

Acknowledgements

We very much look forward to working with professionals from across Northern Ireland over the coming year.

Over 29,000 adult cases and 40,000 associated children were discussed at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) in England and Wales between July 2008 and June 2009. The work taking place in Northern Ireland will add to this number, making a real difference to the safety of people living with severe domestic abuse today.

Of course, none of this would be possible without funding from the Northern Ireland Office, the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Police Service for Northern Ireland. We are very extremely grateful for this. We are also extremely grateful for the practitioners in England and Wales that have helped us develop our body of knowledge and expertise over the last three years.

This is a young process and its success will depend heavily on the feedback we get from all of you whose job it is to make it work, week in and week out. To all of you, we say a huge 'thank you'.

CAADA

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* Please note - this document does not constitute legal advice. If legal advice is required please consult a solicitor or lawyer.

Developing your MARAC – from implementation to sustainability

What is a MARAC?

A MARAC, or Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, is a multi-agency meeting which has the safety of high risk victims of domestic abuse as its focus. The identification of high risk victims has been made possible by the use of a risk identification tool¹, most recently agreed between CAADA and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), for use across a wide range of agencies. This has enabled practitioners, both within the criminal justice system and outside, to identify high risk victims of domestic abuse. As a result many more high risk victims are being identified and in response the MARAC is being rolled out across England, Wales and Northern Ireland with a view to meeting this need.

The MARAC is a high volume process reflecting, sadly, the prevalence of domestic violence within society. As such it involves the participation of all the key statutory and voluntary agencies who might be involved in supporting a victim of domestic abuse. This includes those from the criminal justice system, those supporting children, those from the health service, the local authority, housing, substance misuse and, critically, specialist domestic violence services, most frequently in the form of an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA). The IDVA is a specialist caseworker who has received accredited training to work with high risk victims of domestic abuse from the point of crisis.

At a typical MARAC meeting 15 to 20 high risk cases are discussed in half a day with a very brief and focused information sharing process. This is followed by the creation of a simple multi-agency action plan which is put into place to support the victim and to make links with other public protection procedures, particularly those that manage perpetrators and safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

It is important to understand the MARAC meeting as part of a wider process which hinges on the early involvement and support from an IDVA and with the continued specialist case management that this role can offer, both before and after the meeting itself. Thus the MARAC combines the best of specialist support together with the co-ordination of the generic agencies whose resources and involvement will be needed to keep victims and their children safe.

¹ CAADA Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification Checklist
http://www.caada.org.uk/practitioner_resources/riskresources.htm

What is the evidence that a MARAC works?

The MARAC was originally established in Cardiff in 2003 and was evaluated with both a six month and a twelve month follow-up². This analysis showed that at the six month stage 63% of people were living free from violence and harm, and at the twelve month stage this figure had fallen to 42%. This is a remarkable outcome given the severity and sustained nature of the abuse that most victims whose cases are discussed at MARAC have sustained.

More recently CAADA has begun to collect data over the last two years from the MARACs that are running nationally. Between July 2008 and June 2009 we collected data from over 200 MARACs which showed that over 29,000 adult cases were discussed at MARAC and over 40,000 children were living in those households. The repeat victimisation figures as recorded in these statistics show that, for MARACs that have been running for over two years, there is a range of repeat victimisation typically between 28-34%, although some show somewhat higher repeat victimisation at closer to 40%. Again this is a most encouraging outcome and helps to explain the second success of MARAC, namely the fact that partner agencies have been prepared to establish a MARAC in their area despite the fact that it is not yet on a statutory footing. Unquestionably the MARAC creates extra work for those involved; this preparedness to set up the meeting shows both the value that it offers and also the commitment of those who wish to address domestic violence seriously.

Finally, there is some anecdotal evidence that the MARAC also has an impact on victims who do not meet the referral threshold of high risk. Thus the improved communication between agencies as the result of meeting up regularly at MARAC allows individual practitioners to resolve issues in relation to 'lower risk' cases where such a comprehensive multi-agency response might not be required.

² The Cardiff Women's Safety Unit: A Multi-Agency Approach to Domestic Violence Final Evaluation Report
<http://www.caada.org.uk/research/research.html>

Who should use this guide?

We anticipate that there are four groups who might wish to use this guide.

Firstly, it is aimed principally at the MARAC 'specialist'. These include the Chair, the MARAC Co-ordinator and the IDVA representative, who take a particular responsibility for ensuring that their MARAC follows the evaluated model. We expect that this document is referenced regularly by these roles to ensure effective MARAC performance.

Secondly, new MARACs who are establishing for the first time may want to review the guide as a group to check that their initial processes are sound.

Thirdly, those MARACs approaching their quality assurance review might want to use the guide in more detail to review areas of their work which they feel might need some amendment.

Lastly, we hope that this guide is of relevance to MARAC steering groups who can use it as a performance management tool. Steering groups will be enabled to take one or two sections of this guide to each meeting to review the performance of the MARAC relative to each respective section.

We would encourage all users of this guide to focus on the process tables on the following pages which summarises the essence of a sound MARAC, and the common pitfalls that we find as we observe MARACs around the country.

How to use this guide

The guide is set out to follow the MARAC process from identification of a high risk victim to follow up after the meeting. It is divided up into the ten core principles which we believe underpin an effective MARAC. Over the past two years, the CAADA MARAC model has been established across England and Wales. As a result of our experience in this area, we have been able to build up a set of principles, each one of which we have observed in practice, that we believe incorporate all of the key elements for a safe and effective MARAC.

At the core of each principle is the safety of the victim, which needs to be considered at all stages of the process from referral to information sharing, and action planning to administration. Ensuring that the victim has a clear voice and is supported by the MARAC is crucial to achieving safety and reducing repeat victimisation.

When reading this guide, please bear in mind the following:

- The principles cannot answer all the issues that you face as practitioners, particularly in relation to resources, however they do provide a solid analysis of the process of running a MARAC. This will help you identify both the strengths of your local MARAC and areas that could be developed. We suggest that you review each of these principles in turn and compare them to your own MARAC. You may wish to do this at different points in the development of your MARAC.
- The detail of the principles may appear daunting, and it might be most worthwhile for you to focus on the introduction to each principle, analyse the section on why it is important and note the good practice standard. In each section you will also find the resources that CAADA has prepared to help you implement the principle in question. The flowchart on page 11 will give you a sense of the key elements of the process of running a MARAC.
- There are four appendices to the document. The first two provide a checklist of points to consider when developing information sharing protocol and an operating protocol. There is also information sharing and action planning guidance.
- This guide should be used in conjunction with the other written materials that CAADA has produced including toolkits for MARAC representatives as well as frontline practitioners from all key agencies, the CAADA Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification Checklist, and all of the requisite forms for MARAC covering research, referral and information sharing. **These and other CAADA resources listed in this guide can be found on the website at www.caada.org.uk or by emailing marac@caada.org.uk.**

As you will see, the principles track the MARAC process in a chronological order from the point of identifying a MARAC case to reporting on actions completed. The last two are overarching principles and cover the process of embedding the MARAC in your local strategic partnerships and addressing the equality issues raised by MARAC. All principles relate to the process only and not to operational practice; the latter will rely on your local resources and expertise.

Example of how to use the principles

Principle 1: Identification- finding the right cases to refer to MARAC

What is the principle?

All agencies have protocols and systems for identifying and referring high risk cases to MARAC in a timely way.

Why is this principle important?

The aim of a MARAC is to provide a proportionate response to all high risk victims who meet the local threshold. We know from research³ that less than 50% of people with a severe injury caused by domestic abuse report to the police. This makes it vital that all agencies involved in MARAC have systems in place for identifying victims of domestic abuse. In some cases, you will be trained to differentiate those who are high risk from those who are lower risk. In other cases, you may refer on to other specialists who will identify the risk level. However, all attending agencies need to have a system in place which makes it possible for them to identify all high risk cases and not just those who report to the police.

This section might be most relevant to new MARACs who are setting up, or those who are already operational but unclear about the significance of each part of the process.

Best practice

Agencies at your MARAC systematically screen for domestic violence at the appropriate times and where abuse is disclosed by an adult they either complete a risk identification checklist, or refer to a specialist who can do this on their behalf.

The best practice summary will be relevant for those approaching the Quality Assurance Review and for your steering group as part of a regular oversight of the process.

³ Home Office Research Study 276, Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: findings from the British Crime Survey, Walby and Allen p99.

CAADA resources for the principle 1: Identification

1. MARAC Referral Form – download from www.caada.org.uk

The CAADA resources are available from our website www.caada.org.uk or by emailing marac@caada.org.uk. They will be useful for all MARACs.

How does this principle work in practice?

