

MARAC OPERATING PROTOCOL

SEPTEMBER 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

The Domestic Abuse Bill passed both Houses of Parliament and achieved Royal Assent on 29th April 2021.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is now law and implementation will begin across the criminal justice systems and other agencies later on this year. A number of changes will initially be rolled out as pilot schemes to test their effectiveness and whether there is scope for change.

The Aim of the Act:

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is set to provide robust support and further protection to those experiencing domestic abuse, as well as strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators and their behaviours.

A new statutory definition has been created as a result of the Act. The new definition emphasises that domestic abuse is not just about the physical violence that occurs but encompasses all forms of abuse. The definition also recognises that children are victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or are directly affected by domestic abuse.

The Definition of Domestic Abuse (extract taken from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021):

1 Definition of “domestic abuse”

(1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.

(2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse”

if—

(a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and

(b) the behaviour is abusive.

(3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—

(a) physical or sexual abuse;

(b) violent or threatening behaviour;

(c) controlling or coercive behaviour;

(d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));

(e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

(4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to—

(a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or

(b) obtain goods or services.

(5) For the purposes of this Act A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).

(6) References in this Act to being abusive towards another person are to be read in accordance with this section.

(7) For the meaning of "personally connected", see section 2.

2 Definition of "personally connected"

(1) For the purposes of this Act, two people are "personally connected" to each other if any of the following applies—

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2));
- (g) they are relatives.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if—

- (a) the person is a parent of the child, or
- (b) the person has parental responsibility for the child.

(3) In this section—

"child" means a person under the age of 18 years;

"civil partnership agreement" has the meaning given by section 73 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004;

"parental responsibility" has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);

"relative" has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

3 Children as victims of domestic abuse

(1) This section applies where behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is domestic abuse.

(2) Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to

a child who—

- (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effects of, the abuse, and
- (b) is related to A or B.

(3) A child is related to a person for the purposes of subsection (2) if—

- (a) the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child, or
- (b) the child and the person are relatives.

(4) In this section—

“child” means a person under the age of 18 years;

“parental responsibility” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 (see section 3 of that Act);

“relative” has the meaning given by section 63(1) of the Family Law Act 1996.

MARAC

The aim of the MARAC Operating Protocol is to outline the processes of the London Borough Havering’s Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference or MARAC. This is a companion piece to the MARAC Information Sharing Agreement (ISA), which outlines how information may be shared between attending agencies.

The toolkit sets out accountability, responsibility and reporting structures for the MARAC. It will also outline the process for identifying cases, referral to and risk management through the MARAC meetings. The toolkit will also detail the responsibilities of all parties involved in the MARAC and their accountability.

The overall intention of this toolkit is to encourage greater awareness and confidence in the MARAC process, and therefore, improve engagement of all partner agencies to increase the safety of local victims of domestic abuse.

What is MARAC?

A MARAC is a multi-agency meeting which domestic abuse victims who have been identified as at high risk of serious harm or homicide are referred to. 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.

During the meeting relevant and proportionate information is shared about the current risks, enabling representatives to identify options to increase the safety of the victim and any other vulnerable parties such as children. The MARAC then creates a multi-agency action plan to address the identified

risks and increase the safety and wellbeing of all those at risk. The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the adult victim. However, taking in to account the UK law which priorities the safety of children, the MARAC will also make links with other multi-agency meetings and processes to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator.

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. The victim does not attend the meeting but is represented by an IDVA who represents their views and wishes and ensures that victim's safety remains the focus of the meeting.

The Aims of the MARAC:

- 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 individual or to the general community.
- Jointly construct 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 and the safety of staff involved in high risk domestic abuse cases.

The Need for a Multi-Agency Approach

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 or murder to victims.

In the majority of cases the support of more than one agency is required to ensure the longer-term safety of the victim and their children

Clear information sharing creates a supportive structure to ensure improved outcomes across services

The responsibility to take appropriate action remains 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.

Likewise, the 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.

The MARAC exists as a tool to facilitate effective information sharing and action planning to keep residents safe.

MARAC REPRESENTATIVES

The MARAC process will ask for representation from all service areas that can have an impact in increasing the victim's safety – including non-criminal justice agencies. There should be regular attendance from the full range of statutory agencies, specialist domestic abuse services as well as relevant voluntary and community organisations.

Whilst regular attendance is expected from all relevant statutory and voluntary agencies, there should always be a presence of several “core agencies” which is expected for there to be an effective operation of the MARAC.

