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1. **Introduction**

The purpose of this Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Operating Protocol is to:

- establish accountability
- determine reporting structures for MARAC
- outline the MARAC process
- clarify referral pathways

This protocol is designed to enhance existing arrangements rather than replace them.

Solihull MARAC operates in accordance with the Safe Lives (formerly known as CAADA) Principles to an Effective MARAC Guide.

This protocol was agreed by:

- Solihull’s Domestic Abuse Priority Group (DAPG) on 19th November 2015 and endorsed by:
  - Safer Solihull Partnership
  - Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Board
  - Solihull Safeguarding Adult Board

**Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Outline and Aims**

MARAC is a model of intervention that follows a process of risk assessment in all reported cases of domestic abuse to identify those at highest risk to enable a multi-agency response. The national roll-out of MARACs followed a Government recommended approach to tackling domestic violence known as the Co-ordinated Community Response (CCR) model; this also included IDVAs, alongside Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVC’s). They are not statutory but are placed as the ‘central focus for action to address domestic abuse’ in the Home Office National Domestic Delivery Plan, Annual progress report 2006/07. There are 250 MARAC’s in operation across England and Wales.

MARAC is a multi agency meeting focusing on the safety of victims of domestic violence assessed as at high risk of serious harm or homicide.

The aims of MARAC are to:

- Share information to increase the safety, health and well-being of the domestic violence victims at high risk of serious harm or homicide, and their children
- Determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community
• Jointly construct and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support to all those at risk that reduces the risk of serious harm

• Review previous actions

• Reduce repeat victimisation

• Improve agency accountability, and

• Improve support for staff involved in high risk domestic violence cases by sharing the burden of risk

The role of MARAC is to facilitate, monitor, and evaluate effective information sharing that enables appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety. The responsibility to take appropriate action rests with individual agencies; the responsibility is not transferred to MARAC.

For further information on MARAC, please visit www.safelives.org.uk

MARAC

MARAC deals with high risk domestic violence cases within the geographical area of Solihull Local Authority.

MARAC meetings are held monthly on a Tuesday morning.

**Multi-Agency Screening of Domestic Abuse Incidents**

All domestic abuse incidents involving children that are reported to the police are screened on a daily basis using the resources within the MASH and 2 outside agencies, Solihull Community Housing (SCH) and Solihull Integrated Addiction Service (SIAS).

The screening will seek to confirm the DASH risk level of any adults and will use the LSCB thresholds document to assess risk to children.

Children considered at level 4 are referred to MASH and Children assessed at level 2-3 (standard/medium) are referred to Early Help for support.
Partner Agencies

MARAC is led by WM Police but partners have a responsibility to understand, support and engage in the process. Any agency or organisation can refer a case to MARAC and best practice recommends that 40% of referrals come from agencies outside of the police.

Attendance at MARAC

Having the right mix of agencies around the table is seen as key to the effectiveness of the MARAC and there is broad consensus regarding the core agencies that should, as a minimum, be represented at MARAC.

Core Agencies

Core partners are those agencies identified by SafeLives that are required to consistently attend all meetings. The following agencies are therefore required to attend all MARAC meetings:

- Police
- Probation – National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)
- Local Authority Housing
- Children’s Social Care
- Adult safeguarding
- Primary Care (health)
- Mental Health
- Substance Misuse Services
- IDVA service

Other MARAC Partners

Solihull MARAC is routinely supported and attended by agencies outside of the core agencies. Agencies are invited to attend the MARAC or to provide information where the MARAC considers this would be appropriate e.g. Sexual violence services (including the SARC and ISVAs), housing associations/registered providers, maternity services and organisations from outside of Solihull. Such agencies would be invited to attend and/or present to the meeting where they can provide relevant information and assist in the development and execution of the risk management plan. All agencies will be required to sign the confidentiality agreement prior to attendance.

MARAC Representatives and Their Role

All participating 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. If a MARAC representative is unable to attend then the representative should inform the MARAC Administrator in advance of the meeting and provide a written submission of relevant information. Alternatively, and in the case of all core agencies a substitute representative should attend on behalf of the agency. The MARAC Representative is the key link between
the MARAC and their agency and acts as a Single Point of Contact for relevant advice to that agency about the MARAC and as the Designated Information Sharing Officer (DISO) for all data collection. Further detail on the MARAC representative’s role is contained in Appendix 9.

Requests for a new MARAC attendee or agency to receive MARAC referral information should be made to the MARAC administrator. The MARAC administrator will then refer this to the MARAC chair for approval before referrals are shared with the new representative or agency.