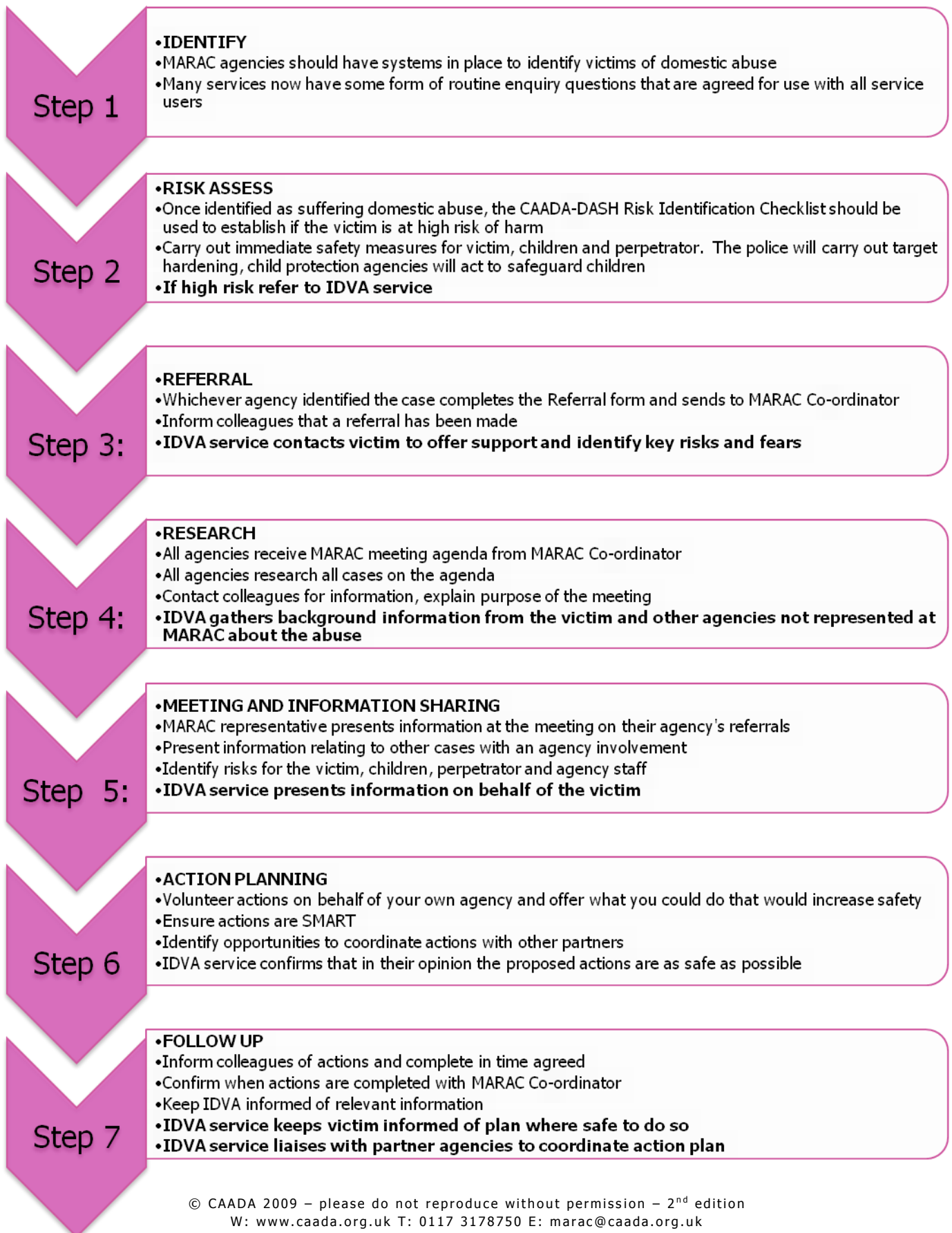
(figures below relate to the QA resource pack, June 09 - Feb 10 edition)	Why is this important?
Do MARAC agencies screen for domestic violence?	The aim of MARAC is to be accessible to all high risk victims of domestic abuse whether or not they report the abuse to the police. Thus, it is important that all partner agencies have systems in place to identify victims and make appropriate referrals.

We very much hope that this guide will help to address some of the inconsistencies in practice that can exist today and will make the process ever more effective and accountable in safeguarding high risk victims of domestic abuse.

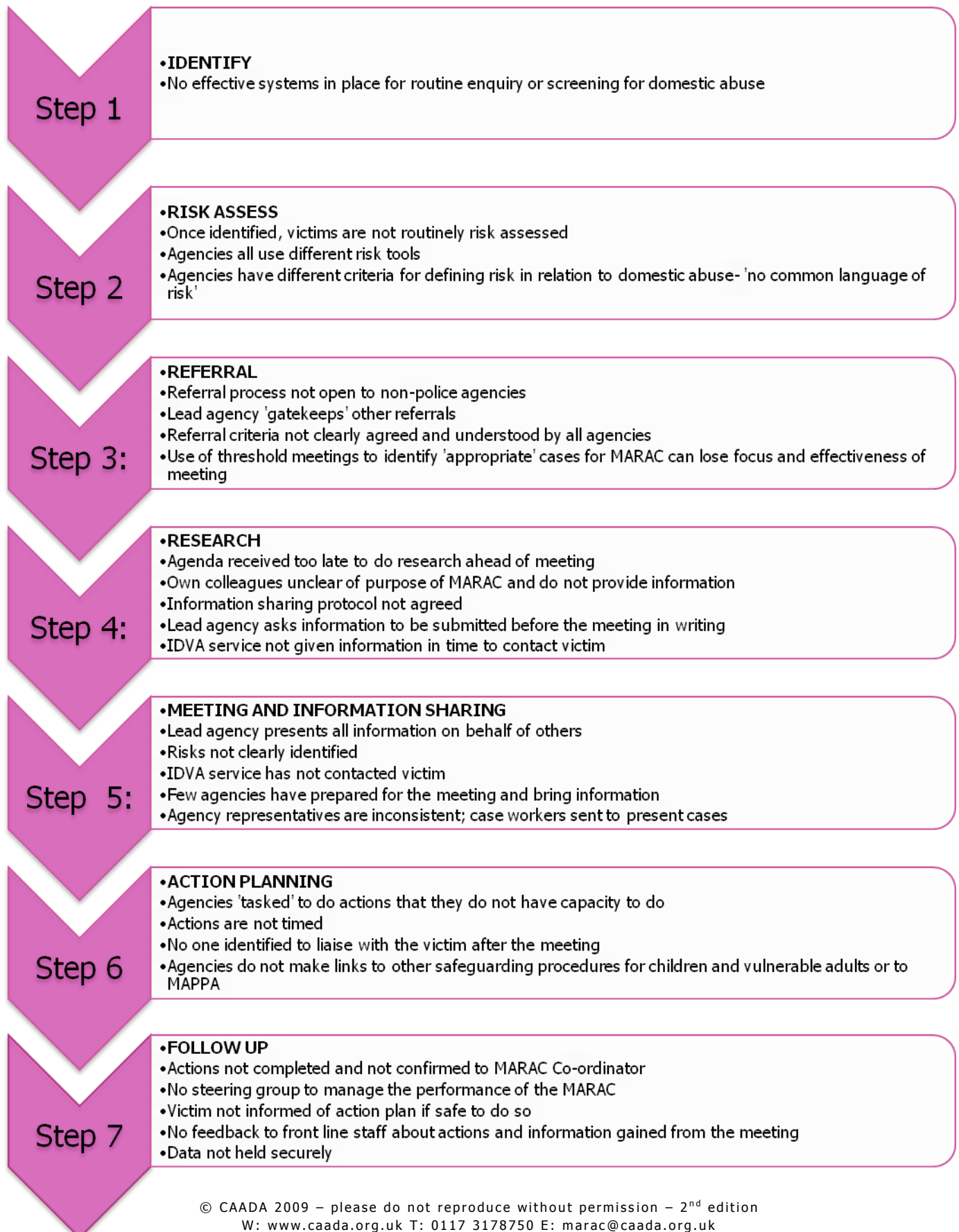
Please remember that we offer direct support about the MARAC process to any area via our dedicated email address: marac@caada.org.uk.

The details in these tables will apply particularly to those undergoing the Quality Assurance process, as well as giving specific guidance for those MARACs who are reviewing their approach and address practical issues. The numbers refer to the detail in the Quality Assurance resource pack.