Core Partners

- Metropolitan Police: East Area Command Unit
- Community Safety
- Victim Support
- Havering IDVA services
- Housing Advice and Housing Solutions
- Children's and Young People's Service
- Adult's Social Care
- National Probation Service (NPS)
- North East London Foundation Trust (Health Visitors/school nurses)
- North East London Foundation Trust (Mental Health)
- Barking Havering Redbridge University Trust (Maternity / A and E)
- Substance Misuse Services: Adult and Youth Services
- Early Help service
- Havering Women's Aid / MENDAS

Additional partners may attend for individual cases or to support the MARAC as required:

Supporting Partners:

- Youth Offending Services
- Anchaal Trust London Fire Brigade
- Ashiana
- Havering ICB
- Military Police
- Cranstoun
- Local Area Coordination team
- Education, including alternative provision service
- Peabody Trust
- Rise Mutual

All agencies are required to agree to the confidentiality agreement at the beginning of the MARAC, as meetings are held on Microsoft teams. It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure they are in a confidential space where conversations cannot be over heard, particularly when working from home.

Expectations of MARAC Representatives

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.

All MARAC representatives are required to submit the key contacts of each case prior to the meeting. If a MARAC representative is unable to attend, then the representative should inform the MARAC coordinator in advance of the meeting and provide a written submission of relevant information. This information should be submitted no later than the day before the MARAC meeting at 12 pm.

Alternatively, and in the case of all core agencies, a substitute representative should attend on behalf of an agency.

The MARAC representative is the key link between the MARAC and their service and acts as a single point of contact (SPOC) for relevant advice to that service about the MARAC.

Induction of New MARAC Representatives

All new MARAC representatives should inform the MARAC coordinator that they will now be attending MARAC on a regular basis before the first meeting.

Where possible a secure e-mail address should be supplied so that the MARAC administrator can send referrals, minutes and case-lists to the new representative. A secure email can be created if the MARAC representative does not already have one.

The MARAC coordinator will ensure that the new representative and their secure e-mail is added to the list for the MARAC. The relevant MARAC chair should also be advised of a new member, so that the necessary introductions can be made.

A MARAC induction should include:

- The new MARAC representative should attend Domestic Abuse Awareness Training and DASH RIC training, through the Havering Safeguarding Partnerships Board Training offer.
- Where replacing a MARAC representative, the new representative should have completed a hand-over meeting with the old representative, to ensure that on-going actions, cases and procedures are in place. This should include at least two observations of the MARAC before taking on this responsibility.
- The new representative should appraise themselves of the local MARAC process, dates, times and locations of MARAC meeting, who the IDV/SAs on borough are, risk assessments, MARAC ISA and referral form.
- The new MARAC representative should visit the Safelives website (www.safelives.org.uk) and make use of the resources available for MARAC representatives.

Governance and Performance Management

Domestic abuse is a priority issue in Havering and is seen as everybody's business. This is recognised by the Health and Wellbeing Board, Community Safety Partnership, Havering Safeguarding Partnership Board's.

The Community Safety Partnership have a sub-structure of groups to support it in strategic decision-making and operations. The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategic partnership group is chaired by the Assistant Director for Children Services, meets quarterly, and is committed to tackling all forms of domestic and sexual violence locally.

In relation to MARAC, the VAWG sub group have MARAC steering as a fixed agenda item, to provide space to monitor and direct the performance and effectiveness of MARAC.

The Detective Chief Inspector is responsible for reporting to the VAWG sub group on MARAC performance.

CRITERIA FOR REFERRAL

A key underpinning principle of MARAC is that any agency can identify and refer cases to the process.

To this effect referrals to the MARAC should identify the assessed level of risk (number of ticks) or alternatively provide an explanation of the referrer's assessment if based on professional judgement.

If referrals lack information, the MARAC coordinator will challenge them and referrers will be requested to provide more information to ensure referrals meet the MARAC threshold. Not providing enough information could be at the detriment of the high-risk victims safety planning.

Thus, professionals within agencies can be confident that if they refer a case that meets the referral criteria to the MARAC then that case will be heard.

Identification of Cases

Agencies may identify the existence of domestic abuse in several ways, including disclosure or direct reporting from victims, third party reporting, and access to historic information that could still pose current risk to a victim or disclosure or because of suspicions arising from the behaviour or appearance of an individual or their children.

There is therefore an expectation that agencies will incorporate questions relating to domestic abuse within their own processes and policies. When domestic abuse is identified agency staff should follow their own agency's procedures. However, all agencies' policies should:

- Encourage the victim to report the abuse to the Police.
- Signpost locally available support services.
- Notify the MASH team where there are children in the household or the victim is pregnant.
- Notify Adult Social Care if there is a vulnerable adult involved.
- Address the responsibility and need of 3rd party reporting crimes.
- Complete a Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment Risk Indicator Checklist (if stalking is identified) to ascertain the level of risk and determine whether a referral to MARAC and/or IDVA is required.

Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment Risk Indicator Checklist (DASH RIC)

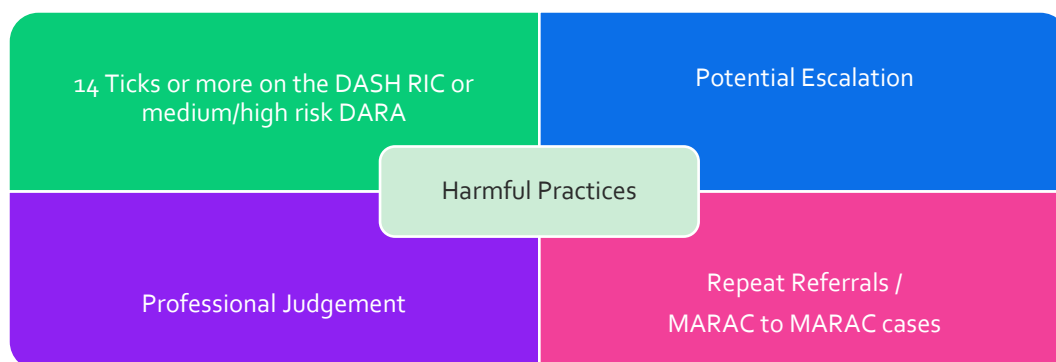
The DASH RIC is used to assess risk for victims of domestic abuse. It is the recognised assessment tool for the MARAC process and should be used by all agencies within Havering wherever there is a disclosure or identification of domestic abuse.

This tool is evidence based and has been developed following analysis of domestic abuse homicide and other serious incidents. The DASH RIC identifies a series of risk factors which are indicative of high risk of harm or death.

There is no specific formal training required to use the tool and it is for individual agencies to determine how they wish to implement the assessment in practice. However, all staff using DASH RIC should have a good understanding of domestic abuse and associated risk factors.

It is therefore strongly recommended that all staff in local agencies attend available training courses offered through the Havering Safeguarding Partnership's Board, Campaign events or local domestic abuse training offers.

Referral Criteria



➤ **14 Ticks or More on the DASH RIC:**

- The DASH RIC threshold for MARAC is 14. If the final score is 14 ticks or more then this would constitute an automatic referral to the MARAC on the ground of evidenced high risk.
- The risk identified must be current risk and occurred within the last 12 months. This does not mean we do not collect historic information as this can sometimes be relevant to the current risk. However, there will be further scrutiny to ensure the answers marked 'yes' are relevant to a current risk.
- Where a case score's 14 or more and there are children in the household, a referral to Children's and Young People's Service is required.

➤ **DARA -**

- This is a tool that only the police will use. The DARA is a risk assessment tool used by officers on scene when they are called to a domestic incident.
 - The tool helps officers to ascertain the level of risk by asking the victim a number of questions regarding domestic abuse and the frequency the abuse occurs.
 - Officers will then determine whether the risk presented is either standard, medium or high.
 - A medium or high risk DARA, she be followed up with the secondary risk assessment by the investigating officer. The secondary risk assessment that should be conducted is the DASH RIC.
- **Potential Escalation:**
- Where there is evidence of escalation in the frequency and/or severity of incidents.
 - Where there are 6 incidents 12 months when there are only NCD's to report.
 - If there are crimes identified between the NCD's then threshold remains 4 incidents in 12 months.
- **Harmful Practices - 'Honour' Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Force Marriage:**
- Is considered an automatic referral to Havering MARAC. Forced Marriage is explicitly identified within the current Home Office definition of Domestic Violence. Therefore, following consultation with specialist support agencies and Metropolitan Police's Forced Marriage Unit it has been determined that the standard position within Havering is that cases of Forced Marriage will be referred to MARAC.
- **MARAC to MARAC referrals:**
- These are cases that have been referred from another borough in the UK, as they have been advised that the victim is now residing with Havering.
- **Professional Judgement:**
- The MARAC respects that partners are experts in their fields, and that experience, skills and knowledge can differ across service areas. For this reason, it also respects that some cases will not meet the above criteria, but a worker may have an instinct that a referral should still be made. In such instances a discussion should be had with the service MARAC representative and consideration given to the following before making the referral:
- The service working with the client believes that full disclosure has not been made resulting in an assessment of risk being made on limited information; or

- The service believes that the victim may be minimising their risk and there is a known risk such as use of weapons, previous history or other issues which may influence ability to disclose.
- Some other reason where the service believes that a MARAC discussion would reduce potential high risk to the victim or family.

The MARAC Panel may also take appropriate requests for a Clare’s Law disclosure to be made under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme.

Repeat Referrals

In addition to the criteria for referral identified above, cases which have previously been heard at the MARAC must be re-referred in the event of a repeat incident within 12 months.