2. Governance and Performance Management

Solihull Domestic Abuse Priority Group (DAPG) will:

- Monitor and evaluate MARAC data
- Ensure that effective partnerships are maintained with other public protection bodies and other MARAC areas
- Monitor and regularly assess the overall performance of MARAC and its adherence to Safe Lives ‘Principles to an Effective MARAC guide.’
- Address operational issues
- Oversee efforts to raise awareness of MARAC and its outcomes with local practitioners and wider stakeholders
- Respond to changes to legislation and national guidance and best practice

Solihull Domestic Abuse Priority Group (DAPG) will report to the Safer Solihull Partnership.

Solihull Domestic Abuse Priority Group (DAPG) meets every two months and is able to address the practical and resource implications of MARAC; and develop and maintain internal protocols and procedures in relation to public protection.

The MARAC administrator is employed and line managed by West Midlands Police.
3. **MARAC Process**

**Identification of MARAC cases**

The DASH Risk Indicator Checklist model (see Appendix 3) will be used by agencies to assess the level of risk to the victim and any children following disclosure or identification of domestic violence. Those cases that are assessed as at high risk of serious harm or homicide should then be referred to the MARAC administrator.

**MARAC Qualifying Criteria**

Any agency should refer cases to MARAC where:

- There are 14 ticks on the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist
- Where professional judgement warrants a referral (this is based on training skills and experience of the person making the referral)
- Escalation of incidents (increasing level of control and/or abuse)
- Repeats, further incidents which if reported would constitute a crime in a 12-month rolling period,
- MARAC to MARAC referral

West Midlands Police can also refer cases where there have been police call outs that indicate a degree of escalation in either severity or frequency which is supported by the repeat DV Database search.

The risk factors and concerns must be documented clearly on the referral form.

The qualifying criteria will be reviewed at least annually by DAPG

**Repeat Victims**

The definition of a MARAC repeat is where a new domestic violence incident is reported to a MARAC agency for a case that has already been presented to a MARAC within 12 months. The second incident will involve:

- Violence or threats of violence to the victim and/or their property, AND/OR
- Where there is a pattern of stalking or harassment, AND/OR
- Where rape or sexual violence or abuse is disclosed
- Although the following cases will be discussed at MARAC, for data recording purposes the following are not counted as MARAC repeat cases:
- Where the case reviewed at MARAC focuses on the same victim, but a different perpetrator(s)
- Where a case reviewed at MARAC involves the same perpetrator, but a different victim(s)
- Where an incident not involving criminal behaviour occurs and it is not reviewed at MARAC
- Where the subjects of MARAC are the same victim and perpetrator, but the review takes place at a different MARAC. It is accepted that this is a repeat incident, but will not be recorded as such for the originating MARAC.
- Cases that were previously reviewed at MARAC more than 12 months previously.

**MARAC Criteria for 16 – 17 year old victims**

Child protection processes/procedures will always take precedence for safeguarding concerns relating to 16-17 year old domestic violence victims. A discussion will take place between children and young people’s services and adult services to agree the most appropriate actions, and these will be delivered in partnership.

Referral to MARAC of a 16-17 year old can be made if the case meets the MARAC threshold (March 2013, new national definition of domestic abuse).

Relevant agencies will be required to research and share their relevant information at the meeting.

**MARAC Referral Process**

The MARAC referral form will be used by all agencies referring cases to MARAC. The form should include as much information as possible, including names, dates of birth, and address of victim(s), perpetrator(s), and children.

If the referral is based on professional judgment, all concerns should be documented on the referral form.

The MARAC referral form (see Appendix 2.)

This form will provide valuable information about the risks that children are living with but it is not a full risk assessment for children. The presence of children increases the wider risks of domestic violence and step children are particularly at risk. If risk towards children is highlighted you should consider what referral you need to make to obtain a full assessment of the children’s situation.
MARAC operates on a rolling referral system and cases are listed for the next available monthly meeting.

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 the 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. This also confirms that the victim is aware of the MARAC referral. However, the role of the MARAC is to address high risk cases of domestic abuse where a risk of 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. If consent has not been obtained either because it is unsafe to contact the victim or that the service user has refused consent for information sharing this should be recorded. An ‘Information sharing without consent form’ is available as a checklist (see Appendix 6) and should be completed where the victim does not consent to the MARAC referral.

**MARAC List and Agenda**

The MARAC agenda will be circulated 9-12 days (including weekends) prior to the MARAC meeting.