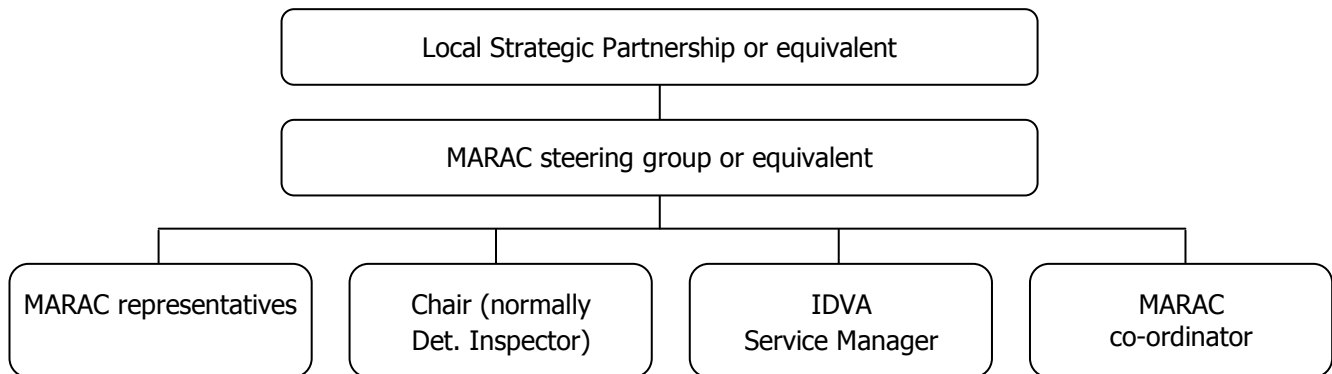
MARAC Flowchart 1 – the steps to the process



MARAC Process 2 – some common pitfalls



MARAC – the governance structure



- ✓ The MARAC needs a governance structure to ensure proper accountability on the part of participating agencies to their representatives, to one another and to victims. There may be a dedicated steering group or the MARAC may be a standing item on another partnership meeting agenda.
- ✓ Standing items to consider will include attendance, training for members, volume, repeat victimisation, referrals to other fora and equality of access.
- ✓ The steering group needs to be accountable to one of the local partnership bodies. This might be the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) or Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) for example, who are in turn accountable to the Local Strategic Partnership. For more detail on the steering group please refer to appendix 2.
- ✓ The steering group should include representatives from all the key agencies attending MARAC who have the authority to take decisions on behalf of their agency to change and amend policy matters.
- ✓ The MARAC meeting itself should be attended by middle managers from the key agencies (the MARAC representatives), as well as the chair, co-ordinator and the IDVA service. The IDVA service will normally be represented by either a lead IDVA, service manager or, in their absence, an individual IDVA.

The principles for an effective MARAC⁴

At the core of each principle is the safety of the victim, which needs to be considered at all stages of the process from referral to information sharing, and from action planning to administration. Ensuring that the victim has a clear voice and is supported by the MARAC is crucial to achieving safety and reducing repeat victimisation.

1. Identification

All agencies have protocols and systems for identifying and referring high risk cases to MARAC in a timely way.

2. Referral criteria

The MARAC has clear and transparent referral criteria that include visible high risk, professional judgment and escalation.

3. Representation

The relevant statutory agencies, specialist domestic violence services and voluntary and community organizations are appropriately represented at MARAC.

4. Engagement with the victim

The victim is at the centre of the process. An effective advocate, most commonly the IDVA, is identified to represent and support the victim within the MARAC process.

5. Research and information sharing

All agencies research their files and information systems and bring relevant, proportionate and up-to-date information which is shared and stored in accordance with legislation by all attendees who hold information on each case discussed.

6. Action planning

Comprehensive, SMART action plans are developed which address the risks identified at the meeting.

7. Volume

The volume of cases referred to the MARAC should be commensurate with your local population.

8. Administration

The administration of the MARAC promotes safety, efficiency and accountability.

9. Strategy and governance

The MARAC process is embedded in key local partnerships to promote sustainability.

10. Equality

The MARAC demonstrates that it is a process which is structured to deliver equality of outcome to all.

⁴ These principles are being used for the CAADA MARAC Quality Assurance process.

Principle 1: Identification – finding the right cases to refer to MARAC

What is the principle?

All agencies have protocols and systems for identifying and referring high risk cases to MARAC in a timely way.

Why is this principle important?

The aim of MARAC is to provide a proportionate response to all high risk victims who meet the local threshold. We know from the British Crime Survey⁵ that less than 50% of people with a severe injury caused by domestic abuse report to the police. This makes it vital that all agencies involved in MARAC have systems in place for identifying victims of domestic abuse. In some cases, you will be trained to differentiate between those who are high risk from those who are lower risk. In other cases, you may refer on to other specialists who will identify the risk level. However, all attending agencies need to have a system in place which makes it possible for them to identify all high risk cases and not just those who report to the police. The ability to correctly identify high risk cases relates both to initial referrals and repeat referrals.

Best practice: Agencies at your MARAC systematically screen for domestic violence at the appropriate times, and where abuse is disclosed by an adult they either complete a risk identification checklist, or refer to a specialist who can do this on their behalf.

CAADA resources for principle 1: Identification

1. MARAC Referral Form – download from www.caada.org.uk

⁵ Home Office Research Study 276, Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: findings from the British Crime Survey, Walby and Allen p 99.

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
1.1	Agencies identify high risk victims and/or have implemented procedures for referring to MARAC	The aim of MARAC is to be accessible to all high risk victims of domestic abuse whether or not they report the abuse to the police. Thus, it is important that all partner agencies have systems in place to identify victims and make appropriate referrals.
1.2	Police and IDVA consistently risk assess in a timely fashion	While more and more agencies are becoming familiar with the CAADA DASH Risk Identification Checklist, we acknowledge that not all practitioners will feel confident in establishing the level of risk without input from a domestic abuse expert. However, we feel that both the IDVA and the police should systematically risk assess and do so in a timely fashion.
1.3	Cases are heard at MARAC within six weeks of incident or referral for monthly MARACs or four weeks for fortnightly MARACs	The speed with which a case is dealt with is important. With monthly MARACs, there should be no more than a six week delay between the report and the conference. In fortnightly MARACs this time can be shortened further. The impact of the action plan will be considerably reduced if there is a further delay.

Principle 2: Referral criteria – establishing clear thresholds for all agencies

What is the principle?

The MARAC has clear and transparent referral criteria that include visible high risk, professional judgment and escalation.

Why is this principle important?

Establishing a set of clear and relevant referral criteria for a MARAC is a delicate task. A system that works for all potential referring agencies is needed - those who are highly experienced and sophisticated in their understanding of domestic abuse and those for whom it represents just a small part of their work. The fact that victims may disclose differing amounts of information to different agencies and that for many victims it will be very hard to give the full picture to any agency must be accommodated.

In order to try and make the process as robust as possible, the referral criteria should include those victims who disclose a lot of detail about the abuse (visible high risk, answering yes to the questions on the checklist), those where numerous incidents have been reported and where one might reasonably assume that domestic abuse is escalating even if no single incident would meet the high risk threshold and, finally, those victims where professional judgement on behalf of the practitioners indicates that the case is high risk. Using professional judgment is particularly relevant in cases involving 'honour'-based violence. These criteria need to be agreed between agencies locally and set out in such a way as to be clear to all, so that the referral process is open to all partners and yet the MARAC is protected from an unmanageable number of referrals.

Referral criteria are also necessary for repeat referrals.

Best practice: Your MARAC has a clear set of referral criteria that cover visible high risk, escalation and professional judgement. The actual cases referred will reflect the use of all these criteria by a range of agencies. Evidence will be submitted to show that repeat cases are being identified and referred to MARAC where appropriate.

CAADA resources for principle 2: Referral

1. MARAC Referral Form – download from www.caada.org.uk
2. Inter MARAC Referral Form – email marac@caada.org.uk
3. CAADA ACPO DASH Risk Identification Checklist – to gain a copy of the ACPO endorsed Risk Identification Checklist for use by frontline police professionals email marac@caada.org.uk
4. Definition of a 'repeat' incident – email marac@caada.org.uk
5. Operating Protocol Checklist – refer to Appendix 2 of this document

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
2.1	Does your MARAC have a referral criteria that includes professional judgement and/or actuarial assessment and/or escalation and frequency of incidents?	There is extensive guidance in the CAADA Risk Identification Checklist about the use of different criteria for referral into MARAC. We recommend that you should include professional judgment to identify cases that are high risk, including those where perhaps very limited disclosure is made, actuarial assessment where a large number of risk factors are identified by the victim and the frequency of incidents. This latter criteria aims to capture those victims who, for example, call the police regularly for apparently 'low level' domestic abuse and where we have a responsibility to establish whether the true situation is more serious.
2.2	Are the referral criteria proactively and regularly communicated to MARAC partners?	Inevitably the staff attending MARAC will change over time and it should be part of the role of the MARAC Co-ordinator to ensure that new attendees are clear about how to refer into the meeting and the criteria for doing so. Suggested procedures are set out in the CAADA DASH Risk Identification Checklist. We would also recommend that your MARAC operating protocol covers referral criteria, ensuring that these are accessible to all partners.
2.3	Does your MARAC receive referrals from a variety of agencies?	In order for your MARAC to provide an effective safety net for high risk victims of domestic abuse, it is important to accept referrals from all your partner agencies who are involved with the MARAC. This may well mean that in the early days of the process you will need to actively promote the MARAC to those agencies and provide them with clear referral pathways that encourage referrals and build their confidence in the process.
2.4	Do agencies refer repeat cases back to MARAC?	In order to be effective, the agencies who take part in MARAC need to have systems to identify repeat cases. These are often known as 'flagging and tagging of files'. We would expect to see cases of repeat victimization being identified by more than just the police and the IDVA, so that the MARAC demonstrates that it can respond when a victim makes a disclosure of repeat abuse to another agency.
2.5	Do you have a procedure for receiving referrals from other MARACs and for referring cases on?	It is increasingly the case that as victims move from one part of the country to another, so MARACs are referring cases to a MARAC in another area. This may also offer the opportunity of support for the victim if there is an IDVA service in the new area. It is important to have the systems in place to deal with these, both in terms of making referrals and receiving referrals and to ensure that communication links are kept open with the other area as much as is necessary.