A repeat case occurs when a case that is referred to MARAC has also been discussed at the same MARAC within the preceding 12 months. Each repeat case will also be counted each time an incident that if reported to the police would constitute a criminal offence takes place.

All MARAC discussions are a consequence of at least one incident being reported to at least one MARAC agency and that the incident involves:

- Violence or threats of violence; and/or
- Where there is a pattern of stalking or harassment (the repeated following of communication with or other intrusions on the privacy of a victim) and or
- Where rape or sexual abuse is disclosed.
- Where in the referrer’s professional judgement a further referral is deemed necessary

The repeat incident can be flagged by any of the agencies involved in the MARAC. Multiple incidents occurring between MARAC meetings only result in one MARAC discussion. It is possible for a case to go to MARAC where there is more than one perpetrator. This is counted as one case and will be reviewed if there are any incidents with any of the named perpetrators.

The following do not constitute a repeat case:

- Where a case is reviewed at the MARAC involving the same victim but a different perpetrator or group of perpetrators
- Where a case is reviewed at the MARAC involving the same perpetrator but a different victim
- Where an incident not involving criminal behaviour occurs and is therefore not reviewed at MARAC

- Where the same victim and perpetrator are being discussed at a different MARAC.
- Cases which are discussed at a MARAC meeting but for information purposes only (e.g. imminent release of perpetrator from prison)

Non-MARAC Cases

Cases should not be referred to MARAC if:

- There is no visible current high risk from the RIC or professional judgement
- Where violence occurring does not legally classify as DA under the definition of DA in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- 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.

If a case does not meet threshold the MARAC coordinator will advise the referrer of the reasons why threshold is not met and where appropriate offer advice on the next steps they can take to support the victim.

Additional Threshold Check:

If at any point threshold is unclear to the MARAC coordinator will send the referral is sent to MARAC police officer for another check to see if the case is known to police. When a mutual decision cannot be made on threshold the referral can also be sent to the Chair/Co-chair for further advice and scrutiny. Where agreement cannot be made on threshold between these parties, the case is accepted to MARAC with threshold met.

REFERRAL PROCESS

Any partner agency can refer a case to the MARAC if it meets the threshold criteria as listed above. If an agency believes that a case is high risk, but they lack confidence in the completion of the DASH Checklist then advice can be sought from their MARAC representative or the Coordinator.

This form requires the following essential information and may not be accepted without it:

- Name, date of birth and address of victim, their children and the perpetrator
- Safe contact details for the victim and whether the address is safe to post to
- Whether the victim has given their informed consent to their information being shared at a MARAC.
- Equality details for the victim and perpetrator
- Whether there are additional considerations to the risk of the victim or family such as the victim being disabled, requiring an interpreter, or barriers to engagement
- School, college or Early Years provider for any children identified
- Details regarding the Background, Current Risk and Outcomes

Deadlines

MARAC are conducted every Wednesday throughout the year. A MARAC meeting is only cancelled at the chair's desertion. Therefore, in order for referrals to be heard the following week, they must be received by 4pm on the Tuesday prior to the MARAC meeting. There is no cap to the number of cases heard each week. This is in order to manage risk to the victim. If a service is struggling with the capacity of work MARAC produces, they could consider sharing the MARAC representative role and seek support with research.

Emergency MARAC or Actions

If a service identifies a case which requires MARAC support and it believes that the needs are urgent, and the case cannot wait until the next scheduled MARAC then the agency can initiate an Emergency MARAC. In the first instance the agency must contact the MARAC Coordinator and the emergency MARAC's request is only authorized by the MARAC chair.

In some cases additional safety measures are enough to support the victim until the next meeting rather than holding an emergency MARAC. Requests must come via the MARAC coordinator and evidence why these measures are needed as a priority. The MARAC coordinator will pass on and make a request to the police.

MARAC List / Agenda

The Havering MARAC list of cases is circulated each Wednesday so that all agencies have the time to complete their research before the meeting. It is not appropriate for research to be conducted within the meeting as this has an impact on the efficiency of the MARAC. If a MARAC representative is unable to attend the meeting, their research must be sent to the MARAC coordinator no later than 12pm every Tuesday, to ensure their intelligence is replicated to the minutes that are typed live during the meeting. The MARAC coordinator is unable to share your intelligence during the meeting without having enough time to process the information.

The MARAC list of cases is circulated on a word document. The list cannot be arranged to accommodate timed cases where an agency or professional is required for specific cases, however, requests can be made via the MARAC Coordinator for cases to be heard at the beginning of the meeting if only representing one case.

