



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Guidance and Terms of Reference

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Purpose and Aims

The purpose of these Terms of Reference is to give an understanding to partners of the process of the MARAC in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and to codify the governance and operations of the MARAC. The guidance aims to follow the Safe Lives Ten Principles of an Effective MARAC and will include:

- A general overview
- Understanding risk and repeat victimisation
- An outline of actions with other safeguarding processes and key agencies
- A detailed outline of the process

The MARAC is an integral part of the Coordinated Community Response model to domestic abuse in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The process was established across the county in 2005/06 and has supported more than 15,000 victims and their children since that time.

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

The key objectives of the MARAC are as follows:

- To share information to increase the safety, health and well-being of victims and their children;
- To jointly construct and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support and reduces the risk of harm;

- To determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any individual or to the general community;
- To reduce repeat victimisation;
- To improve agency accountability
- Improve support for staff involved in high-risk DA cases.

The MARAC is governed by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Strategic Board, which reports to the Cambridgeshire High Harms Board. Performance data relating to the MARAC is shared with key partners (such as the High Harms Board, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children's and Safeguarding Adults Boards) on a quarterly basis.

General Information and Overview

This section gives a brief overview of the process of the MARAC (more specific guidance can be found at www.cambsdasv.org.uk). The local process is fully compliant with the recommendations of SafeLives, HMICFRS, Home Office, and NICE.

There are three MARAC meetings per week – one for Peterborough held on Tuesday and two for Cambridgeshire held on Wednesday and Friday. All begin at 9.30am. MARAC meetings are chaired by Police Detective Inspectors or Managers from the DASV Partnership. Coordination of the MARAC is provided by Cambridgeshire County Council (1.8FTE coordinator posts) and Peterborough City Council (1.6FTE coordinator posts). Twenty minutes are allocated to discuss each case, and ideally a maximum of nine cases are heard at each meeting.

All MARAC meetings are held remotely on Teams. Additional MARACs can be arranged if demand requires, usually on a Thursday.

The MARAC is only for high-risk cases scoring 17+ on the DASH risk indicator checklist (or on professional judgement) or assessed as high risk by police using their DARA assessment tool. MARAC referrals can also be made by any partner agency using repeat and escalation criteria.

The police process for referring to MARAC using repeat and escalation criteria is as follows:

The Dedicated Sharing Team (DST) within MASH will share DA risk assessments with the relevant IDVA service for consideration of a MARAC hearing if the below criteria are met;

- The case is assessed through a DARA risk assessment as High Risk.
- The case is a repeat MARAC case – (requires agreement from MASH DS)
- The case indicates escalation of risk such as three incidents in the last 12 months – (requires agreement from MASH DS)
- Professional Judgement that the victim is at high risk of serious harm – (requires agreement from MASH DS)

The MARAC Plus process was established in 2006 to provide a forum to discuss particularly complex MARAC cases that need more than 20 minutes to jointly

construct a risk management plan. A MARAC Plus meeting is convened when needed and is chaired by a Manager from the DASV Partnership. One hour is allocated to each case.

A secure, web-based case management tool (Oasis) is available for use by Chairs, MARAC Coordinators, IDVAs and some partners to gain access to agendas and minutes of MARACs. The number of Oasis licences available is limited.

The MARAC Coordinator is responsible for inputting referrals to the MARAC and MARAC Plus, circulating agendas, requesting partner reports, recording the meetings and ensuring that minutes and actions arising are circulated (usually within 24 hours of the meeting). The action list will be summarised after each case by the MARAC Chair so that all attendees are clear what they are committing to do on behalf of their agency. The responsibility to take and complete appropriate actions within an agreed timescale rests with individual agencies; it is not transferred to the MARAC Chair or process. The MARAC Coordinators send a reminder to agencies urging them to update their actions then mark incomplete actions after a period as 'no update from lead agency'.

Where possible, time banding or clustering of cases involving certain agencies will take place to reduce the time commitment of those invited to provide additional information.

All agencies must be aware of the confidential nature of information discussed at the MARAC and ensure that all written information is stored securely in accordance with the MARAC Information Sharing Agreement. Information sharing at MARAC meetings is strictly limited to the aims of the meeting and attendees must read and agree to a confidentiality statement and declaration at the start of each conference, including persons attending MARAC meetings with permission of the MARAC chair to act as observers or assessors. On Teams, confirmation that the confidentiality statement and declaration is agreed to is confirmed by each participant in the meeting chat. This is overseen by the MARAC Coordinators.