2.6	Do you refer cases on to other MARACs?	It is increasingly the case that as victims move from one part of the country to another, so MARACs refer cases to MARACs other areas. This may also offer the opportunity of support for the victim if there is an IDVA service in the new area. It is important to have the systems in place to deal with these, both in terms of making referrals and receiving referrals and to ensure that communication links are kept open with the other area as much as is necessary.
2.7	Do you receive MARAC referrals from other areas?	

Principle 3: Representation – who should attend the MARAC meeting?

What is the principle?

The relevant statutory agencies, specialist domestic violence services and voluntary and community organisations are appropriately represented at MARAC.

Why is this principle important?

Each representative at MARAC will typically bring specific information that will help to build the most comprehensive picture possible of the family and the risks that the victim faces. Representatives need to be of an appropriate level of seniority so that they can commit to actions on behalf of their agency, which in certain circumstances will involve the use of resources. Finally, consistency of attendance will reinforce the practical working relationships within MARAC.

Best practice: Your MARAC has regular attendance from the full range of relevant statutory agencies, specialist domestic violence services and voluntary and community organisations with consistent attendance in each from someone of middle manager rank or equivalent. For larger agencies, a named alternative representative is also identified.

CAADA resources for principle 3: Representation

1. MARAC Representative's Toolkit – download from www.caada.org.uk

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
3.1	Do those agencies who have a role in supporting the victim consistently attend the meeting – including but not limited to – police, IDVA, health trust, probation, housing and children's services.	It is important that the representatives at the MARAC reflect the needs and risks faced by the victims whose cases are discussed and therefore the list of potential attendees can include the criminal justice agencies (such as the police, probation, and the Youth Justice Agency), the health agencies housing agencies, those working with children and young people (including children's services, children's centres, family courts and community services) and those working with adults (including vulnerable adult services and substance misuse services), as well as specialist services from the voluntary sector covering domestic abuse (in particular the IDVA service), sexual abuse, substance misuse and specialist support for black and minority ethnic (BME) and lesbian, gay,

		bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) communities.
3.2	Are there any significant gaps in agency attendance that impact the effectiveness of the MARAC?	Some MARACs include attendance from agencies as far ranging as the fire service, the ambulance service and even the Borders Agency. You will know what the particular needs are of your local community and you should try and ensure that they are represented at the MARAC, either in person or, in the case of smaller agencies or those who have an occasional attendance, via a paper submission to the chair with information ahead of the meeting.
3.3	Do the larger agencies send another representative when they are not able to attend?	For the statutory agencies, and larger voluntary sector agencies, we would expect that they would nominate an alternative representative if the designated representative cannot attend so that there are not gaps in attendance at the meeting owing to holidays, sickness, etc.
3.4	Are attendees able to represent and act on behalf of their agency?	Agency representatives are normally expected to be a middle manager or equivalent so that they are able to gather and present information from colleagues and also commit to specific actions, with the resources that these require, without normally having to seek further authorisation.

Principle 4: Engagement with the victim

What is the principle?

The victim should be at the centre of the MARAC. An effective advocate, most commonly the IDVA, is identified to represent and support the victim within the MARAC process.

Why is this principle important?

The MARAC process is almost always most effective when the victim is engaged in the process and their views are represented at the meeting. Normally the IDVA is best placed to do this and to follow up with the victim and with partner agencies after the meeting. The IDVA, or other professional, should be able to highlight the key elements of risk from the victim's perspective and the areas that they believe will make most difference to their safety. This allows all partners to use their limited resources to best effect.

Best practice: You will have clear protocols for referring cases to the IDVA service and adequate capacity to support the volume of victims managed at MARAC. Victims are consistently contacted before and after the meeting where safe to do so. There is evidence that in the majority of cases this contact is successfully achieved and the views of the victim are identified and shared at the meeting.

CAADA resources for principle 4: Engagement with the victim

1. CAADA IDVA training course – visit www.caada.org.uk for more information
2. CAADA Leading Lights service accreditation – visit www.caada.org.uk for more information
3. CAADA IDVA Toolkit – download from www.caada.org.uk
4. CAADA IDVA helpdesk – email training@caada.org.uk

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
4.1	Does the referring agency discuss the referral to MARAC with the victim where it is safe to do so?	It is regarded as best practice that the victim should be informed that their case is going to MARAC unless the referring agency judges that it is not safe to do this. Unless the victim is aware of the referral, it is not possible to contact them and seek their views on how the MARAC could best help them. Without this, the task of those attending the meeting becomes considerably more difficult.
4.2	Do you have a procedure for referring MARAC cases to the IDVA service in a timely way?	We recommend that you establish a clear referral protocol with your IDVA service relating to high risk cases that go to MARAC. This ensures that referrals are received in time and the IDVA service is able to contact and work with the victim before the MARAC meeting.
4.3	Are attempts systematically made to contact the victim before the meeting and bring relevant information from the victim to the meeting?	It is the role normally of the IDVA, but on occasion of other specialist services, to bring the views of the victim, where possible, to the meeting so that participants have a sense of what they can offer to be as helpful as possible in each case.
4.4	Do you attempt systematically to update the victim after the meeting where it is safe to do so?	It should be a standard action that either the IDVA or the named person responsible for liaising with the victim should do so after the meeting to ensure that the actions that have been agreed are indeed appropriate and safe and that the victim feels supported by the MARAC.
4.5	Do you have sufficient IDVA capacity to support the volume of MARAC cases that you are handling?	We recommend that an IDVA should receive no more than 100 high risk referrals each year ⁶ , assuming that approximately 70% of these will engage with the service. It is important to try and establish enough capacity in this area to ensure that your IDVA service fulfils its role effectively and is not unduly stretched.
4.6	Is the main focus of the meeting on the victim's safety?	There are occasions when the MARAC meeting can get understandably diverted and move away from its central role in addressing safety. For example, the focus of the MARAC may shift onto the problems that the victim's case presents or the child protection issues that are raised. All agencies should play a part in retaining this focus however the IDVA has particular expertise in understanding victim safety and should act to ensure that the meeting keeps its key focus as much as possible.

⁶ In very rural areas this figure may be lower.

Principle 5: Research and information sharing – managing the sharing and storage of sensitive personal information

What is the principle?

All agencies research their files and information systems and share relevant, proportionate and up-to date information on each case discussed at the MARAC meeting. Any information is then stored in accordance with legislation by all attendees.

Why is this principle important?

Consistent and accurate research will help attendees at MARAC to build up as comprehensive a picture as possible of a case at the meeting. In practice, most agencies will frequently be unaware of information held by others. For example, the police may be unaware of significant injuries reported to A&E, while the A&E staff may be unaware of criminal convictions, arrests and incidents reported to the police. If research is done before the meeting, it can be shared where appropriate and an action plan can be established in the timeliest way possible.

Proportionate information sharing is the key to a successful MARAC, facilitating effective safety planning while protecting the rights of the individual. The sharing and storing of information outside the meeting is also important for safety and to meet the legal responsibility of each agency in relation to data protection.

Best practice: Your MARAC has an Information Sharing Protocol that all agencies are signed up to and abide by. Information is researched before the meeting and shared at each meeting by all agencies that hold relevant information relating to the risks faced by the victim.

CAADA resources for principle 5: Information sharing

1. FAQs for Information Sharing at MARAC – download from www.caada.org.uk
2. Information Sharing Protocol for MARAC Checklist⁷ - refer to Appendix 1 of this guide
3. Sharing Information without Consent Form – download from www.caada.org.uk

⁷ Please note that this document does not constitute legal advice, separate advice must be sought.

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
5.1	Does your MARAC have an Information Sharing Protocol that is up-to-date and annually reviewed?	<p>Many MARACs will start using an Information Sharing Protocol that has been developed either for generic use in domestic violence or possibly for some other multi-agency meeting. The distinguishing features of the MARAC include the involvement of a number of voluntary sector agencies in the process and its inherent links with other public protection arrangements, namely MAPPA, child protection and POVA. You will need to be sure that your information sharing protocol covers all the relevant aspects for MARAC and is suitable for use by all agencies.</p> <p>We would recommend that you review your Information Sharing Protocol annually, that it is updated and that all agencies confirm their commitment to the principles contained within it.</p>
5.2	Does your Information Sharing Protocol cover information sharing and the distribution, security and storage of information?	It is important that all aspects of the process are covered within the Information Sharing Protocol, not just the sharing of information itself but, critically, how information is distributed and how it is held and stored securely. You will, as part of the MARAC process, be involved with circulation of minutes, agendas and actions and this needs to be done in a secure way.
5.3	Can you evidence application of 5.2?	We are aiming here to establish that the procedure set out in your Information Sharing Protocol is being implemented in practice. Eg. is correspondence secure? Are agencies keeping the MARAC information in a secure way? Do they have a process for deciding what information is retained and when it might be destroyed?
5.4	Are all the agencies that receive the agenda and/or attend the MARAC signed up to the information sharing protocol?	It is not appropriate to circulate the agenda or to attend the MARAC unless the agency in question has signed up to the information sharing protocol.
5.5	Do agencies consistently research cases ahead of the MARAC meeting?	Without researching cases ahead of the meeting it is not possible to share relevant and proportionate information. Actions to go and check files should be exceptional as they encourage the reviewing of cases which is not in line with CAADA guidance.
5.6	Does your chair read out or ask attendees to sign a confidentiality statement at the beginning of the MARAC?	We recommend that a confidentiality statement is read out at the beginning of each MARAC and in the event that you do have an individual attendee for a single case that that person also signs a confidentiality statement for that case.
5.7	Is the information shared at MARAC relevant and	There is a certain skill in presenting suitable information for MARAC given the tight time constraints and the specific focus

	proportionate?	of the meeting. It is important that the information that is shared is relevant to the case and that neither too much nor too little detail is gone into. It also needs to be up-to-date and accurate.
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Principle 6: Action planning – co-ordinating the work of the MARAC agencies

What is the principle?