Cases for information only

Where a case meets the referral criteria, but the matter the incidents are deemed to be low risk, the repeat is low risk or the MARAC has exhausted all options, it may be listed for information only rather than full MARAC action planning. Cases where a MARAC to MARAC is received, but the victim is now in a safe location will also be list for mention only. These cases would still require pre-meeting research and would initiate standard actions e.g. flagging and tagging but would result in limited discussion and action planning.

The decision to list cases as either full cases or for information will be made by the MARAC police officer and MARAC coordinator in consultation with the referrer or referring agency. Where needed further scrutiny can be sought from the MARAC Chair/Co-chair. If once listed in this way a partner agency identifies information which would indicate the listing is inappropriate as they have found information that would be considered high risk or a cause for concern then this will be communicated to the MARAC coordinator. The MARAC coordinator will then inform partners and the case will be moved on the MARAC agenda to be discussed as a full case. The listing of cases for information should help the time management of the agenda and may allow more cases to be heard at a forthcoming meeting, rather than having to be held over to the next meeting.

Victim contact before the meeting

It is best practice that clients who are referred to the MARAC should be notified of the referral (if it is safe to do so), although it is acknowledged that this will not always be possible. Victims should also be offered the support of an IDVA and where this is consented to a referral should be made prior to the MARAC.

The IDVA will be allocated within 48 hours of referral (with the exception of referrals received over a weekend) to enable the IDVA to contact the victim prior to the meeting. This ensures that the views and concerns of the victim can be directly communicated at the MARAC.

If the victim declines the support of an IDVA then the referring agency should record this on the referral form and, make attempts themselves to notify the victim that the case is being presented to the MARAC. All other methods of contact should be attempted i.e. via social care, housing, education, health visitor etc.

IDVA – Independent Domestic Violence Advocates

It is a standard action that all cases referred to the MARAC are also offered the services of an IDVA. To enable the IDVA to make contact prior to the meeting it is vital that a referral to the IDVA service is made in enough time with all appropriate details, specifically a safe contact number and consent.

It is the responsibility of agencies referring cases to the MARAC to also make a referral to the IDVA Service. A copy of the IDVA Referral form is contained in the Appendices.

Referrals to the IDVA Service can also be made for victims whose cases do not meet the threshold for MARAC but who score ten ticks or more on the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist.

A victim can decline the services of an IDVA and if this is the case, it should be stated clearly on the MARAC referral form. In these instances, the referring agency will then remain responsible for presenting the views of the victim and reporting back following the meeting.

Consent

The key focus at each MARAC meeting should be the victim. It is therefore desirable that 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 as above.

Notwithstanding this, 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, if referral threshold is met and cases should still be referred where it has been withheld.

Research

Once the case list has been circulated, MARAC representatives should research their own agency databases and records to identify relevant information regarding the victim, perpetrator and any children.

Where an individual is known to an agency, the information should be brought or forwarded to the MARAC Coordinator in advance of the MARAC if the MARAC representative is not be able to attend a meeting.

Guidance as to relevant and appropriate information is available in Safelives toolkits for all agencies and should be used as a guide. As with all information sharing is important that the level of information shared is appropriate to the risk identified.

There are occasions where MARAC to MARAC referrals need to be made to hand over a case outside of the borough. When a case has yet to be circulated, this case can be handed to the new MARAC area without any further research.

If the case has already been circulated for research, all partners, including the police, need to submit their research to the MARAC coordinator. This is to ensure a minute's document is created for the case. The MARAC to MARAC is then transferred to the new area has most information that can be shared in order to support the victim in the new area.

Actions before the MARAC

It is not intended to be the case that agencies wait until the MARAC meeting before taking action to address a case and begin reducing risk. Prior to the meeting work will commence within several agencies to address issues of safety and support. These are likely to include:

- Target Hardening to improve the security and safety at the home address
- Moving the victim to a safe address or temporary accommodation if needed.
- Providing support and advice, and safety planning with the victim, including planning safe exit
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults - There may also be a need for immediate safeguarding actions in cases where children or vulnerable adults are involved. A Strategy meeting will be initiated if necessary, either with Children's Care and Support or Adult's Care and Support.
- 3rd Party reporting of crime to 101 where necessary.

THE MARAC MEETING

The Havering MARAC meets once a week, unless the Chair has previously agreed an alternative date, for example due to bank holidays, schools holidays, annual leave etc. These take place remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Start / Finish Times

Meetings commence promptly at 10.00am and continue until all cases have been heard or 13.30pm. It is important that agencies ensure their representatives can attend and do not schedule conflicting appointments or other commitments for this day. As it is not possible to determine precisely when the meeting will conclude, representatives should ensure they have enough flexibility on the day to remain at the meeting until all cases have been heard. It is recommended that agencies do not schedule appointments from 1.30-2.30pm in case the meeting should run over schedule.