Information gained at the meeting cannot be used for other purposes without the explicit agreement of the Chair.

In summary, the governing principles of the MARAC are:

- Where a domestic abuse victim's level of risk has been identified as being high the case will be referred to a MARAC.
- The MARAC is a formal conference to facilitate the risk assessment process. The purpose is for agencies to share relevant risk-led information and jointly construct a risk management and support plan.
- All actions will be noted on the minutes from the MARAC meetings.
- Each agency will be responsible for the security of all paperwork related to MARAC meetings.

Only accurate information that is directly relevant to the safety of the victim and involved children 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 indicators identified by the risk indicator checklist. This will include where appropriate, professional opinion on the risks faced.
3. Any relevant history of domestic abuse or other associated behaviour (such as violence, child abuse, sexual assault etc.) by the perpetrator or victim.
4. The 'voice' of the victim. Typically, the IDVA or another support agency should represent the perspective of the victim on the risks s/he faces.

Understanding Risk – Domestic Abuse/Stalking and Harassment/Honour based abuse (DASH) Risk Indicator Checklist and Police Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) tool.

The risk indicator checklist (DASH) and DARA (used only by police) threshold for the MARAC is not designed to replace or override current agency working practices but to compliment them. It will be reviewed at regular intervals by the DASV Strategic Board.

For the MARAC process to work effectively there needs to be a common understanding of risk and the threshold for referral among the participants. This is achieved by the use and completion of the DASH and the referral document and the DARA. Victims identified as high risk will be offered the services of an IDVA and some may be referred to MARAC.

DASH is a tool which is evidence based and designed to be used with victims to assess the risk of homicide/significant harm by agencies seeking to support the victim. Any risk assessment relies on good information and a mixture of static and dynamic factors. Caution must be exercised in relation to the use of the tool in other situations that are not specific to the field of application and may undermine the accuracy.

It must be understood that using DASH alone is not fool proof and the predictive value is not 100% accurate. Many victims will minimise the risk to themselves and others as a coping mechanism. Risk assessment is complex and not just related to the number of ticks on a DASH. It is also about professional judgment and escalation as detailed below.

Actuarial Assessment: (number of ticks – 17 is high risk MARAC level). This involves the number of risk factors to compute the probability of harm occurring.

Professional Judgment: The assessment of dangerousness is based on an individual practitioner's professional expertise, knowledge and experience of a situation.

Escalation: There is a very real need to identify repeat victimisation and escalation. DASV victims are more likely to become repeat victims than any other type of crime and as abuse is repeated it is also likely to become more serious.

Repeat Victimization: Once a case has been taken to MARAC it remains flagged as a MARAC case for a total of 12 months after the most recent MARAC review. For example, if a case is seen at a MARAC once only, in January, it will be flagged for 12 months after this date. If this case is then reviewed at the same MARAC in the April of the same year, then the case will be flagged for 12 months from April. The repeat incident can be flagged by any of the agencies involved in the MARAC.

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.

SafeLives defines a 'repeat' as ANY instance of abuse between the same victim and perpetrator(s), within 12 months of the last referral to Marac.

The individual act of abuse does not need to be 'criminal', violent or threatening but should be viewed within the context of a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Some events that might be considered a 'repeat' incident may include, but are not limited to:

- Unwanted direct or indirect contact from the perpetrator and/or their friends or family
- A breach of police or court bail conditions
- A breach of any civil court order between the victim and perpetrator
- Any dispute between the victim and perpetrator(s) including over child contact, property, divorce/ separation proceedings etc.

The following do not constitute a repeat case, but should still be considered as a MARAC referral on a case-by-case basis:

- 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 the same combination of victim and perpetrator has been heard at a MARAC in a different area. This is clearly a repeat incident in human terms, however, will not be recorded as such for the purposes of this indicator.
- Cases which are discussed at a MARAC meeting but for information purposes only (e.g. imminent release of perpetrator from prison).
- Cases which were previously reviewed at the MARAC more than 12 months ago.

There are specific instances where a second referral might be made but **no repeat incident has occurred** such as, for example, where a perpetrator is about to be released from jail and the case is mentioned in order to make sure that every agency is aware and able to put in place any appropriate safety measures.

