarding this brought to MARAC.
- MARAC should not be used as a tool to escalate cases through the system, whether it is housing, social care assessments or other services – this can be done outside of the MARAC.

## Core Agencies

- Havering borough police (Chair the meeting)
- Probation (NPS & CRC)
- Health service representatives from mental health, school nurses, health visitors and midwives
- Community Safety team
- Havering Women's Aid
- Victim Support IDVA Service
- Housing Services
- Registered Social Landlords - Family Mosaic
- CYPS
- MASH
- Safeguarding Adults
- Early Help Service
- Attendance Behaviour & Education
- Drug & Alcohol Services
- YOS

## The role of the MARAC Representative

- All participating core agencies should have a named MARAC representative who should be of an appropriate level of seniority to commit to actions on behalf of their agency. Consistency of attendance is strongly encouraged, as it will reinforce and aid in developing practical working relationships.
- The MARAC representative is the key link between the MARAC and their agency and acts as a single point of contact (SPOC) for relevant advice to that agency about the MARAC.
- New MARAC representatives should receive a copy of the MARAC toolkit, referral form and is invited to join the Domestic Violence Champions Network as coordinated by Community Safety.

# Identifying Cases

- An underpinning principle of MARAC is that any agency – including those working with perpetrators of abuse) can and should identify and refer high risk cases to the MARAC.
- Agencies are encouraged to use direct questioning to encourage disclosure. The MARAC will take referrals for victims aged 16 and over in an intimate partner relationship.
- Cases where an adult parent meets the threshold for MARAC but where the perpetrator is a child or young person can also be referred to the MARAC
- Cases of mutual violence i.e. relationships where both parties present as the victim and the perpetrator at different times, can also be referred if one of both parties is identified as being at high risk.
- Agencies should follow their own procedures for screening cases of domestic abuse and the subsequent risk assessment using the SafeLives (previously CAADA) DASH RIC and those that are identified as high risk should be referred forward to the MARAC process by completion and submission of a MARAC referral form

# Thresholds

- **Visible High Risk:**  
The stated number of yes ticks on the DASH RIC is met. The current threshold for referral to MARAC is 14 ticks on the RIC.
- **Potential Escalation:**  
The number of police callouts to the victim as a result of domestic violence in the past 12 months. This criterion can be used to identify cases where there is not a positive identification of risk factors but where the abuse appears to be escalating and where it is appropriate to assess the situation more fully by sharing information at MARAC. SafeLives guidance suggests 3 or more incidents within 12 months.
- **Professional Judgement:**  
If a professional has serious concerns about a victim's situation they should refer the case to MARAC. There will be occasions where the particular context of a case gives rise to serious concerns even if the victim has been unable to disclose the information that might highlight their risk more clearly. Cases can be referred with less than 14 ticks on the basis of professional judgement where the practitioner is aware of additional information about the victim and their circumstances which indicates high risk. In addition, high risk "right to know" and "right to ask" disclosures under the Domestic Violence disclosure scheme (Clare's Law) will be automatically regarded as MARAC cases.
- **Repeat Referral:**
- Where a case has been referred to any MARAC in the last 12 months and a new incident, which would constitute criminal behaviour, has been reported to any agency, between the same two people.

## Non MARAC Cases

Cases should not be referred to MARAC if:

- There is no visible high risk from the RIC or professional judgement
- In order to get access to an IDVA
- To provide evidence to access Housing moves (without other circumstances)
- To signpost to other services.

Where the case does not meet the risk threshold and criteria for referral to MARAC, support should be sought from local domestic abuse services.

It is important that actions are not delayed for MARAC sign-off, many if not most actions can be completed before a case comes to MARAC.

