

Practitioner Guide to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) in East Sussex

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All the documents referred to in this guidance are available to download at <http://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/MARAC-help.html>

MARAC Support Team – East Sussex

Secure email MARAC@eastsussex.gcsx.gov.uk
 Website <http://www.safeineastsussex.org.uk/MARAC-help.html>
 Telephone 01323 466013

Specialist Domestic Abuse Service – cgl at the Portal

Secure email hastings.das@cri.cjsm.net
 Website <http://www.theportal.org.uk/>
 Telephone 0300 323 9985

Background information

What is a MARAC?

The domestic abuse Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a meeting that brings together representatives from a number of agencies in the local area to discuss the safety, health and well-being of people experiencing domestic abuse (and their children).

The agencies which attend the MARAC include statutory services such as the Police, Probation, Children's and Adult Social Care services, as well as the local specialist domestic abuse service ([cgl](#) at [The Portal](#)) and other voluntary and community organisations.

The aim of the meeting is to:

- Share information to increase the safety, health and well-being of high risk victims/survivors - adults and their children
- Determine whether the alleged perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community
- Construct jointly and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support to all those at risk and that reduces the risk of harm
- Reduce repeat victimisation
- Improve agency accountability
- Improve support for staff involved in high-risk domestic abuse cases.

How often is the MARAC held?

There are two MARACs held in East Sussex each week:

- Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden every **Tuesday**; and
- Hastings and Rother every **Thursday**.

There is a list of [MARAC Referral Deadlines and Meeting Dates](#).

Identification

How do I identify risk?

At the point a victim/survivor makes a disclosure of domestic violence or abuse, it is good practice to complete a [Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment Risk Identification Checklist](#). This is commonly known as the 'DASH RIC'.

The DASH RIC is designed to help professionals make an accurate and fast assessment of the danger someone is in. The DASH RIC helps professionals to identify what support someone might need, which could include a MARAC referral.

What are the referral criteria for the MARAC?

A case should be referred to the MARAC if any of the following criteria are met:

1. **Professional judgement of high risk of serious harm or significant concern for safety:** 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. This could reflect extreme levels of fear, cultural barriers to disclosure, immigration issues or language barriers particularly in cases of 'honour'-based violence. This judgement would be based on the professional's experience and/or the victim's perception of their risk even if they do not meet criteria 2 and/or 3 below
2. **Visible High Risk:** 14 or more 'yes answers' or 'ticks' on the CAADA-DASH risk identification checklist (RIC)
3. **Potential Escalation:** 3 or more incidents as a result of domestic violence or abuse in the past 12 months. This criterion can be used to identify cases where there is not a positive identification of a majority of the risk factors on the RIC, but where abuse appears to be escalating and where it is appropriate to assess the situation more fully by sharing information at MARAC
4. **MARAC repeat:** where there is a further incident within 12 months from the date of the last MARAC referral and there has been a further incident, regardless of whether it has been reported to the police or the level of risk), the case should be referred back to the MARAC. There is a [national definition](#) for a MARAC Repeat.

Referral

Can I refer to the MARAC?

Any professional can make a referral to the MARAC. However, if you have never made a MARAC referral before you may want to speak to your manager first or, if your agency routinely attends the MARAC, your agency will have a MARAC representative who can provide advice and support.

To make a referral to the MARAC the referring professional must complete a [MARAC / IDVA Referral Form](#).

What does a good quality referral look like?

A good quality MARAC / IDVA Referral Form should have all the fields completed and provide clear, accurate and up-to-date information in order to inform the development of an action plan. A completed form should include:

- Client information, including questions about someone's personal characteristics (such as age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion and belief and any disabilities), as well as (safe) contact details
- An outline of risk factors, relevant background information and the reason for referral. This section should be concise. If it helps, use bullet points. The referral needs to include sufficient information for other professionals to understand any risk and needs, while ensuring that the information shared is proportionate and sensitive to an individual's right to privacy
- Additional questions (e.g. "Who the victim is afraid of?"). The responses to these questions may help identify any specific issues that could affect someone's risk (e.g. if they are a victim of Honour Based Violence and there are multiple perpetrators) or what may prevent them accessing help and support (e.g. if they or the alleged perpetrator work for an agency that is involved in the MARAC process)
- Whether the victim has previously been heard at MARAC (if known)
- Whether the (alleged) perpetrator has previously been heard at MARAC or is being managed under [Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements \(MAPPA\)](#) (if known).