Comprehensive, SMART⁸ action plans are developed which address the risks identified at the meeting.

Why is this principle important?

The MARAC will prove to be a more efficient use of resources if your action plans are SMART.⁹ Comprehensive action plans are typically more effective at reducing repeat victimisation for MARAC cases. By co-ordinating resources a more effective and cost effective action plan can be drawn up. Since all cases that come to MARAC are high risk, action planning is key with regards to reducing the risk of these victims and to improving the safety of other family members, especially children and staff. With the introduction of homicide reviews, action plans developed at MARAC need to be consistent and auditable. The responsibility for actions lies with each agency so transparency and accountability are crucial.

Best practice: Your action plans reflect where possible the risk factors identified by the agencies who shared information at the MARAC and the responsibility for and timing of completion is clear. Incomplete actions are an exception. Clear links are made with other multi-agency processes where relevant. Agency resources are co-ordinated to help ensure maximum effectiveness and all partner agencies are involved in actions where appropriate.

CAADA resources for principle 6: Action planning

1. MARAC Representative's Toolkit – download from www.caada.org.uk
2. Action Planning Guidance – refer to Appendix 4 of this guide

⁸ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely.

How does this principle work in practice?

	Practice	Why is this important?
6.1	Do your actions plans reflect the risks and needs identified during the information sharing process?	In the information sharing process a number of risks will be identified relating to the victim, the perpetrator and the children and in some cases, staff or other individuals. It is helpful to reflect on these risks and to consider them in relation to the action plan as to whether they have been addressed and, if they cannot be addressed, whether this has been noted. As much as possible the action plan should aim to address the risks that were identified in the meeting.
6.2	Do your actions plans incorporate actions in relation to the victim, children, perpetrator, agency staff and other vulnerable parties?	As above it is crucial that the MARAC is picking up on all risks identified and ensuring that referrals are made which protect the children, family members, perpetrator, and staff. We would anticipate that as part of the MARAC process you would identify additional risks to members of the family and that additional referrals would be needed such as to Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI), child protection or safeguarding vulnerable adults. These should be noted as part of your action plan. You may also want to record where resources are simply not available to make these referrals; if for example, the number of children identified cannot be accepted for assessment by children's services.
6.3	Are the action plans SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed)?	SMART action plans are likely to be more effective, and will ensure that agencies can be held accountable for the actions that they volunteer.
6.4	Are actions completed within the target time?	Without confidence that agencies are completing their actions the efficacy of the MARAC will be reduced.
6.5	Where an action cannot be achieved is this recorded separately?	It is the responsibility of agencies when they are unable to complete an action, for whatever reason, that they report this to the MARAC Co-ordinator before the next meeting, who in turn records it in the minutes. The emphasis here is to highlight actions that were impossible to compete (e.g. the victim went into emergency accommodation in another part of the country).
6.6	Do your plans involve joint working between agencies where appropriate (e.g. where a victim is very isolated and difficult to see alone)?	We would expect to see examples of joint working, either in the form of joint visits or perhaps more creatively where agencies combine their resources to facilitate additional support for a victim.

Principle 7: Volume – managing the balance between resources and need

What is the principle?

The volume of cases referred to the MARAC should be commensurate with your local population.

Why is this principle important?

The aim of MARAC is to support those victims who are at high risk of homicide and serious harm. It is a volume process and in order to achieve a significant reduction in repeat victimisation, it should include approximately the top 10% of all victims in terms of risk profile. In a mature MARAC where up to 50% of referrals come from the police and 50% from other agencies, this will equate to about the top 5% of police referrals and the remaining cases coming from other partners.

Best practice: Your volume will be between 80-100% of the CAADA recommended volume.

CAADA resources for principle 7: Volume

1. CAADA visit report and cost benefit analysis – this information is forwarded to your MARAC directly by CAADA

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
7.1	Does your volume reflect the CAADA recommendation for your area?	In the CAADA report following our visit to observe your MARAC, we will have set a target for the volume that your MARAC should be undertaking annually.

Principle 8: Administration – creating a clear and robust process

What is the principle?

The administration of the MARAC promotes safety, efficiency and accountability.

Why is this principle important?

The effective administration of MARAC will facilitate a more efficient use of participants' time. Key functions, such as the timely preparation of minutes and agendas, permit MARAC participants to research their files in good time for the meeting. This in turn encourages effective information sharing and action planning. Accurate minutes pinpoint responsibility for actions. Secure storage of MARAC data and information, both paper and electronic, is critical for both safety and accountability. Robust administrative procedures will underpin your effectiveness in relation to almost every other principle of the MARAC.

Best practice: The administrator/co-ordinator for the MARAC ensures that information is prepared accurately and is distributed securely and in a timely manner.

CAADA resources for principle 8: Administration

1. MARAC Co-ordinator's Toolkit – download from www.caada.org.uk
2. MARAC Co-ordinator Job Description – download from www.caada.org.uk
3. MARAC Referral Form – download from www.caada.org.uk
4. MARAC Minute Checklist – refer to Appendix 3 of this guide

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
8.1	Does your area have an identified person with responsibility for MARAC administration/coordination?	It is recommended that you have a named MARAC Co-ordinator who has responsibility for organising the MARAC meeting including preparation of the agenda, research for the meeting and preparation of the minutes.
8.2	Do you use consistent forms for MARAC referrals?	We recommend that consistent forms are used for MARAC referrals so that the MARAC remains an accessible process for all agencies.
8.3	Does the agenda/case list go out to attendees in a timely way, ie. eight	It is important that the agenda goes out far enough ahead of the meeting so that agencies can research their files before the meeting and bring relevant and proportionate information.

	working days before the MARAC?	
8.4	Do the minutes differentiate between fact and opinion?	There will be instances in the MARAC where facts are shared with the group and there others where professionals will voice their professional opinion about the risks or position of a victim.
8.5	Are the minutes accurate?	Where possible the minutes should differentiate between these two and should be an accurate record of the meeting. It is good practice to review the minutes with the group at the beginning of the next meeting.
8.6	Does the MARAC coordinator keep track of MARAC cases and notify the Chair of those cases where there has been 12 months since the last MARAC?	We recommend that cases that go to the MARAC should be flagged or tagged by agencies for twelve months following the last incident. This will require the MARAC Co-ordinator to set up a simple case tracking system to allow them to notify colleagues when twelve months have passed and the flags can be removed from their respective systems.

Principle 9: Strategy and governance - performance management and governance of your MARAC

What is the principle?

The MARAC process is embedded in key local partnerships to promote sustainability.

Why is this principle important?

MARACs are an effective mechanism for dealing with high risk cases of domestic abuse, and this principle highlights the need to sustain this effectiveness and to provide adequate resources to the process. Sustainability will be achieved through the embedding of these principles, and by ensuring the strategic commitment of key partnerships and constituent agencies in terms of resources, practice and standards. Having a successful and sustainable process will ensure your MARAC meets best practice standards, thereby increasing the efficacy of your area's domestic violence strategies and demonstrating that you are saving public money locally.

Best practice: Your area has an operating protocol and a steering group that oversees the MARAC. You may have adopted a commitment to record repeat victimisation within a local strategy and/or have made a clear commitment to the process long term. This might be reflected in main stream funding for the co-ordinator's post and the IDVA service as well as inclusion of the MARAC representative function in key job descriptions. MARAC is in key local strategies for reducing domestic violence and violent crime.