CAFCASS referrals into MARAC

There is legislation in place that means CAFCASS are not allowed to present at MARAC. CAFCASS referrals into MARAC should be sent to Children's Social Care to submit. The MARAC Steering Group has agreed that – in circumstances where

the process above is not possible – CAF/CASS can send a referral directly to the relevant IDVA Service for triaging and processing and (if accepted) the MARAC Coordinator will present their referral at MARAC. CAF/CASS has agreed to accept any safeguarding actions. Provided CAF/CASS has signed up to the ISA, the MARAC Steering Group has agreed that MARAC minutes and actions can be shared with them.

MARAC Flag and Tag

A MARAC Flag and Tag process is in place for MARAC-to-MARAC referrals into Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

On receipt of a MARAC-to-MARAC referral the IDVA Service will endeavour to contact the client and assess risk. If the IDVA assesses that the risk remains high (based on information shared by the client) the case will be heard at MARAC as usual. If the IDVA Service is unable to contact the client, it will be assumed that risk remains high and the case will be heard at MARAC. If the risk is not assessed as high a MARAC Flag and Tag form will be completed and sent to all MARAC partners for information.

In both cases if any MARAC partner has additional information that would indicate the case should be heard at MARAC, they should refer in using the usual referral pathway.

The Relationship between MAPPA (Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements) and the MARAC

The aim of this section is to summarise the principal differences between MAPPA and MARAC, to identify where there are potential overlaps and illustrate how we will accommodate this in practice to ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources.

The central purpose of MAPPA is to reduce serious harm from known offenders and prevent further harm to victims, operating to a central principle that risks presented in these typically complex cases cannot be managed by agencies working alone.

There are three categories of offender that fall under the MAPPA as defined by the Criminal Justice & Court Service Act (2000) Sections 67 & 68 and re-enacted by the Criminal Justice Act (2003) Sections 325 and 327:

- Category 1: Registered sex offenders, for the period of their registration.
- Category 2: Persons convicted of a violent or sexual offence sentenced to at least 12 months imprisonment or detained under hospital orders (excluding registered sex offenders who will fall under category 1).
- Category 3: Other Dangerous Offenders who do not fall into categories 1 or 2, but because of the offences committed by them (wherever they have been committed) are considered by the Responsible Authorities to pose a risk of serious harm to the public.

Where an incident occurs that is risk assessed by the Police as the highest risk of domestic violence to the victim, this would automatically be referred to a MARAC. Checks will be made at this stage to see if the perpetrator is subject to statutory supervision and is being managed by the MAPPA process.

Referral of cases: from MARAC to MAPPA

Most MARAC cases will not reach the threshold for MAPPA because of the strict eligibility criteria, particularly in respect of the conviction history of the offender. There may be instances within MARAC where the perpetrator is involved in other types of criminality ancillary to the domestic violence or is involved in organised crime. In these scenarios it is unlikely that these complex issues are going to be addressed through a single meeting of the professionals involved in managing the case and may warrant a referral from MARAC to MAPPA. These cases involve those perpetrators who are not subject to statutory supervision or post release licence.

Where there is no statutory contact with a case and it is deemed multi agency involvement is required to commit exceptional resources to protect the victim and manage the perpetrator, it may be considered appropriate to refer from MARAC to MAPPA.

The IDVA and MARAC

The IDVA is crucial to the MARAC process. They provide the voice of the victim during the meeting and feed information back to the victim afterwards. In the context of the meeting itself, their role is to keep victim safety and that of any children central to the process.

IDVAs may 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. Since risk is always changing in domestic abuse 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. The victim may ask that they are represented at the MARAC by another support service. In this instance the IDVA will support that agency and identify roles and responsibilities between the two. The IDVA service will be represented at MARAC by a duty IDVA or the IDVA allocated to that specific case.

Relationship between Police and IDVA

The relationship between the Police and IDVA service exists as described in this document and with reference to the MASH ISA. Joint working to these procedures will ensure an effective multi agency risk management plan is created to protect the victim and any children. It is important to acknowledge that despite the best efforts of both the Police and IDVA some victims will decline the offer of support and services. In such cases it must be stressed to the victim that this does not bar them from accessing help in the future. In every case there should be certain police actions carried out before the MARAC.