Attendance

Service representatives who attend the MARAC must be sufficiently senior to be able to offer actions which they can then ensure are completed. Generally, this would require a senior officer or middle manager.

Individual case workers will be requested to attend when they have made the referral for the case to be heard at the MARAC. Other caseworkers may only attend by invitation. Requests should be made to the MARAC coordinator.

When the nominated representative is unable to attend, a named deputy may attend. If there is no named deputy or the named deputy is also unable to attend, then a written case update can be submitted to the MARAC Coordinator no later than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

For those agencies which are not identified as core agencies it is permissible to send representatives to the MARAC only when relevant cases are listed.

The MARAC Chair/Co-chair

The Havering MARAC is currently chaired by the Detective Inspector of Safeguarding in the East Area Basic Command Unit of the Metropolitan Police Service. It has been agreed for the Police to find a substitute at a suitable rank if the Detective Inspector is unable to attend.

The role of the MARAC 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 10 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. Where appropriate a pre-meeting with the MARAC coordinator can be made.
- To assist the MARAC Coordinator to ensure that they can accurately record all actions at the meeting.
- To work to the MARAC Toolkit and uphold the principles for safe information sharing as outlined in the MARAC ISA, including ensuring the confidentiality agreement is signed (including verbal agreement) at the start of the meeting.
- Through the MARAC ensure that partners are held to account for the actions agreed at meetings.
- To report performance to the MARAC Steering group as set out on the VAWG sub group agenda.

The details for the Chair:

Name: Ryan Gilbert

Job Title: Acting Detective Inspector

Email: Ryan.gilbert@met.police.uk

Secure email: ryan.gilbert@met.pnn.police.uk

The details for the Co-Chair:

Name: Kerry Wright

Job Title: Senior Community Safety Officer

Telephone: 01708

Email: domesticviolenceMARAC@haverling.gov.uk

Secure email: domesticviolenceMARAC@haverling.gov.uk.cjism.net

The MARAC Coordinator

The Havering MARAC is administered by the MARAC Coordinator who is based within the Council's Community Safety Neighborhood directorate.

The role of the Coordinator is:

- To be a clear point of contact for all services referring to and working with the MARAC process
- To coordinate the MARAC meeting through managing calendar invites
- To screen all referrals made and ensure they meet the MARAC threshold's
- For referrals where threshold is not met, ensure more information is collated to re-assess threshold before rejected the referral submitted
- To coordinate services to complete risk reduction actions prior to MARAC meetings
- To collate a MARAC case list for circulation every Wednesday prior to the MARAC meeting
- To administrate the meeting, take minutes and record actions and their completion
- Record statistics and data to inform strategic discussion and decision making
- To coordinate a quarterly MARAC steering group
- Awareness raising, training, event planning, newsletters and creating promotional materials
- To complete MARAC transfers to other local authorities
- Complete letters agreed at the MARAC and ensure chair's approval before sharing

The details for the MARAC Coordinator:

Name: Sarah Strang

Job Title: Community Safety Officer

Telephone: 01708 434471

Email: domesticviolenceMARAC@haverling.gov.uk

Secure email: domesticviolenceMARAC@haverling.gov.uk.cjism.net

Information shared at the MARAC

All attending agencies are required to verbally agree the MARAC Information Sharing Protocol prior to attending the meeting. In doing so they are agreeing to the confidentiality Agreement at each meeting along with all invited visitors. The MARAC ISA provides full details about information sharing and confidentiality.

Observers at MARAC

It is recognised that the MARAC approach is likely to be of interest to many partners both locally and across the country. Consequently, it is acknowledged that there is a high likelihood that request to observe the process may be received from partners across various agencies.

While there is every intention to promote the work of the MARAC and to encourage partners to contribute to such multi-agency initiatives it is nonetheless a meeting where highly sensitive information is shared and therefore Havering limit it to two observers per meeting and they must sign the confidentiality act.

The MARAC Coordinator must be advised who the observers are before the meeting and given an opportunity to agree or otherwise to the observer will not be permitted to attending the meeting.

ACTION PLANNING

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. The responsibility to take appropriate action rests with individual agencies; it is not transferred to the MARAC.

Within the MARAC meeting a tailored action plan will be developed to increase the safety of the victim, children, perpetrator, other vulnerable parties and any staff. It is a key principle of the MARAC process that action plans are specific to individual cases to address the circumstances and wishes of the victim.

This does not however prevent a series of standard actions which will be implemented for all cases. These include:

- All agencies flagging and tagging their files in relation to perpetrator, victim and any children. This ensures that repeat incidents can be identified as such and that should a victim later have contact with another agency the appropriate level of support can be given.
- The establishment of Police TACAU (treat all calls as urgent) where appropriate on the victim's and any other relevant addresses.
- Referral to the IDVA service for specialist support and advice as well as information relating to other specialist services and providers of support.