A research form is available for partner agencies to assist in completing their research. The research form is Appendix 5.

**Actions prior to MARAC**

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 they take necessary actions. Where there are safeguarding needs, these MUST be dealt with immediately in line with agencies’ Safeguarding policies and procedures.

All agencies are expected to systematically flag and tag files involving families’ subject of MARAC, and to remove flags after a 12 month period if there are no repeat incidents.

Within 1 working day of notification, the MARAC administrator will share details of the victim with an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA).

**Victim contact prior to MARAC**

Where possible and safe to do so, the IDVA will make contact with the victim prior to the MARAC. The IDVA can provide specialist crisis intervention and safety planning to domestic abuse victims and their families prior to MARAC and represent the victim’s view at the MARAC.
When it is safe to do so, the referring professional or IDVA will notify the victim that their information is being shared with MARAC, and feed-back relevant actions.

Victims do not ask to be referred to MARAC and therefore may not choose to engage with the IDVA.

Although it is preferable to have the victim’s consent to share information at MARAC, in the event that it is not safe to contact or advise the victim of the MARAC referral, the case will still be presented without consent.

**MARAC Meeting**

The Solihull MARAC meets once a month. The MARAC Chair is a West Midlands Police Public Protection Detective Inspector. The role of the Chair is to structure the MARAC meeting, and to ensure that the aims and objectives are achieved.

**Minutes and Administration**

The MARAC administrator will create and circulate an action list within 4 working days of the MARAC meeting, and the Minutes within 10 working days of the MARAC meeting.

The Public Protection Unit will monitor repeat referrals and instances.

The Public Protection Unit will use appropriate IT systems for West Midlands Police and partnership agencies to administer and report on MARAC.

**Information shared at MARAC**

Only accurate information that is directly relevant to the safety of the victim should be shared by the attending agencies. This information falls into 4 main categories:

- Basic demographic information including the victims’ names, dates of birth, addresses, and any pseudonyms used, and the names and dates of birth of any children.

- Information on key risk indicators, including where appropriate, professional opinion on the risk faced.

- Any relevant history of domestic abuse or other associated behaviour (child abuse, sexual assault) by the perpetrator or victim.

- The views of the victim. Typically the IDVA will represent the perspective of the victim on the risks faced and how best to address them.

Information sharing at MARAC meetings is limited to the aims of the meeting.
At the start of each MARAC meeting the Chair will read out the confidentiality statement, and partners will be asked to sign the statement. The confidentiality statement (see Appendix 4.)

In cases where professional judgement has been used to make the MARAC referral, and consent has not been sought, it is necessary to complete the ‘Information Sharing without Consent’ form. (see Appendix 6.)

**Action Planning**

A tailored action plan will be developed at MARAC that will increase the safety of the victims, children, perpetrator, other vulnerable parties and any staff.

The following types of actions will be agreed:

- Flagging and tagging of files
- Referral to other appropriate multi-agency meetings, and
- Prioritising of agencies’ resources to MARAC cases, partner agencies are responsible for providing any interventions identified that are relevant to their organisation

Where victims have chosen not to engage with the IDVA, a partner agency may be nominated as the lead for engaging with the victim and there is an option to undertake joint working where possible.

It is essential that actions are completed in a timely manner. Confirmation of completion and action updates should be submitted to the MARAC administrator within the set timescales. Incomplete actions will be circulated prior to the next meeting and reviewed at the next meeting.

If actions are incomplete, the responsibility and accountability remains with the named agency and not the MARAC or Chair.

If the victim moves to another area, best practice requires that MARAC agencies should inform their counterparts in the relevant area that the victim is high risk and subject of MARAC.

For further information on the types of actions agreed at MARAC, refer to: [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk)

**Emergency MARAC**

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to hold an emergency MARAC meeting. If an agency feels this is the case, contact should be made with the MARAC administrator as soon as possible. Referrals should be made to the MARAC administrator in the same way as
to the MARAC meeting. The relevant forms must still be completed by the referring agency. A MARAC meeting is only called if the risk of harm is so imminent that statutory agencies have a duty of care to act at once.

**Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) & One Day One Conversation (ODOC)**

MARAC has established links with MAPPA and ODOC processes.

The MARAC agenda is shared with the MAPPA and ODOC Administrators who check for their past and present involvement. Any relevant information is shared with the MARAC administrator who brings it to the meeting.

All new MAPPA subjects are forwarded to the MARAC administrator who checks for MARAC and IDVA involvement. Any relevant information is forwarded to the MAPPA Coordinator.