When an IDVA refers a client to MARAC, they share this information with the police. It must be remembered that in high-risk cases the safety of victims and children outweigh any client confidentiality concerns. Lack of consent in these cases need not be a bar to the sharing of relevant information appropriate to the level of risk. Further advice regarding information sharing can be found in the section on the Information sharing agreement.

If the incident has not been reported to police, then the MASH will create an Athena Non-Recordable Domestic Incident report or crime report. Decisions and actions must be recorded to show transparency of process and defensible decision making. The web-based case management tool (Oasis) is not a replacement for Athena or other police systems. It is designed to speed up the sharing of information. Any data entered on the system is subject to existing data procedures.

The MASH will take responsibility for the referral of police identified cases unless otherwise agreed.

All referrals from police to MARAC must be made using the single point of referral IDVA referrals inbox and having completed a DARA referral form. Referrals will not be accepted if this procedure is not adhered to.

The IDVA and police will also work together around liaison with the victim and other agencies, and in the implementation of a safety plan ahead of the MARAC, if required.

Referral to partner agencies in the case of children will be carried out by the police. Consent from victims to share information with other agencies is recorded on DARA forms.

MARAC Time scales

MARAC referrals are sent to the IDVA mailbox (from police) or via the Oasis online referral pathway (all other agencies) to be triaged. Referrals are transferred to an agenda in order of receipt. Time between receipt of referral to MARAC meeting varies depending on volumes but is usually between two to three weeks. When demand is high additional MARACs may be arranged if necessary.

Children and Young People

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims of domestic abuse if they “see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of abuse”.

Domestic abuse can impact on a child’s life chances, and the MARAC process must address the support and safety issues in relation to children and young people to reduce risk and prevent harm. The following principles will apply:

General – Children’s issues

If a child is referred to a child protection conference, and it becomes known that there is domestic violence, the safety of the parent should be considered by the Social Worker prior to the conference convening and any steps taken to ensure the parents safety. This is done in conjunction with the Child Protection Chair and could include adjustments to the meeting and redactions to the level of information shared. The Chair of the Child Protection Conference must be informed if the case has been referred either to MARAC or MAPPA. A decision will be made at the conference whether there is still a need for the parent to be referred either to MARAC or MAPPA.

A Domestic Abuse Children's Risk Assessment Matrix (DVRIM) is available on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Safeguarding Children Board (website [Safeguarding Children Partnership Board | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board \(safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk)) to support safeguarding referrals.

Children named on MARAC Agendas

Children should be named on the agenda where they are linked to the adult victim and relevant to understanding or managing risk, including:

Children of the victim (biological, adopted, or stepchildren), children living in the household, children who have regular contact with the victim or perpetrator, unborn children (pregnancy is a recognised high-risk indicator), any child where the abuse is impacting them, even if not living full-time with the victim.

These children are listed because MARAC must consider risk of harm through exposure to domestic abuse, risk created by contact arrangements and the need to link with children's safeguarding processes.

Children should not be added to the agenda if they are:

Not linked to the adult victim being presented and, not relevant to understanding or managing risk in that case.

For example, children of an ex-partner with no contact, children connected only to a different adult victim, wider family children where there is no safeguarding relevance.

Listing unrelated children risks diluting the victim focus and breaching data-minimisation principles.

There is one key exception where children not living with the victim may still be relevant: children the perpetrator has contact with, even if not children of the victim. Although these children are not the primary focus, they may be referenced for risk context. Safeguarding actions usually sit with children's social care, not MARAC.

Children's Services

On receipt of the MASH police safeguarding referral – consideration will be given to the need for a MASH enquiry or a child and family assessment or other response.

It is recognised that perpetrators may have contact with/be living with other children (including the unborn child), than those of the identified MARAC victim. As a general principle there should be consideration for a MASH enquiry or C & F initial assessment for those children too.

Representation from Children's Social Care is essential to an effective MARAC. When Children's Social Care is not present, the chance for them to share risk-led information with partner agencies is lost, and they also miss out on hearing vital

information from others about the risks faced by children experiencing domestic abuse.

This results in lost opportunities for Children's Social Care to contribute to the development of robust, multi-agency risk management plans. If the allocated Social Worker is unable to attend MARAC, a representative from the team who can share relevant information and contribute to risk planning should attend in their place.

