**LIVERPOOL**

**Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)**

**Combined Protocol**

**Updated April 2023**

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Section 1

**1.** Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (**MARAC)**

1.1 The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a regular meeting where local agencies share information about high risk domestic abuse victims and families.

MARAC aims to develop risk focused, co-ordinated safety plans to support victims, including children this can only be achieved if the behaviour of the alleged perpetrator is addressed effectively. MARAC therefore shares information about perpetrators to increase safety for victims including children, develop ways to hold perpetrators accountable and offer appropriate services to them where safe to do so.

1.2. MARAC **does not** replace professional responsibility to take action to improve victim safety. Agencies have a responsibility to take steps to protect victims of domestic abuse including children, and **should not** wait for the MARAC meeting before taking action to prevent further abuse.

1.3. The MARAC provides an opportunity to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing between agencies to ensure that appropriate actions are being taken to reduce the risk of further abuse.

1.4. The MARAC is part of a broader commitment and response to reducing high risk Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls in Liverpool.

1.5. The purpose of a MARAC is to:

* Share risk information and work undertaken to assess the needs of victims and families
* Manage risk and increase safety by developing a holistic action plan to address any unmet risks to the safety of victims including children
* Reduce repeat victimisation
* Share information about perpetrators of domestic abuse and develop ways to address perpetrator behaviour safely
* Determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to the victim, other individuals or to the wider community and to refer appropriately
* Improve partnership working by facilitating information sharing and overseeing the joint implementation of multi-agency risk management plans
* Improve support for staff who are involved in high risk cases

**2.** **The MARAC Combined Protocol**

**General Information**

2.1 This document contains two interlinked protocols:

* The Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) which governs the exchange of information for the purpose of the MARAC
* The MARAC Operating Protocol (MOP) which outlines how MARAC enhances existing local arrangements to support high risk victims of domestic abuse.

2.2 The purpose of the combined protocol is to provide guidance and support for agencies who sign up to the MARAC process with the aim of decreasing risk and maintaining safety for high risk victims of domestic abuse including children.

2.3 The combined protocol is a binding agreement between local organisations. Any issues with compliance will be resolved by the MARAC Steering Group using the appropriate provisions within the protocol.

2.4. The combined protocol may be amended with the agreement of the MARAC Steering Group and is to be formally reviewed in April 2023.

2.5 Signatories to the combined protocol are those agencies listed (See Appendix One). Additional agencies may become signatories to the protocol at any time (see 3.1. below).

2.6. The MARAC membership is reviewed on an annual basis to maintain relevant and appropriate membership for this work.

2.7. Agencies that are not signatories to this protocol may refer cases to MARAC (see Section 4: 9.15).

2.8. New MARAC members should attend a MARAC briefing with a MARAC Support Officer. MARAC representative training is offered as required to ensure members are confident and able to participate in the process fully.

**3.** **Joining** /**Withdrawing from MARAC**

3.1. Any agency wishing to join the MARAC membership must contact the MARAC Co-coordinator via the marac@liverpool.gov.uk email inbox for an initial discussion. The application to join will be considered at the next MARAC Steering Group.

All new members must undertake a briefing from a MARAC Support Officer, participate in MARAC and risk assessment training and commit to the guidance outlined in the combined protocol.

3.2. The agency representative with the relevant authority should sign the agreement (See Appendix Two) to work within the guidelines of the Liverpool MARAC Combined Protocol.

3.2. Signatories may choose to withdraw their endorsement of this protocol. An appropriate representative of the agency that wishes to withdraw should advise the Chair of the MARAC Steering Group of their intention to withdraw and why this is considered necessary.

3.3. The Chair will advise the next meeting of the MARAC Steering Group of the agency’s intention to withdraw from the Protocol. The agency will then be removed from all correspondence regarding the MARAC.

3.4. The withdrawing agency will destroy or return all data relating to the MARAC. Withdrawing agencies must continue to comply with the terms of the combined protocol in respect of any data that the partner has obtained through being a signatory.