Does the victim have to consent to a MARAC referral?

The victim should normally be involved and informed about the referral to the MARAC. It is helpful to explain the MARAC process at the point of referral so that the victim can understand how agencies will work together to help increase their safety by offering services or support.

There is a [MARAC Victim Leaflet](#) available which professionals can use to explain the MARAC process and what will happen. If it is safe to do so, a victim may want a printed copy of this leaflet or they could access it online.

In some cases a victim may be referred to the MARAC without their consent. In these cases, the referring practitioner must assess whether it is proportionate and defensible to share information, depending on the level of risk which the victim is facing.

If you are making a referral to the MARAC, and you do not have the consent of the victim to do so, you will need to follow your agency's guidance on information sharing in these cases.

There is a template [MARAC Information Shared without Consent Form](#) available from Safelives which may help you evidence your decision to share without consent.

Should I consider the alleged perpetrator?

While the central focus of the MARAC is on the safety of the adult victim and children, this can only be achieved if the behaviour of the alleged perpetrator is addressed effectively. It is essential that the MARAC considers information about the alleged perpetrator, and that actions are agreed within the safety plan that directly addresses abusive behaviour.

When completing the MARAC / IDVA Referral Form the referring professional should include any information about the alleged perpetrator's circumstances and their behaviour.

Safelives has produced [guidance for MARACs](#) to address the abusive behaviour of alleged perpetrators.

Should I consider the wider family / social network?

When completing the MARAC / IDVA Referral Form the referring professional should consider whether there are any risks or needs in relation to a victim's wider family / social network. This could include children or other adults who have been harmed, may be vulnerable to harm or who may need safeguarding.

What do I do if I have a concern about a child?

Domestic abuse can have a significant impact on children. Children can:

- Hear events as they unfold
- Witness physical damage to a parent or to property following an incident
- Be hurt trying to intervene
- Be used as a pawn to bargain or threaten with, particularly post separation
- Become the direct subject of abuse, which may be physical, emotional, sexual or a combination.

There are additional questions in the DASH RIC relating to children, including:

- Are there any children, step-children in the household?
- Has the alleged abuser ever hurt the children?
- Has the alleged abuser threatened to hurt or kill the children?

When completing a referral, the referring professional must consider whether there are any needs or risks relating to children in the family. If the answer is yes, in addition to making the MARAC referral, the referring professional should also make a referral to the Single Point of Advice (SPOA). This is first point of contact for East Sussex Children's Services which is available for both professionals and public who have concerns about the welfare of a child. For further information consult [The Continuum of Need](#). This provides guidance for both professionals to identify and assess levels of individual need.

To contact the [Single Point of Advice \(SPOA\)](#) call 01323 464222 or email 0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gov.uk or GCSX_0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gcsx.gov.uk.

What do I do if I have a concern about an adult with care and support needs?

Domestic abuse can have a significant impact on adults with care and support needs. As an example:

- Women with depressive disorder are over two times more likely than women without a mental illness to experience domestic abuse
- People with a disability are significantly more likely to experience physical, sexual, emotional and financial domestic abuse than people without disabilities
- Victims aged 61+ are much more likely to experience abuse from an adult family member or current intimate partner than those 60 and under (2015-16).

There are additional questions in the DASH RIC relating to adults, including:

- Has either the victim or the abuser been diagnosed with / suspected that they may have dementia or any other form of cognitive impairment?
- Are there any concerns about the victim's capacity to make informed decisions?
- Is either the abuser or the victim looking after the other person i.e. acting as their carer?

When completing a referral, the referring professional must consider whether an adult with care and support needs is at risk of abuse or neglect. If the answer is yes, in addition to making the MARAC referral, the referring professional should also make a referral to Adult Social Care.

To report abuse or neglect of an adult at risk, or for further information, contact Health and Social Care Connect. Email HSCC@eastsussex.gov.uk call 0345 6080191 (public), or email esh-tr.hsc@nhs.net or call 0300 6780010 (professionals).