CAADA resources for principle 9: Strategy

1. Checklist for MARAC Operating Protocol – refer to Appendix 2 of this guide

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
9.1	Do you have an operating protocol for your MARAC which is signed by relevant agencies and up-to-date?	We recommend that each MARAC should have an operating protocol which sets out the terms under which each agency is committed to the process. This needs to be kept up-to-date on an annual basis, or more frequently if necessary.
9.2	Do you have a MARAC steering group, or other accountable body or governance structure that meets regularly?	It is important to have some sort of governance structure for your MARAC, such as a dedicated steering group which in turn would report to your local strategic partnership or similar. It may be that there is an existing steering group which has the right membership and authority to take on this role in relation to MARAC. This will help to ensure that there is clear accountability for each agency that is involved in the process, that the process is performance managed on a regular basis and that practical issues that are raised by those involved in the meeting can be addressed at a strategic level. Such issues include funding, attendance, analysis of statistics, clarity of roles, links with other multi-agency fora and training.
9.3	Does this body have the authority to uphold the key principles and hold partner agencies to account?	In practice, we know that in many areas individual practitioners are making the decision to attend MARAC independently, and that their position would be greatly strengthened if they had the strategic support from senior managers in their respective organisations.
9.4	If so, is it attended by the key MARAC agencies at an appropriate level?	Ideally, the steering group needs to have a senior manager from each agency that is part of the MARAC represented.
9.5	Are there strategic leads for MARAC within the key agencies at MARAC?	We recommend that there should be a named strategic lead for MARAC within each of the key agencies that are represented there.
9.6	Have you adopted a commitment to repeat victimisation data collection or identified MARAC as a key strategic priority in your local strategic partnership?	Understanding how MARAC can contribute to Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) and key performance indicators around violent crime will be important in getting longer term buy-in for the process.
9.7	Is the throughput of the MARAC and repeat cases monitored and performance reviewed on a quarterly basis?	Reporting on repeat victimization at MARAC will be encouraged. Monitoring your level of repeat victimisation, source of referrals and diversity of MARAC cases will assist you in ensuring your MARAC is effective for all high risk victims.

Principle 10: Equality – assuring that the MARAC is accessible to all communities

What is the principle?

That the MARAC demonstrates it is a process which is structured to deliver equality of outcome to all.

Why is this principle important?

Ensuring that your MARAC adequately addresses the needs of all high risk victims of domestic violence in your area, including those from minority communities, will demonstrate that your MARAC upholds equality and human rights.

Best practice: Your MARAC receives referrals that reflect your local population and have specialist agencies in attendance at the meeting which are able to offer specialist services where appropriate.

CAADA resources for principle 10: Equality

1. Toolkits for practitioners working with B&ME and LGBT victims and adult services – download from www.caada.org.uk

How does this principle work in practice?

Practice		Why is this important?
10.1	Does your MARAC collect information on the ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability or gender of the victims referred to MARAC?	The CAADA data collection forms give you the opportunity to collect some data in relation to diversity. It is important that these are filled in accurately otherwise they will reflect a distorted picture of the practice of your MARAC.
10.2	Do your referrals reflect the diversity of your local population?	The aim of the MARAC is to be accessible to all high risk victims. Ensuring that the diversity of referrals reflects the diversity of your local population is crucial in demonstrating that your MARAC upholds equality and diversity.

APPENDICES

1. Information Sharing Protocol for MARAC Checklist¹⁰

The following checklist maps out the key contents of an Information Sharing Protocol and is designed to act as a guide to help you draw up your own protocol locally. The categories listed below provide the basic structure for a generic Information Sharing Protocol. There may be additional information that you feel is relevant to your area and that you would like to include.

An understanding of issues around sharing information without consent will be crucial when writing an Information Sharing Protocol. Some of those issues are addressed in the Frequently Asked Questions on Disclosure of Information Before and During the MARAC meeting document, available at www.caada.org.uk. You are also advised to contact the Information Commissioner's Office for guidance on specific issues relating to information sharing.

This document was developed from a number of Information Sharing Protocol's for MARAC in existence. Email marac@caada.org.uk for more details.

I. INTRODUCTION

- Outline the purpose of the Information Sharing Protocol.
- *Example: To facilitate information-sharing between all agencies who have agreed to work together within the MARAC framework to increase safety of victims, enable the protection of vulnerable people, reduce crime and disorder locally.*
- Explain how the protocol sits with other inter-agency information-sharing agreements in operation.
- *Example: The Information Sharing Protocol is designed to enhance existing arrangements rather than replace them.*
- List all relevant legislation.
- *Example: The Data Protection Act (1998), The Human Rights Act (2000) etc.*
- List all signatory agencies.
- Set out the commitments of signatory agencies.
- *Example: To share information in high risk situations, to comply with all relevant legislation, to register with the Information Commissioner's Office, to seek their own legal advice, to use the data disclosed only for the agreed purpose etc.*

II. DATA

- Specify the nature of the data each agency will share.
- *Example: Police will share crime incidents, offender information etc.; housing will share vandalism records, neighbourhood complaints etc.*

¹⁰ Please note that this document does not constitute legal advice, separate advice must be sought.

- Define the different types of data to be shared (non-personal data, depersonalized data, personal data and sensitive personal data) and outline the different ways in which these types of data will be used.
- Outline the statutory gateways for information sharing.
- *Example: Explain how the relevant provisions of the Human Rights and Data Protection Acts allow for information sharing in certain circumstances.*
- Explain best practice around obtaining consent from the victim.
- *Example: It is best practice to obtain consent but not obligatory in high risk cases and this approach is not always safe.*
- Outline where public interest overrides the need to obtain consent from the victim.
- Highlight the need for proportionality to govern decisions made about sharing information.
- *Example: Signatory agencies should consider the perpetrator's right to a private life under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act, and balance this with the need to share information.*
- Set out the role of the data controller/ single point of contact for each signatory agency.
- *Example: The data controller must be of a sufficient standing within the signatory agency to have a co-ordinating and authorising role as they are responsible for ensuring that the agency they represent obeys the protocol and all relevant legislation, etc.*

III. PROCESS

- Outline how signatory agencies meet disclosure requests.
- Outline how signatory agencies meet subject access requests.
- Explain how signatory agencies will agree on the criteria for 'weeding' data.
- Specify the key principles when handling media involvement in relevant cases.
- *Example: Consistency, honesty, impartiality, and a consent-based approach when making information public.*

IV. SECURITY AND DATA MANAGEMENT

- Set out an acceptable standard of security when storing and processing data so that its integrity and confidentiality are maintained at all times.
- Outline how use of information outside of the meeting is governed.
- Outline how long data should be kept after it is first collected.

V. COMPLAINTS

- Outline the process for making a complaint against another signatory agency about their MARAC activities or processes.

VI. BREACHES

- Highlight that a breach of this protocol would be extremely damaging for all signatory agencies.

VII. REVIEW

- Specify a date for reviewing the Information Sharing Protocol.

VIII. WITHDRAWAL

- Make clear the process for and implications of withdrawing from the Information Sharing Protocol.

IX. SIGNATORIES

- Provide space for agencies to sign the Information Sharing Protocol, specifying their name, the agency they represent, and the date of signature.

Suggested appendices

You could also consider attaching the following to your Information Sharing Protocol:

- The recommended CAADA DASH Risk Identification Checklist – download from www.caada.org.uk
- A glossary of terms
- An Information Sharing Without Consent Form – download from www.caada.org.uk
- Explanation of the MARAC and aims of the process
- MARAC Research Form – download from www.caada.org.uk

2. MARAC Operating Protocol – Checklist of Points for Consideration

The following template maps out the key contents of a MARAC Operating Protocol and is designed as a guide to help you draw up your own protocol locally. The categories mentioned below provide the basic structure for a generic MARAC Operating Protocol, although there may be additional information that you feel is relevant to your area and that you would like to include.

This document was developed from a number of MARAC Operating Protocols in existence. Email marac@caada.org.uk for more details.

I. INTRODUCTION

- Outline the purpose of the MARAC Operating Protocol.
- *Example: to establish accountability, responsibility and reporting structures for the MARAC and to outline the process of the MARAC.*
- Explain how the protocol sits with other protocols in operation.
- *Example: The MOP is designed to enhance existing arrangements rather than replace them.*

II. PARTNER AGENCIES

- List all signatory agencies and the strategic lead for MARAC within those agencies.
- Refer to those that may be involved in the process on a case-by-case basis.

III. GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- Identify the objectives of the MARAC and the framework in which these objectives are delivered.
- Outline the core responsibilities of the MARAC steering group.
- *Example:*
 - *Monitor and evaluate the data from the MARAC.*
 - *Ensure that effective partnerships are maintained with other public protection bodies and other MARAC areas.*
 - *Monitor and regularly assess the overall performance of the MARAC and ensure it operates in line with the 10 Principles of an effective MARAC¹¹.*
 - *Address operational issues.*
 - *Report to strategic partnership.*

¹¹ The 10 Principles and accompanying guides are available on the CAADA website www.caada.org.uk.

- *Oversee efforts to raise awareness with local practitioners about the MARAC.*
- *Communicate to the public, to stakeholders and to government about the successes of the MARAC.*
- *Conduct reviews following a homicide.*
- *Ensure that the MARAC operates in line with legal responsibilities and keeps up-to-date with changes to legislation national guidance.*
- Detail the membership of the MARAC steering group. Membership should include senior representatives from each of key agencies. This representation needs to be able to address the practical and resource implications of MARAC; and develop and maintain internal protocols and procedures in relation to public protection.
- Note the frequency of the MARAC steering group meetings.

IV. PROCESS OF THE MARAC

Outline the process for the MARAC. It may be easiest to follow the MARAC process from point of referral to repeat and consider the questions raised below:

Identification of MARAC cases

- Do agencies screen for domestic violence? Is there a process for referring high risk cases to the IDVA/police?

Criteria for MARAC

- What is the threshold for your MARAC? Which Risk Identification Checklist are you using? How many ticks classify as a MARAC referral?
- Can you also refer to MARAC based on escalation? What number of incidents does there need to be and in what time frame?
- State how cases can be referred to the MARAC on the basis of professional judgement.
- How do repeat referrals get referred back in to the MARAC process? What is the threshold?