- Providing feedback to the victim on the MARAC process. Following the meeting where the victim is engaging with an IDVA they will contact the victim to give a verbal update on the outcome(s). Where a victim does not consent to an IDVA referral the referrer should feed back to the victim.

It is expected that agencies will volunteer actions and it is not the role of the MARAC Chair or Coordinator to allocate actions to participating agencies.

Completion of Actions

A summary of agreed actions from the MARAC are distributed within the minutes. Representatives are required to complete and provide confirmation that actions, within their own service. There should be further follow up, from the action owner, to inform the MARAC that the actions have been completed to the MARAC within 5 working days after the MARAC, unless specified otherwise. The MARAC Coordinator will query any outstanding actions if these have not been completed within this timeframe. It remains however the responsibility of the named agency to ensure that actions are noted before leaving the MARAC and completed in a timely fashion.

Where agencies are unable to complete either individual or standard actions they should notify the MARAC Coordinator. If the situation cannot be resolved, the MARAC Chair and/or the VAWG strategic Group will then work with the agency concerned to identify a solution consistent with the principles of the MARAC process.

Referrals to other MARAC's

MARAC's operate on a geographical basis which is not always consistent with the geographical areas served by the agencies which are represented in the MARAC process. Consequently, if a case which requires MARAC is identified but which does not fall within the geographical boundaries of the Havering MARAC then the case will be referred to the appropriate area via the MARAC Coordinator if the referrer is unable to send their referral to the correct borough.

Similarly, if the victim moves out of the borough a referral will be made by the MARAC Coordinator to the local MARAC Coordinator in the area where the victim re-locates.

Jurisdiction

Where a victim has relocated across MARAC boundaries, the MARAC of the Local Authority area in which the victim is normally resident should take lead responsibility. This is to ensure that each case is referred to the MARAC most able to offer appropriate support to the victim.

As housing, children's social care, adult social care and education services are ordinarily provided by the Local Authority in which the victim is registered as living, MARAC referrals should reflect this and as such all MARAC referrals should be made to the MARAC operating in the local authority area where a victim is registered as living.

Where the victim's relocation is a permanent or long-term move then a MARAC to MARAC referral will be appropriate.

In all other cross boundary cases the lead MARAC will update any other MARACs who may be able to offer support, via the MARAC Coordinator as required.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MARAC

Equality Impact Data

All partner agencies are committed to delivering services that meet the needs of all residents. The Havering website has a directory which lists several local, regional and national services to support people from different backgrounds and who may have differing needs or experience unique barriers to accessing support.

The MARAC and any individuals involved with it will ensure that victims are not judged or discriminated against. This includes any inappropriate or insensitive comments being made about the victim, their children or their circumstances, or the alleged perpetrator. All work undertaken at the meetings will be informed by a commitment to equal opportunities and effective practice issues in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Equality impact data within the MARAC process is monitored and reported to Safelives and the VAWG sub group. Safelives requires that the following diversity data is submitted as part of a quarterly data return.

- Number of referrals where the victim is Black and/or Minority Ethnic (BME)
- Number of referrals where the victim is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) cases
- Number of referrals where the victim has a disability.
- Number of referrals where the victim is male
- Number of referrals where the victim is aged 16 or 17
- Number of referrals where the person listed as a perpetrator is under 18 years old

- Number of referrals where the victim is over the age of 65.

Evaluation

All MARAC data is collected weekly and entered into the Safelives MARAC spreadsheet by the MARAC Coordinator. The data is sent quarterly to the Performance and Intelligence team.

Review

The MARAC Operating Protocol will be reviewed annually by the VAWG Strategic Partnership.

Meeting Etiquette

When sharing information during the meeting, MARAC representatives are asked to ensure they are only sharing new and relevant information in the meeting.

The delivery of the information should be succinct to ensure only relevant information is recorded. Over sharing of information that is not required, causes unnecessary delays to the meeting and the meeting, which can lose focus to the action planning for the victim.

MARAC representatives are reminded that all SPOC's can share information on cases, support others services with ideas to safety plan for the victim and respect that everyone's voice is relevant.

As the meetings are on Teams, it is important that MARAC representatives be fully engaged in the meeting and listening to everyone's comments to prevent repetition of information that has previously been shared during the case discussion.

Through the duration of the meeting, apart from the chair, all attendees are to remain on mute to avoid background noise and unnecessary interruptions. Attendees should use the raise hands facility and speak only when directed by the chair.

MARAC representatives are asked not to speak over one another and wait for others to stop talking. MARAC representatives should use the chat facility if they need to ask a question or seek clarification. It is important to no information is shared in the chat that will identify any individuals being discussed during the meeting to endure GDPR compliance. This will be monitored by the coordinator.