3.5. The agency details will be removed from the MARAC contact list.

**4. Complaints and Breaches**

4.1. Complaints

Complaints regarding the MARAC should be referred to the relevant agency’s Designated Officer in the first instance. The complaint will be dealt with by the relevant agency, using their internal complaints procedure.

All agencies are expected to contribute to the meeting in an appropriate manner, with due respect for equality, diversity and the seriousness of the subject matter, and with respect for colleagues and the subjects of the meeting. Concerns with professional conduct during a meeting should be raised in the first instance with the chair of the MARAC steering group (MARAC Co-coordinator at Safer and Stronger Communities).

Individuals do retain the right to raise a complaint with such bodies as the Information Commissioner or the statutory Ombudsman.

* 1. Breaches

All agencies retain responsibility for any breach of these protocols by any member of their staff. Steps to control breaches of these protocols are to be undertaken in line with individual agency procedures and in accordance with relevant legislation such as the Data protection Act 2018. The MARAC Steering group is to be advised of all breaches of security and steps that agencies have taken to redress these.

Section 2: Information Sharing

**1. Introduction**

1.1. This protocol does not replace any other information sharing arrangement between agencies in Liverpool. It is intended to clarify the arrangements for sharing information for the purposes of the MARAC.

**2. Purpose of Information Sharing**

2.1. Information is shared between agencies at a MARAC meeting to:

* Reduce risk of serious harm through domestic abuse
* Increase safety of victims, including children
* Address any risks faced by professionals and/or to improve public safety

**3. Principles for Information Sharing**

3.1. Information sharing for the purposes of the MARAC complies with key legislation relating to crime and disorder, the protection of private data, the common law duty of confidence and human rights.

3.2. Personal information, which is information that could be used to identify a living person, may be shared to reduce the risk of serious harm from domestic abuse. Specifically, information may be shared to increase the safety of all victims of domestic abuse, including children; enable the protection of vulnerable people; and reduce crime and disorder locally.

3.3. Any disclosure of personal information should be proportionate to the risks faced. Professionals should aim to strike a fair balance between the protection of an individual’s rights and the general interests of society.

3.4. The decision to share information should be properly documented at the time of disclosure, identifying the reasons why the disclosures are being made (i.e. what risk is believed to exist), what information will be disclosed and what restrictions on use of the disclosed information will be placed on its recipients.

3.5. The party receiving the data should not use it for any purpose other than that set out in this Protocol, nor share it with any other party, without the disclosing partner’s written permission and, if appropriate, the consent of the client.

3.6. It is the responsibility of each signatory agency to ensure that staff members comply with GDPR, DPA and other relevant legislation, internal policies on disclosure and retaining of information and, where appropriate, relevant professional codes of conduct. Agencies are encouraged to seek their own legal advice wherever necessary.

3.7. Signatory agencies will ensure that information will be stored securely in accordance with GDPR Legislation. This data will be destroyed when no longer required for the purpose it was provided.

3.8.Signatory agencies will share the identity of designated Data Protection Officers for their agency when signing up to the MARAC Combined Protocol.

**4. Information that may be disclosed**

4.1. Signatory agencies will need to make an informed judgment on a case-by case basis about information that should be disclosed through the MARAC process. This information may relate to victims, (alleged) perpetrators, children in the household or otherwise affected by the domestic abuse, and others that may be at risk of harm. Where relevant, the MARAC may also consider information about the perpetrator’s family or other relationships.

4.2. The information shared by agencies may include:

* Name, date of birth, address(es), aliases and gender
* Information about court orders, injunctions, bail conditions and other legal issues
* Current information relating to recent contact, meetings, sightings, phone calls, which may include attendance or non-attendance at appointments, at A&E or in other health settings
* Who is present during home visits and appointments
* Relevant historic information regarding previous convictions, family or relationships history
* Other safety options considered or substance misuse issues
* Other information relating to the risks facing the victim or other affected individuals

4.3. Different levels of disclosure may be appropriate for different individuals in different circumstances. In all cases disclosure must be relevant and proportionate to the risks faced

**5.0 Reviews of Domestic Homicides (DHRs) Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews**

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

5.2. Safeguarding Adult Reviews: (formerly serious case reviews) were established on a statutory basis under S44 of the Care Act (2014). This provision came into force 1 April 2015.