Referral

- How do agencies refer cases to the MARAC? Who can refer cases? Is there a referral form? What does this need to include? (ie. name, DOB, address of victim, perpetrator and children.)
- What is the deadline for referrals? Is this the same every month or does it change from month to month?

MARAC list/agenda

- When is the MARAC list circulated?
- Is the agenda ordered in the most efficient way so that children's agencies/those that work in a specific region can leave early?
- Do you have a research form available for partner agencies?

Actions before the MARAC

- Are there any specific police actions that will be completed ahead of the MARAC?
- Are there specific target hardening actions that can be offered to all MARAC cases?
- What is the protocol where children or vulnerable adults are identified within MARAC cases (also needs to refer to individual agencies' policies)?
- Which agencies are able to and will systematically flag and tag files?

Victim contact before the meeting

- Is there a process through which the IDVA Service receives all MARAC cases before the meeting in order to bring the views of the victim to the meeting? If there is no IDVA involvement who will speak to the victim?
- What is your process for notifying the victim of the MARAC and feeding back relevant actions?

MARAC meeting

- What is the frequency of meetings?
- Who is the chair? If they are unavailable who covers this role? What is the role of the chair?
- *Example: to structure the meetings and ensure that agency representatives understand agreed actions and which agencies are responsible for such and review those which are outstanding from the last meeting.*
- Who do you recommend attends the meeting from partner agencies? Do they send a deputy or a report when they are not able to attend?

Minutes and administration

- Who is the MARAC administrator/co-ordinator? Is there a time period within which the minutes will be circulated?
- How will the co-ordinator let partners know that the case has had 12 months since the last MARAC and therefore would not be considered a repeat should another incident occur?

Information shared at MARAC

- Confirm that the Information Sharing Protocol has been signed and is up-to-date.
- Confirm who is the data controller or single point of contact for each signatory agency.

Action planning

- What is the purpose of the action plan?
- *Example: A tailored action plan will be developed at the MARAC to increase the safety of the victim, children, perpetrator, other vulnerable parties and any staff.*
- What type of actions will be agreed?

- *Example: flagging and tagging of files, referral to other appropriate multi-agency meetings, prioritising of agencies' resources to MARAC cases.*
- How do agencies let the co-ordinator know when actions are complete and how are incomplete actions tracked?
- *Example: by emailing incomplete actions between meetings and reviewing incomplete actions at the beginning of the next MARAC.*
- What do you do if the victim moves out of your area?
- *Example: refer to another MARAC.*

Emergency MARACs

- In what instances will an emergency MARAC be called and what is the process through which to call one?

V. EQUALITY

- State how you ensure that the MARAC is accessible by all communities in the local area.
Example: are there any additional support organisations/agencies that can be contacted for cases which are identified as being from diverse communities?

VI. EVALUATION

- Outline how the data from the MARAC is collected and by whom and how it is shared.
Example: you may fill in the CAADA excel spreadsheet – is this reviewed with the chair on a quarterly basis?

VII. COMPLAINTS

- Outline the process for making a complaint against another signatory agency.

VIII. BREACHES

- Highlight that a breach of the protocol may increase the risk to a high risk victim.

IX. WITHDRAWAL

- Make clear the process for withdrawing from the MOP.

X. SIGNATORIES

- Provide space for agencies to sign the MOP, specifying their name, the agency they represent and confirmation that they are the responsible individual within that agency, and the date of signature.

XI. REVIEW

- Specify a date and frequency for reviewing the protocol.

Suggested appendices

You could also consider attaching the following to your MOP:

- The recommended CAADA DASH Risk Identification Checklist – download from www.caada.org.uk
- A glossary of terms
- MARAC Referral Form – download from www.caada.org.uk
- MARAC Research Form – download from www.caada.org.uk
- An Information Sharing Without Consent Form – download from www.caada.org.uk
- Explanation of the MARAC and aims of the process
- Information Sharing Protocol

3. MARAC Minutes Checklist

The following checklist maps out the key contents of a minutes template and is designed to act as a guide to help you develop your own template locally. There may be additional information that you feel is relevant to your area and that you would like to include.

It is a draft document and is currently being piloted in a number of MARACs. If you would like more information on templates then please contact marac@caada.org.uk

I. INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEETING

- Date
- Attendees – names/agency/organisations/job title/area covered by the agency
- Observers present
- Apologies
- Name of MARAC and page numbers should be on all pages

II. CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

- Include the confidentiality statement for your MARAC
Example: Those persons present were reminded that this meeting is strictly confidential. Discussions should not be shared outside of the meeting. Similarly, copies of the minutes should not be photocopied or shared without the agreement of the agencies concerned. All agencies should ensure that they develop procedures to ensure that the minutes are retained in a confidential and appropriately restricted manner. These minutes will aim to reflect that all individuals who are discussed at these meetings should be treated fairly, with respect and without improper discrimination. All work undertaken at the meetings will be informed by a commitment to equal opportunities and effective practice issues in relation to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and belief and disability.

III. ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MARACS

- Specify actions that are outstanding from the last MARAC, include details on the responsible agency/organisation, the case number and the reason why that action is incomplete where appropriate

IV. CASE DETAILS

- The information relating to a case will likely be collected on one sheet per case discussed
- Case details to collect prior to the meeting where possible will include the following:
 - Case number
 - Victim information; name, address, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender, DOB
 - Perpetrator information; name, DOB, address
 - Children information; name, DOB, address
 - Referring agency
 - Whether the victim is aware of the referral
 - Whether the referral is a repeat

- If so how many times has the case been MARAC'd in the last 12 months?
- What the date was of the last MARAC
- Whether the case referred was on the basis of professional judgement, actuarial assessment or escalation
- Key information shared and the source of the information
- Actions agreed, completion date, whether the action is a joint action and the agency responsible
- Other case details to be collected during the meeting include:
 - Date of the incident that prompted the MARAC referral
 - Whether the MARAC had up-to-date information direct from the victim
 - Whether someone was assigned to feed back to the victim
 - Whether the case was flagged for the attention of PPANI, child protection or safeguarding vulnerable adults teams
 - Whether the case was referred to a MARAC in another area

4. Information Sharing and Action Planning Guidance¹²

What information to share?

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

1. Basic demographic information including any pseudonyms used and whether there are any children and their ages.
2. Information on key risk factors including where appropriate, professional opinion on the risks faced.
3. Any relevant history of domestic violence or other associated behaviour (child abuse, sexual assault) by the perpetrator or victim.
4. The 'views' of the victim. Typically the IDVA or another support agency should represent the perspective of the victim on the risks s/he faces, and how best to address them.

Information sharing at MARAC conferences is strictly limited to the aims of the meeting and attendees should sign a declaration to the effect at the start of each conference. Information gained at the meeting cannot be used for other purposes without reference to the person/agency that originally supplied it.

Examples of the kind of information that different agencies might bring to the meeting and the actions that might arise are shown in the tables at the end of this chapter. These are merely some examples and in no way represent a comprehensive list of either information or actions.

Guidance on the legal grounds for information sharing can be found on the CAADA website in the library of resources.

What actions to take:

Most of the actions that arise from the MARAC reflect an altered perception of risk as a result of the information shared and therefore a more tailored response for the victim. With additional information, agencies are more able to prioritise actions, to support the victim and to support their staff. There are single agency actions that are listed in the table below but also combined actions between agencies.

The main categories of action include:

- **Flagging files:** systems vary between agencies and between different parts of the country but where possible it can be very useful to put a 'flag' or marker on individual records to show that the individual is a very high risk victim of domestic violence. This might apply to A&E records, health visitor, midwife, housing officer etc as well as obviously the police. This action is designed to ensure that the individual receives a response from whichever practitioner they meet that reflects their experience of domestic violence.
- **Joint meetings/separate meetings:** in certain circumstances it can be very difficult to make contact with the victim of domestic violence, especially on their own. In such cases it may be possible for the IDVA to co-ordinate with perhaps a health or education

¹² Please note that this document does not constitute legal advice, separate advice must be sought.

professional in order to meet them in a safe place. Equally, there may be opportunities when the perpetrator (or even the victim) is having another appointment such as with probation, to arrange a safe time to see the victim without any risk that the perpetrator will be present.

- **Prioritising cases:** this occurs when information disclosed at MARAC gives individual agencies grounds to prioritise an individual case. This could apply to housing, social services, mental health or drug and alcohol teams and others.
- **Legal options:** the MARAC may learn of non-compliance with bail conditions, inappropriate conditions or decide that civil injunctions may be appropriate in a particular case. They may be able to alert police officers to intelligence about harassment or more serious offences including sexual offences.
- **MARAC letters:** in certain cases there may be local agencies who are unable to send a representative to MARAC or who choose not to engage with the process. If this gives cause for the participating agencies to be concerned about the specific safety issues that this creates, then it is appropriate to send a letter from the MARAC as a body explaining the situation. This can also be used with agencies that are not part of MARAC at all - for example where apparently unsafe child contact conditions have been agreed by the court.