## Referral Procedure

- If possible, complete the DASH RIC - Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment Risk Identification Checklist.
- Before making the referral, the practitioner should discuss the case with their line manager, supervisor or MARAC representative and consider what immediate actions the agency needs to undertake to support the victim and their children, and increase their safety. This may include contacting the police
- Complete the MARAC referral form **fully** including reference to the number of ticks on the SafeLives DASH and an explanation of the reasons for referring on professional judgement if the 14 tick threshold has not been met.
- Where the case involves HBV, the referrer should identify who the victim feels it safe and not safe to talk to.
- Send the MARAC referral form to the email address on the form

# Consent

- The referring agency should, where appropriate, discuss their concerns with the victim and seek to obtain their consent to share information with other agencies represented at MARAC and this should be recorded on the MARAC referral form.
- The key focus at each MARAC meeting should be the victim. It is therefore desirable that the victim consents to the MARAC process and as such it is vital that agencies can explain the role and purpose of MARAC in such a way that consent is encouraged.
- However, the role of the MARAC is to address high risk cases of domestic abuse where a risk or death or serious harm has been identified. Therefore it is not a requirement that consent is obtained and cases should still be referred where it has been withheld

## Victim Contact before MARAC

- All high risk victims referred to the MARAC are offered the support of an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA).
- IDVAs work with the high risk victims referred by agencies, providing advice and support to enable them to access a range of legal and non-legal services and resources.
- IDVAs will participate in the MARAC framework by attending MARAC meetings, participating in discussions at meetings on behalf of the victims and follow up on any actions agreed by the MARAC partners in relation to any specific service user.
- A victim can decline the services of an IDVA . In these instances the referring agency will then remain responsible for presenting the views of the victim and reporting back to them following the meeting.

# The Meeting

The MARACs are chaired by DI Ronan McManus or an agreed deputy

The role of the chair is:

- To ensure risks are highlighted within the meeting with appropriate measures put in place to manage or mitigate those risks through the MARAC action plan.
- To effectively chair MARAC meetings and drive forward action on outstanding items.
- To ensure the efficient running of the MARAC meeting, including keeping to time overall and by case i.e. max 15 minutes per case.
- To ensure relevant agency attendance at meetings to maintain confidentiality and safety.
- To ensure that observers at MARAC meetings are appropriate.
- To read meeting papers and prepare for meetings ensuring that they have full awareness of the cases.
- To assist the MARAC co-ordinator to ensure that the co-ordinator is able to accurately record all actions at the meeting.
- To work within the MARAC operating protocol and uphold the principles of safe information sharing as outlined in the MARAC ISP, including ensuring the confidentiality agreement is signed at the start of the meeting.
- To respect confidentiality of sensitive information discussed at MARAC meetings and ensure that MARAC partners do likewise
- Through the MARAC ensure that partners are held to account for the actions agreed at meetings.
- To ensure that all MARAC attendees are able to participate fully in MARAC meetings.

## Information Sharing

- Each meeting will begin with the members present signing the confidentiality agreement read out by the chair of the meeting.
- Observers are welcome at MARAC meetings with the prior agreement of the chair. Observers are expected to sign and abide by the confidentiality agreement and to uphold the principles of the MARAC ISP.
- Information discussed by the agency representatives, within the ambit of the meeting, is strictly confidential and must not be disclosed to third parties who have not signed up to the MARAC ISP, or other meetings without the agreement of the partners of the meeting and the authorisation of the MARAC chair.

## Action Planning

- Actions are jointly constructed and assigned – providing professional support to all those at risk, thus reducing the risk of harm
- The responsibility to take appropriate action rests with individual agencies and it is not transferred to the MARAC. The role of the MARAC is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety. Once actions are completed each agency should update their own version of an action record and return this via secure e-mail to the MARAC Coordinator who collages and updates the master document.
- Where the alleged perpetrator in a MARAC case is known to work with or around children e.g. is a social worker or teacher, the MARAC should set an action for the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to be informed so that this can be investigated in line with local managing allegations procedures

## DVDS/Clare's Law

In Havering, MARAC meetings are often used as the multi-agency decision making forum for high risk 'right to know' and 'right to ask' disclosures under the DVDS (Domestic Violence Disclosure scheme)

All potential disclosures are regarded as 'disclosure discussions' and agencies are required to research each case in the same way they would a MARAC case. The victim's name, together with any children, is included in the case list in order to carry out this research. If the decision is made to disclose, this will be recorded in the minutes.

## MARAC Steering

The MARAC Coordinator provides reports to the Violence Against Women & Girls Strategic Partnership which includes:

- What agencies are referring to MARAC
- Diversity Data
- The number of children affected
- Agency Attendance at MARAC
- Agencies with outstanding MARAC actions
- Self Assessment

# Getting in Touch

MARAC Chair

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