Where do I send my referral?

Referrals must be sent via a Secure eMail system. This means that your email system should either be part of the Government Secure Community (ending in .gsi . gsx, .nhs.net or .pnn) or you should be using Criminal Justice Secure Email (.cjsm.net).

A completed [MARAC / IDVA Referral Form](#) should be sent to the [MARAC Coordinator](#), who will add the case to the next MARAC list and make a referral to the specialist domestic abuse service.

What do I do if the victim has moved to another area?

If you think a victim who has been referred to MARAC in the last year has - or is about to - move out of the area, you should contact the MARAC Coordinator in the first instance (see contact details below). There is [guidance](#) available on how to manage cases in these circumstances.

If you want to refer a victim for the first time and they are normally resident elsewhere in Sussex, you should contact the relevant MARAC:

- For more information on MARACs in West Sussex, email kate.johnson@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk
- For more information on MARACs in Brighton & Hove, email MARAC.Brighton-Hove@sussex.pnn.police.uk

If you want to refer a victim for the first time and they are normally resident elsewhere in England or Wales, [Safe Lives](#) can help locate the relevant contact details.

The MARAC meeting

What happens ahead of the MARAC meeting?

Where possible and safe to do so, a specialist domestic abuse service caseworker from The Portal will contact any victim who is referred to the MARAC. They will try to contact the victim ahead of the meeting, to ensure they are receiving appropriate support, notify them that their case is to be discussed at MARAC, attain their views and wishes to ensure they are represented at the MARAC.

The specialist domestic abuse service caseworker will represent any views the victim has and will provide the 'voice of the victim' at the meeting. The role of the specialist domestic abuse service caseworker is to ensure that victim safety and that of children is maximised and remains central to the MARAC process.

If I make a referral, do I need to attend the MARAC?

You will need to speak to the MARAC representative for your agency, who may present the case on your behalf. Alternatively, you may be asked to attend the meeting. If you are unsure, contact the [MARAC Coordinator](#).

I attend the MARAC, how should I prepare for the meeting?

The [MARAC Coordinator](#) will circulate the meeting agenda with the list of cases to agency representatives 2 working days prior to the MARAC meeting date. At this point agencies will need to research each of the cases on the list.

There is a [MARAC Research Form](#) available for all partner agencies to use to identify what information they should share at the MARAC meeting. Having the right information at the MARAC helps ensure that an effective and complete action plan is developed in order to increase the safety of the victim.

If you are unable to attend the MARAC, and if there is no one who can take your place, you should contact the [MARAC Coordinator](#) and advise them of your non-attendance. As the agency representative will still need to complete the research and will be asked provide a report form prior to the MARAC meeting. This will be shared / read out at the meeting and added to the minute (the report should include any relevant information on cases, as well as confirming those cases where the agency has no relevant/ proportionate information to share).

Additional information

What is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)?

When completing a MARAC / IDVA referral form, the referring professional is asked to indicate whether they have considered making 'Right to Ask' or 'Right to Know' application under the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme \(DVDS\)](#), which is sometimes called 'Clare's Law'. The aim of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is to enable potential victims to make an informed choice about whether to continue with a relationship if a new or current partner has a history of violence or abuse. It also aims to provide help and support to assist a potential victim when making that informed choice.

If you do think an application under this scheme needs to be made, you will need to complete a ['Minimum Standards Form'](#).

Training

The Safer East Sussex Team offers training to statutory, voluntary and community sector partners to help ensure that frontline professionals are able to undertake risk identification and refer to the MARAC.

This training is FREE and can be delivered to your service or team by arrangement. To view the training information see:

- [Domestic Violence and Abuse- Risk Identification and Initial Response Outcomes](#)
- [Domestic Violence and Abuse- Intro to MARAC Outcomes](#)
- [Domestic Violence and Abuse- Initial Response Risk Identification and the MARAC Process Outcomes](#)

National resources and guidance

You can find out more about MARACs nationally, as well as access a range of resources for workers and service managers who work directly with victims of domestic violence and their families, from the national charity [Safe Lives](#).

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