Where the victim is subject of MARAC and the offender is managed at a Level 2 or 3 MAPPA meeting, the MAPPA meeting will take priority and the IDVA must be invited to the MAPPA meeting. The MAPPA meeting will ensure that the risk management plan effectively identifies and puts into place actions to protect the victim.

Safe Lives also give guidance about the management of domestic abuse perpetrators, see **Appendix 8**

**Referrals to and from other MARACs**

MARAC is a national model. A MARAC referral form should still be completed for any high risk victims who are re-locating away from Solihull. The referral should be submitted to the Solihull MARAC administrator and include details of the re-location address and date of when the move took place. This information will then be forwarded to the relevant MARAC.

Referring agencies are also responsible for ensuring their counterparts in the appropriate re-located area have received the relevant referral.

When a MARAC referral is received from another area, the MARAC administrator will inform the IDVA and West Midlands Police, and the case will be heard at the next MARAC.

4. **The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare’s Law)**

In Solihull the MARAC Meetings are used as the multi agency decision making forum for high risk ‘right to know’ and ‘right to ask’ disclosures under the DVDS (Clare’s Law). 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 on the case list in order to carry out this research. If the decision is made to disclose, this will be recorded in the minutes. The Police will then complete their disclosure document and record it. A referral will also be made to the IDVA service and an
IDVA will accompany the relevant person identified as best placed to make the disclosure when it is made. This may be a Police Officer or agency worker currently working with the victim.

Where information arises during the information sharing at the MARAC meeting which suggests that the victim should be advised of their partner’s previous history of abuse this will be agreed and recorded as an action in the minutes.

5. **Equality**

Agencies will have policies relating to their approach and access to translation and interpretation services. Specific and additional support and advice can be accessed for cases identified as being from diverse communities through the following services:

- **Birmingham & Solihull Women’s Aid** 0808 800 0028
- **Solihull Children’s Services** 0121 788 4333
- **Solihull Adults Services** 0121 704 8007
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline** 0808 2000 247
- **Mens Advice Line** – 0808 801 0327
- **Broken Rainbow** (advice and support for LGBT victims of domestic violence) 0300 999 5428
- **Karma Nirvana** (Forced marriage and honour crime) 0800 5999 247
- **IKWRO** (Forced marriage and honour crime) 0207 920 6460
- **Doli Project** (Forced marriage and honour crime) 0845 658 1057
- **Women & children at risk of Female Genital Mutilation – Daughters of Eve** – [www.dofeve.org](http://www.dofeve.org)

7. **Evaluation**

MARAC data is collected by the MARAC administrator and is submitted to:

- Safe Lives
- SMBC Domestic Abuse co-ordinator

If agencies require data to assist in training, funding applications or resource management, SMBC Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator should be contacted in the first instance.
8. **Complaints & Accountability**

Complaints about how a professional or agency is working within the MARAC process should be submitted in writing to the MARAC Chair or SMBC DA Coordinator in the first instance. If not resolved, this will be escalated to MARAC Governance Group.

9. **Breaches**

A breach of this MARAC Operating Protocol may increase the risk of harm to a high risk victim of domestic violence.

Breaches of the protocol should be provided to the MARAC Chair or DA Co-ordinator, and these may be escalated to the MARAC Governance Group.

10. **Withdrawal**

The strategic lead for any agency who wishes to withdraw from the MARAC process must inform the MARAC Chair in writing of their intention. The Chair will forward this to DAPG for discussion.

Withdrawal from this protocol will result in a withdrawal from MARAC.

All information shared at MARAC that is no longer relevant should be destroyed in accordance with individual agencies’ guidelines in order to meet the requirements of The Data Protection Act.

11. **MARAC Chair Resilience**

The MARAC must implement appropriate measures around MARAC Chair resilience. The MARAC will need to identify an appropriate MARAC chair and that chair should be a partner agency or individual who understands the risk of threat and harm.

12. **Review**

This protocol will be reviewed annually from the date of signature by DAPG. Requests for additions/changes should be made in the first instance to the MARAC Chair.
13. **MARAC Development**

Through joint co-ordination of the MARAC Chair and strategic domestic abuse partnerships, there is an appropriate response put in place to deal with emerging trends and issues of domestic abuse which will impact on MARAC processes.

14. **Training and Induction Process**

New MARAC representatives will have access to the protocol and the opportunity to observe the MARAC meeting.

MARAC Chair and partner agencies will together identify any gaps which might require further formal training and notify the domestic abuse co-ordinator.

15. **Signatories**

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