Police

The first officer, who attends any incidence of domestic violence and becomes aware that there are children involved, will complete a DARA and a safeguarding referral (the latter of which is sent electronically to Children's Services representatives in the MASH where the risk is assessed as medium or high). Completed DARA risk assessments where children are present will be shared with Health, Children's Social Care and Education (via Operation Encompass).

Honour Based Abuse/Violence (HBA) Definition

Honour based abuse is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community.

For this document, we will use the term Honour Based Abuse (HBA) to include all forms of abuse including physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial.

HBA is a fundamental abuse of human rights. There is no honour in the commission of murder, rape, kidnap and the many other acts, behaviours and conduct which make up violence in the name of so-called honour. Honour Based Abuse is a collection of practices; this includes practices involving abuse of Forced Marriage (FM) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which are used to control behaviour within families to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour.

Forced marriage is a crime. It is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are coerced into it. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. In cases of vulnerable adults who lack the capacity to consent to marriage, coercion is not required for a marriage to be forced (HM Government 2014).

Female Genital Mutilation is a crime; the term (also known as female circumcision and female genital cutting) refers to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Management of cases

In the management of such cases (because of the collusive nature of the family and cultural leaders) confidentiality considerations are of paramount importance.

To achieve this the MARAC Coordinator, once it is ascertained that it is a HBA case, will arrange the agenda, so the case is heard in a closed session, usually after the normal MARAC meeting or a separate one will be called.

The confidentiality declaration outlining security of relevant paperwork is shared in the meeting by the MARAC Coordinators and participants confirm they have read and agree with it in the Teams chat.

The same confidentiality procedures must apply if children are involved – and any other subsequent risk assessments/initial assessments carried out by children’s services must be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Governance

The DASV Board comprising of the key agencies involved in delivering a Coordinated Community Response are the governing body for the MARACs, through the MARAC steering group.

The MARAC Steering Group will meet on a quarterly basis and its roles and responsibilities include:

- Monitor and evaluate the data from the MARACs – and report to the DASV Board and the High Harms Board
- Ensure that there are effective partnerships maintained with other public protection bodies
- Monitor and assess the overall performance of the MARACs, in line with the 10 Principles of an Effective MARAC (Safe Lives)
- Address operational issues
- Report to the DASV Board on a regular basis and link to the other sub-groups to ensure there is effective communication about the successes of the MARAC
- Consider findings and recommendations resulting from DHRs where appropriate
- Ensure that the MARACs operate in line with legal responsibilities and keep up to date with changes to legislation and national guidance
- Make recommendations to the DASV Board about whether the referral threshold needs to be raised or lowered.

Chairing of MARAC

The Chair will have overall responsibility for the MARAC operational process. Their roles and responsibilities include:

- Ensure that the MARAC is as consistent, transparent and accountable as possible by making sure that all agencies are clear about their role.
- Support and encourage partners to create bespoke, timed actions plans in line with identified risks.
- Refer cases to MARAC Plus due to complexity.
- Encourage participation from all agencies involved to help create a proactive safety plan where the risks and needs of victim, children and perpetrator are addressed by the MARAC appropriately.
- Ensure that any issues of staff safety that become apparent are shared between the agencies who are working with the victim, children or perpetrator.
- The chair is **not** responsible for the actions of each attendee but for promoting an ethos of accountability and responsibility from all the partner agencies involved.

Any decision taken by the Chair to adjourn a discussion due to the absence of a key partner should be a last resort.

Developing an Action Plan

The individual representatives of each agency must agree to prioritise the actions they have agreed to and deliver them within a defined and agreed time scale as determined by the MARAC.

It will be the responsibility of that individual to ensure that actions are complied with and reviewed within defined time scales.

In principle:

- Tailored actions will be developed at the MARAC to increase the safety of the victim, children or other vulnerable parties and any staff.
- Agencies should inform the MARAC Coordinator by email when actions are complete, or mark as complete on Oasis.
- If victims move out of the area, they will be referred to that geographical location of the MARAC.

Data Protection

All agencies **must** have signed the MARAC Information Sharing Agreement prior to their attendance at the meeting. Information will not be shared unless this has been completed. The information being shared at MARAC meetings is strictly limited to the purposes and aims as stated in the Information Sharing Agreement.

All attendees must agree a confidentiality statement and declaration at the start of each conference, including persons attending MARAC meetings with permission of the MARAC chair to act as observers or assessors.

