



**This leaflet tells you more about Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), a multi-agency meeting to support victims of domestic abuse, forced marriage or honour-based violence.**

### **What is a multi-agency risk assessment conference?**

The main aim of the MARAC is to reduce the risk of serious harm for a victim and to increase the safety, health and wellbeing of victims – adults and any children. In a MARAC local agencies will meet to discuss the highest risk victims of domestic abuse in their area. Information about the risks faced by those victims, the actions needed to ensure safety, and the resources available locally are shared and used to create a safety plan involving all agencies.

### **What is the key element of MARAC?**

The key element of MARAC is the Risk Identification Checklist (RIC) which will have been carried out by a practitioner from any agency supporting people affected by domestic abuse. A consistent risk assessment tool is used. This has been developed from analysis of previous domestic homicides, and has been evaluated nationally.

The assessment has 3 main objectives:

1. To gather detailed and relevant information from victims, which could be shared with other agencies if the level of risk is high or becomes high.
2. To identify those individuals that need more intensive support and multi-agency planning.
3. To make agencies aware of the risk posed by the most dangerous offenders.

### **Why does a representative from my agency attend?**

Matching the information you have about the risks to a client with that known to other agencies will help to ensure that the action plan drawn up by the MARAC is more likely to succeed. Your representative will also be best placed to know what actions you can offer within the safety plan and what might need to be put in place to address client and staff safety.

### **Which cases are discussed?**

The highest risk cases of domestic abuse are discussed in the MARAC. A practitioner from any agency using the evaluated risk assessment tool will have identified these.

### **How do I refer a case to a MARAC?**

If you identify a case that you consider is high risk you should first discuss it with your manager. Clarify that the victim has given consent to the process and, if not, that there is a legal authority to override consent. Complete the MARAC risk assessment and referral document and ensure that it is forwarded to the MARAC Co-ordinator, identifying whether or not a scheduled or emergency

meeting is required. The case will then be listed and agencies will be asked to complete a research form prior to the meeting which will identify information about the case based on that agency's involvement.

### **What information should my agency bring?**

The representative from your agency should bring relevant and basic details on the client and services they require that might relate to the domestic abuse. This should include names, dates of birth, dates of attendances at your agency, summary of injuries sustained, whether domestic abuse was disclosed, and what relevant services have been accessed. This can highlight the severity of abuse to other agencies.

### **What can the MARAC do?**

Actions volunteered by your agency representative will frequently focus on ensuring that the response to the client in the future reflects the fact that they are a high risk victim of domestic abuse and that further incidents may prompt an enquiry into their case and a possible referral to the appropriate person/agency (for example, it would be important to see the client alone at appointments and to do this safely and where possible to "flag files" to highlight that the case has been referred to MARAC). The MARAC will ensure that a safety plan is put in place and that a co-ordinated approach is taken.

### **What are the legal grounds for sharing information?**

Disclosures to MARACs are made under the Data Protection Act, the Human Rights Act and the Caldicott Guidelines. Relevant information can be shared when it is necessary to prevent a crime, protect health and/or the safety of the victim and/or the rights and freedoms of those who are victims of violence and/or their children. It must be proportionate to the level of risk of harm to a named individual or known household.

### **Does the victim need to know they are being discussed at MARAC?**

If you are the referring agency, it is good practice to discuss the referral with the victim, if it is safe to do so. You will need to use your professional judgement to decide whether it is safe. The MARAC follows a consent-based approach, however if consent is refused this may be overruled (Crime & Disorder Act 1998, s.115) where the situation is assessed to be dangerous.

If you are not the referring agency you should check with the referring agency before contacting your client to gather relevant information to ensure it is safe to do so.

### **What is the referral process?**

There is a standard MARAC Referral Form which requests relevant information.

- Step 1:** Complete a MARAC referral form, you can obtain the form from your MARAC representation within your agency
- Step 2:** Ideally obtain consent from your client, if you are unable to do so please continue with the referral. We are allowed to discuss referrals without the victims consent in potentially dangerous situations.
- Step 3:** Either speak with your representative or contact the MARAC Co-ordinator who will advise you on how to refer the case.
- Step 4:** The referral is distributed to all agencies prior to the MARAC. Each agency then has the obligation to gather all their information in relation to the referral and bring it to the

next MARAC. At the meeting information is then shared and a safety plan is agreed so that the victim and their children remain safe and are supported.

### **Is the perpetrator informed of the meeting and safety plans?**

No. It would defeat the purpose of the MARAC if the perpetrator was informed about the safety plan. The perpetrator may become aware of the meeting taking place but should not be informed of the safety plan. Participants should take extraordinary care not to inadvertently inform the perpetrator of any element of the safety plan.

### **What happens after a MARAC?**

After a MARAC, practitioners in regular contact with the victim will contact them to let them know about the safety plan, safety measures and the support each agency is offering. All MARAC representatives must inform the MARAC Co-ordinator when their agency actions have been completed.

### **What about child protection, child in need and the need and the common assessment framework and safeguarding of vulnerable adults?**

The MARAC process does not replace the procedures for dealing with concerns about a child or a vulnerable adult. Those protocols must always be followed, but in high-risk cases of domestic abuse you may need to follow both and make two referrals.

### **How do I find out who my agency MARAC contacts are?**

These will change over time. The MARACs are administered by the MARAC Co-ordinator and an up-to-date list of MARAC agency representatives can be requested by contacting Jenny Wylie – MARAC Co-ordinator on 01595 744527.