Complaints

Any MARAC agency wishing to make a complaint against another agency related to the MARAC must follow the procedure as set out below.

- Anyone who wishes to make a complaint may do so in person, by telephone, or in writing. (Written complaints can be submitted by mail or email).
- In the first instance all complaints are to be made to the MARAC Chair.
- The MARAC Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days and provide a timeframe in which a response will be made.
- The MARAC Chair will investigate the complaint, consider a response and write to the complainant
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the initial response from the MARAC Chair, then an escalated letter of complaint can be sent to the chair of the VAWG Sub Group
- The Chair of the VAWG Sub-Committee will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days and respond within a stated time frame. The response should be reviewed by the VAWG Sub-Committee, if time permits, before it is sent to the complainant.
- If the complainant wishes to complain about the MARAC chair, the complaint should be made to DCI of the safeguarding unit in the first instance. the complaint within 5 working days and provide a timeframe in which a response will be made
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the initial response from the DCI, then an escalated letter of complaint can be sent to the chair of the VAWG Sub Group

Breaches

The aim of the MARAC is to increase the safety of the victim(s). All agencies are advised to ensure they operate within these protocols as a breach can increase the risk to the victim(s).

Any identified breaches of either the Operating Protocol or Information Sharing Agreement, will be referred to the VAWG Strategic group and the Designated Information Sharing Officer for consideration and may be referred to the Havering Safeguarding Partnerships Boards as required.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR)

Domestic Homicide Reviews were established on a statutory basis under section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004). This provision came into force on 13th April 2011

If a MARAC case becomes subject of a DHR the Independent Chair of the Homicide Review Panel or the Head of the Community Safety Partnership may make a written request to the MARAC Chair for the release of Minutes pertaining to the case.

The MARAC Chair in conjunction with the MARAC Coordinator will provide the Homicide Review Panel with copies of relevant minutes and action plans within 10 working days. MARAC information will be provided to Homicide Review Panels in the following circumstances:

- A client of the MARAC is the victim of a domestic abuse related homicide.

- A MARAC client is identified as the perpetrator of a domestic abuse related homicide and the victim is also known to the MARAC.

In all other circumstances a written request for the release of information including minutes and action plans may still be submitted to the Chair of the MARAC who will decide as to whether the request will be granted.

MARAC disclosure into court proceedings

Where disclosure of documents is requested by a court, the MARAC will follow the principles outlined by the Working party of the Family Justice Council/Safelives document; "MARAC and disclosure into court proceedings" published in December 2011, updated November 2022

Further Information

Further information relating to MARAC can be obtained from the MARAC Coordinator or from the SafeLives website: www.safelives.org.uk

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

APV	Adolescent to Parent Violence
BME/BAMER	Black Minority Ethnic/Black and Minority Ethnic and Refugee
Express Consent	Consent which is expressed orally, or in writing, (except where patients cannot write or speak, when other forms of communication may be sufficient)
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
Crime	Any act, default, or conduct prejudicial to the community, the commission of which by law, renders the person responsible liable to punishment by fine, imprisonment or other penalty.
Crime and Disorder Act (CDA)1998	The purpose of the Act is to tackle crime and disorder and help create safer communities. It requires the police and local authorities in partnership with the community, to establish a local partnership to cut crime. This partnership must conduct an audit to identify the types of crime in the area and develop a strategy for tackling them.
Designated Information Sharing Officer (DISO)	A person nominated by the agency of sufficient standing to process or initiate requests for personal information and data (generally the MARAC representative)
DA	Domestic Abuse
DCI	Detective Chief Inspector
DI	Detective Inspector

DV	Domestic Violence
DVA	Domestic Violence and Abuse
DASH RIC	Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Abuse Risk Indicator Checklist
DHR	Domestic Homicide Review
FLO	Family Liaison Officer
FP	Family Practitioner
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GP	General Practitioner
HBV/A	Honour Based Violence/Abuse
HSPB	Havering Safeguarding Partnerships Board
HV	Health Visitor
IDV/SA	Independent Domestic Violence/Sexual Violence Advocate
ISA	Information Sharing Agreement
ISP	Information Sharing Protocol
ISVA	Independent Sexual Violence Advocate
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB) or Transgender
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
M2M	MARAC to MARAC
OIC	Officer in Charge
Partner Agencies/Services	Organisations who have signed up to the MARAC Information Sharing Protocol and this toolkit.
TACAU	Treat All Calls as Urgent
SA	Sexual Abuse
SafeLives	Formerly known as CAADA, a National Organisation working to end domestic and sexual violence. SafeLives developed the IDVA and MARAC Model and collate data from MARACs across England and Wales.
SN	School Nurse
SW	Social Worker
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