Information must only be shared with partners who have a stated lawful basis through involvement in that case. Partners must ensure that MARAC data is restricted and staff accessing information must be subject to the 'need to know' and to any specific additional restrictions agreed within agencies.

Information gained at the meeting cannot be used for other purposes without consent from and reference to the person/agency that originally supplied it. A clear lawful basis under data protection legislation must be identified for any reuse.

All partners must ensure that they have policies and procedures which are compliant with data protection legislation.

Access and Security of Data

All agencies must ensure that they have appropriate security measures commensurate with data protection legislation. This is signified by the agreement of the MARAC ISA.

This must include that they have policies and documented procedures which ensure that 'appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data'.

Secure Storage of Data

Data should be stored in accordance with the Data Protection principles in that:

- Data should be stored securely – only those who legitimately require access to the data should be allowed access
- Personal data processed for any purpose should not be kept longer than is necessary for that purpose (it is usually recommended that data is kept for seven years from the date of the last referral to the MARAC)
- The retention of data should comply with organisational policies
- Steps should be taken by all Partners to ensure that information is securely stored and accessible by only those who are permitted access.
- Where information is stored electronically, steps should be taken to ensure that files are created with restricted access to those permitted to access the data.
- Care should be taken when using electronic storage accessible to other individuals within own organisations.

MARAC Coordinators

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Partnership is responsible for the management of the process locally and to do this the MARAC Coordinator posts are sited within the IDVA Service within the MASH.

The role of the MARAC Coordinator is intended to be as independent of any one agency as possible.

The MARAC Coordinator is the single point of contact for referral to the MARAC. The MARAC Coordinator can be contacted at idva.referrals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk (for Cambridgeshire) and peterboroughidvas@peterborough.gov.uk (for Peterborough). Cases discussed at the MARAC will have been referred via the coordinators and referrals will not be accepted via any other method.

The MARAC Coordinator is the link between all agencies and the overall process and is responsible among other things for the collation of referrals, the preparation of reports and monitoring of actions completed.

It is the referring agency's responsibility to identify the level of risk and forward the cases to the MARAC Coordinator via their internal nominated person or representative. Cases can be referred by any agency if they meet the threshold for discussion at a MARAC. Essentially, the MARAC Coordinator role and responsibilities are in relation to communication, administration and outcomes and therefore the MARAC Coordinator will:

- Establish effective communication between all parties who regularly attend the MARAC
- Establish effective communication between those parties who may attend the MARAC on a less frequent basis
- Give appropriate information to partner agencies about the MARAC process
- Work with the Chair to identify agency gaps within the MARAC and continue to establish links with these agencies to enable full participation at the MARAC
- Accept properly completed referrals to the MARAC from all agencies

- Maintain and develop referral forms on Oasis case management tool, and organise ways of sending information, for example by secure email
 - Produce agendas and distribute to relevant partners, detailing victim, perpetrator and children's details
 - Produce and distribute appropriate and accurate minutes as soon as possible after the MARAC, uploading them on completion to Oasis
 - Record MARAC data
 - Monitor agency actions following a MARAC, send a reminder to partners (excepting police*) when actions are not completed in the agreed timescale and mark outstanding actions (after a period) as 'marked incomplete by lead agency'
- *Police are responsible for updating their own actions on Athena
- Keep performance data on the MARAC and feedback to the MARAC steering group
 - Inform partner agencies of relevant facts and provide performance reports to meet information requests from the MARAC steering group, and to Safe Lives
 - Highlight statistics for help with future funding for further resources and identify if there are communities that are not currently engaging with any service providers

The MARAC Coordinator is not responsible for managing the risk of victims, or for ensuring that agency actions are completed. The responsibility for managing the risk and completing actions remains with the referring agency and those agencies tasked with completing the actions identified by the MARAC.

The Referral Process

The purpose of the referral method is to allow all agencies and persons to be able to make a referral to the same consistent standard, and to give confidence in the referral process. Although the MARAC Coordinator is responsible for managing the process, they will not screen referrals or change the risk score of a referral.

Referrals to the MARAC will be accepted from all agencies for high-risk victims. For more information on the threshold for 'high risk' please refer to **Section 3**. Agencies must be aware that DASH is a risk indicator checklist and not a full risk assessment. It is a victim focussed practical tool that can help to identify which clients should be referred to the MARAC and where to prioritise the use of resources. Risk is dynamic and the person completing needs to be alert to the fact that risk can change very suddenly.