Examples by agency:

Some examples of possible actions are summarised in the tables below:

The tables on the following page show examples of the kinds of information and actions that might be taken by a range of agencies that are regularly involved in the MARAC. Other agencies such as a range of community projects might attend the MARAC occasionally. In many parts of the country specialist domestic violence services for B&ME or LGBT victims may not exist. In such cases, it is important to have some input from more generalist support agencies. They may have important information about the victim, children or perpetrator and may also be a non-threatening way to establish contact with any of them for any of the other agencies.

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Police	Number of previous domestic violence incidents/offences Relevant previous convictions	Provide intelligence package to sector inspector All agencies aware of risks
	Details of incidents, use of weapons, threats to kill, threats to harm children	Arrest offender Referral to social services
	Previous call outs to the address	Put occurrence marker on the address
	Breaches of bail	Arrest offender Intelligence marker for Officer in Case (OIC) Heightened awareness by agencies and likelihood that bail might not be granted in future
		Target hardening of address, install CCTV system
		Put police watch on the address
	Any warning signals such as threats of suicide, drugs, weapons, assault on police	Locate perpetrator and do spot checks on behaviour
		Organise special measures at court if appropriate- domestic violence co-ordinator to check
		Inform agencies who visit home (midwives, health visitors) if perpetrator released
		Supply housing support letters

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
IDVA	Update on whether or not victim has engaged with IDVA	Crucial for safety
	Update on whether victim has engaged with other agencies who might not be part of the MARAC	Gives broader picture of extent of support accessed
	Information about victim's fears	Relevant to intervention by other agencies
	Information about specific abusive behaviour	Possible relevance to harassment charge?
	Details of sexual abuse/assault if relevant	Might suggest option of supporting a criminal prosecution Referral to specialist support
	Details of impact on children	Cross reference to information from children and adolescent mental health services, social services, the health visitor and education and have an impact on the approach taken by these agencies
	Actions taken by victim to protect themselves eg. change phone number/ request for personal alarm	Application made to community safety
	Information about harassment	Discuss victim making a statement
	Information about incidents not reported to the police	Police to investigate alleged incidents Probation to be informed
	Update on other legal protection	Whether injunctions are in existence and dates
	Information about contact disputes	Information to family courts, risks to children and non-abusing parent
		Track outcomes of court process and inform victim
	Victim needs to be re-housed	Supply housing support letters

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Housing	Confirm information about incidents affecting property with dates	If this constitutes criminal damage then Police can take action
	Information about where victim and perpetrator are living and terms of tenancy	Eg. can terms be put on perpetrator's tenancy to prevent him harassing victim
	If victim has made an application alone	Get tenant support team to assess victim
	Information about rent arrears	Co-ordinate with refuge provider about re-housing needs

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Children and young people's services	Feedback on assessment	
	Update on what support is in place and whether appointments are attended	
	Update on specific needs of children in need, children at risk and children with disabilities	Make referral to children and adolescent mental health services Give additional support to family Make joint visits with health for example

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Health visitor/ midwife	Update on whether or not appointments are attended	Relevant for safety of children
	Developmental update including progress of pregnancy, routine enquiry	Important for other agencies
	Anything unusual about client eg. attendance by partner at all appointments	Potential risk factor of controlling behaviour Difficult for client to disclose abuse if partner is there
	Any damage noted to the home address on previous visits with dates ie. observes damage that might not have been reported to police	General information from MARAC of relevance for staff going to victim's home

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Probation	Previous history of convictions	Relevant to other agencies working with perpetrator
	Update on attendance at Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP)/supervision	Make supervision/case officer aware of domestic violence or other relevant behaviour disclosed by another agency at MARAC
	Breaches of orders	Pursue action on breaches
	Prison information such as recalls and release dates where possible	Prioritise recalls if appropriate
Use information from MARAC for pre-sentence report writing, giving guidance to magistrates on options for addressing behaviour		
Get information from other MARAC partners, especially IDVA, regarding compliance with terms of orders		

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Drug and alcohol team	Perpetrator substance misuse issues	Prioritise support Safety of victim and children affected
	Victim substance misuse issues	Prioritise support Child protection issues?
		Increased information from other agencies about history of individuals

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Adult mental health services	History of perpetrator mental health issues	Create complete picture with other agencies
		Make referrals
	History of victim mental health issues	Create complete picture with other agencies
		Make referrals

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Refuge provider	Previous stays in refuge with dates etc	Informs risk assessment
	Details of severity of abuse	
	Attempts by perpetrator to contact/find victim	Get support from police to protect whereabouts of victim Update information on particular needs of victim and children

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
A&E	Number of attendances with dates and pattern of injuries if possible for victim, perpetrator and children	Links to information from police, housing and IDVA
		Flagging/tagging of patient records if possible

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Adult services	Update on specific needs of victim if a vulnerable adult	Make referral to vulnerable adults team and/or voluntary sector support eg. Age Concern Potential for joint visits with police/IDVA
	Update on needs/services available to perpetrator if a vulnerable adult	Make referral to vulnerable adults team

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Education	School and attendance	
	School performance/ behavioural issues	
	Incidents at the school eg. attempted abduction of child	Police to put occurrence marker on the school and inform staff on need to know basis
	Provide information on who takes and collects children from school	Gives other agencies information on perpetrator's movements If the perpetrator does not go to the school, then it may be possible to contact the victim through the school Inform school of wider concerns

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Family courts (statutory duty in relation to child protection)	Update on court proceedings and court orders.	Safety of victim and children affected Establish inconsistencies between bail conditions and contact orders
	Feedback from supervised contact sessions	Clarifying any risks to victim and children
	Views of children if appropriate	Relevant to social services and other children's services; may prioritise additional support
	Professional opinion	Relevant to all agencies
	History of involvement with either victim or perpetrator from previous cases, either public or private law	Could be relevant to other agencies

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Specialist B&ME domestic violence service	Information about specific clients	
	Detail of abuse and needs of victim	Victim may not wish to access generic services
	Detail of role of extended family if any	May be relevant to criminal investigation, bail conditions, conditions of injunction
	Detail on immigration status of victim and/or perpetrator	Relevant to financial security and accessibility of generic services
	Provide information about victim's movements	Other agencies could make a joint visit

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
LGBT service	Information about specific clients including whether they are 'out' or not	Impact on degree of isolation. Allows agencies to access individuals appropriately and manage confidentiality (eg. around their sexual orientation or gender identity)
	Detail of abuse and needs of victim	Victim may not wish to access 'generic' services because of concerns about real or perceived homo/bi/trans phobia
	Details of any support network, eg. local LGBT group	Clarifies gaps in support and may offer a point of contact (to either a local or national contact)
	Information about unique needs	Impact on accurate risk assessment
	Information regarding counter allegations	Essential to resolve counter-allegations and avoid minimising risk (eg. by inappropriately labelling a case as mutual abuse)

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Sexual violence services	Information from the victim about history of abuse, fears, barriers to accessing support (ie. a bad experience with a particular agency)	Relevant for those supporting the victim
	Information regarding incidents of sexual abuse	Offer to support victim through criminal prosecution if appropriate
		Offer services to victim of sexual abuse

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Community perpetrator programme	Professional judgement on attitude of perpetrator	Relevant to other agencies working with perpetrator
	Update on attendance at perpetrator programme	Relevant for those supporting victim
	May bring information on drug, alcohol or mental health issues	Relevant for all other agencies involved particularly those conducting home visits
		Support efforts of other agencies to prioritise a case

AGENCY	TYPE OF INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Children and adolescent mental health services	Reasons for referral	Information for all agencies
	Update on whether or not appointments are attended	Implications for safety
	Extent of mental health issues and need for additional support	

When should the actions be completed?

If victims and their children are at high risk of being severely hurt or killed, agencies must agree to prioritise the actions assigned and deliver them on the day of the MARAC or as soon as possible thereafter. To ensure MARACs have the most up-to-date information possible and have time to implement agreed actions, it is recommended that meetings be held insofar as it is possible, mid-week to enable prompt action to be taken before the weekend.

What is the role of the IDVA at MARAC?

The IDVA is crucial to the MARAC process. In the context of the meeting itself, their role is to keep victim safety and that of any children central to the process. They are likely to have more information about the victim's situation and what might influence their safety than any other agency and this information will be crucial in developing a safe and appropriate risk management plan for each family.

Finally, they will be expected to keep the victim informed of any decisions made by the other agencies where safe to do so, and to make sure that the other agencies perform their functions safely. Since risk is always changing in domestic violence situations, a decision, which was safe at one time, may not be only a short time later and therefore the impact of an agency's actions can be affected.

About CAADA

Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) is a charity which supports the creation of a consistent, professional and effective multi-agency response for high risk victims of domestic violence. CAADA's aim is that every high risk victim of domestic abuse receives the support of an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) who in turn can help co-ordinate the work of all agencies involved. It is this combination of specialist independent support combined with the resources of the main statutory agencies that is transforming our national response to domestic abuse. CAADA's goal is to allow victims to stay safely in their homes, for their children to be properly supported and for perpetrators of abuse to be held to account.

If you would like further information on the wide range of multi-agency training that CAADA provides, please contact us by calling 0117 317 8750, emailing info@caada.org.uk or visiting www.caada.org.uk.