Methods of Referral

Only referrals via the MARAC Coordinator will be accepted using the correct format. This will require an online referral to be completed accompanied by the Safe Lives DASH Risk Assessment Indicator Checklist.

This online referral and completed DASH contain the information required for the MARAC Coordinator to collate and prepare the reports required prior to the conference taking place. This ensures as much relevant information is brought to the

meeting as possible, reduces the amount of time spent discussing each case, and in turn allows more cases to be included during the meeting duration.

Police send their referrals via secure email to idva.referrals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or peterboroughidvas@peterborough.gov.uk

The online referral form links for both Peterborough and Cambridgeshire can be found at https://www.cambsdasv.org.uk/make_a_referral

Professional Judgement

In this operating procedure, professional judgement is deemed to be based on facts and objective evidence as well as experience. At times the DASH RIC might not meet the threshold for referral to a MARAC (i.e. 17 ticks) – however professional judgment should also be taken into consideration. Individuals are expected to make professional judgments about the level of risk to secure the best interests and welfare of the victim.

Best Practice:

- Discuss the circumstances that have informed your professional judgment that an individual is to be referred to the MARAC with your senior manager
- Always record discussions and reasons why actions were taken
- Record any areas of disagreement about course of action taken and if necessary

Out of county referrals - MARAC to MARAC process

The aim is to promote the safety of high-risk victims, regardless of where they live, and to ensure that all agencies at MARAC are clear about their roles and responsibilities at each stage of the transfer process.

For high-risk victims that require a MARAC referral to a different county, IDVAs should complete a MARAC transfer form. This is processed by the MARAC Coordinators, and the MARAC referral and risk assessment is forwarded to the appropriate area.

- Where a victim moves between areas, a MARAC-to-MARAC referral should always be made
- Agency referrals should be consistent with a victim focused response to the transfer of cases across MARAC areas
- A referral to a new MARAC should not be contingent on that victim meeting the local MARAC threshold in the area to which they are referred
- The originating and receiving MARAC should have clear responsibilities at both the point of referral and in the 12 months since last referral (i.e. 'flagging and tagging' for further incidents)

Oasis Case Management Tool

Data relating to victims, perpetrators and children of domestic abuse will be recorded into the Oasis Case Management System. Partners can have access for the purpose

of accessing MARAC minutes and updating actions. It is the responsibility of individual agencies to update their own actions, either on Oasis or via the MARAC Coordinators. Any queries relating to the Oasis case management system should go to the MARAC Coordinators.

Before the Meeting

Agendas are sent to partners seven days before the meeting. Agendas are also available on Oasis. Partners should establish what information is held by their organisation about each case and complete the research form. This should be returned to the MARAC Coordinators as soon as possible.

The Safe Lives '10 Principles of an Effective MARAC' should be followed:

The 10 principles underpin an effective MARAC and support everyone involved to deliver these aims. At the core of each principle is the safety of the victim, which needs to be considered at all stages of the process. Ensuring that the victim is supported throughout and their needs represented at the MARAC is crucial to managing risk, improving and maintaining safety, and reducing repeat victimisation. The principles are:

1. Identification - professionals recognise domestic abuse; risk assess and identify high-risk cases based on the referral criteria for MARAC
2. Referral to MARAC and IDVA - all victims who meet the MARAC threshold are referred to MARAC and the IDVA
3. Multi-agency engagement - agencies that can contribute to safeguarding high-risk victims, associated children and vulnerable adults attend the MARAC
4. Independent representation and support for victims - all high-risk victims are offered the support of an IDVA; their views and needs are represented at MARAC
5. Information sharing - MARAC representatives share relevant, proportionate, and risk-focused information
6. Action planning - multi-agency action plans address the risk to the victim, safeguard children and adults at risk, and manage perpetrator behaviour
7. Number of cases - the MARAC hears the recommended volume of cases
8. Equality - the MARAC addresses the unique needs of victims with protected characteristics
9. Operational support - there is sufficient support and resources to support effective functioning of the MARAC
10. Governance - there is effective strategic support and leadership of the MARAC and agencies work together effectively

After the MARAC

The MARAC Coordinator produces the minutes of the meeting and uploads them onto Oasis or sends by secure email if arranged separately.