5.3 Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews: Regulation 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006 sets out the functions of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). This includes the requirement for LSCBs to undertake reviews of serious cases in specified circumstances. (Working Together 2015: 75-76)

5.4 Reviews may include several agencies (multi-agency reviews) or single agencies (single agency or critical learning reviews).

5.5 These Reviews aim to establish what lessons can be learned; organisations share and apply these lessons to service responses; prevent serious incidents and homicide and improve service responses.

5.6 In the event that a MARAC case becomes subject to one of the above reviews, the Independent Chair of the Review Panel or the Domestic Abuse Lead for Safer and Stronger Communities may make a written request to the MARAC Chair for the release of Minutes of meetings pertaining to the case. The administration of all information reports and reviews will be completed by Citysafe and signed off by the MARAC Chair.

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

* A client of the MARAC is the victim of a domestic abuse related homicide
* A MARAC client is identified as the perpetrator of a domestic abuse related homicide and the victim is also known to the MARAC
* A client’s child is the victim of a domestic abuse related homicide or serious incident and is known to MARAC

5.8 In all other circumstances a written request for the release of information including minutes and action plans may still be submitted to the Chair of the MARAC who will, in conjunction with the MARAC Steering Group make a decision as to whether the request will be granted.

5.9 If professionals are in any doubt as to whether a decision to disclose is appropriate, legal advice should be sought internally via their agency senior management structure to ensure that any request is compliant with GDPR and CDPA legislation 2018.

**6. Consent**

6.1. It is considered good practice to obtain consent from victims prior to discussing their case at MARAC. As such, where appropriate and possible, explicit consent should be obtained and consent to share information should be recorded on clients records. However for cases meeting the MARAC threshold of high risk, there are legal obligations and other conditions such as Article 6(C&E) and Article 9(C&G) processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest.

6.2. However, there may be circumstances where agencies have not been able to gain consent (e.g. police) or victims may have chosen not to provide consent.

6.3. Furthermore, it may be inappropriate to attempt to seek consent if doing so:

* Could place anyone e.g. the individual, family member, child, worker, third party etc. at harm
* May prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime
* May lead to an unjustified delay in making enquires about allegations of significant harm to a child or serious harm to an adult

6.4. If consent is not obtained, the victim’s information should still be discussed at a MARAC. A decision as to whether to disclose information at MARAC should not be based upon whether or not consent has been obtained. The decision to disclose information should conform to the principles set out in this protocol and the obligations written in relevant legislation.

If consent for referral is not given but a professional decides to refer to MARAC anyway, the reason for sharing information has to be clearly noted on the referral form including reasons why information needs to be shared in accordance with relevant legislation

**7. Information Sharing with Victims and Perpetrators**

7.1. Victims discussed at MARAC should be informed of the outcome of the MARAC meeting unless it is considered unsafe to do so. The IDVA or referring/supporting agency would normally undertake this task after the MARAC meeting. If the victim is not informed about MARAC before the meeting, there should be an action at MARAC for IDVA or other representative to inform the victim if it is safe to do so.

7.2. The perpetrator should NOT be informed about the MARAC meeting or its outcome. Agencies should take precautions to ensure that, as far as possible, the perpetrator is not made aware of the MARAC or subsequent safety plan. Participants should take extraordinary care not to inform the perpetrator of any element of the safety plan inadvertently (i.e. through a third party).

**8. Legal Grounds for Sharing Information within the MARAC Framework GDPR & DPA 2018**

8.1. This Protocol operates in accordance with relevant legislation to: increase the safety of victims of domestic abuse, including children; enable the protection of vulnerable people; and reduce crime and disorder locally.

8.2. Information sharing for the purposes of the MARAC complies with key legislation relating to the Crime and Disorder Act, the protection of private data, common law duty of confidence and the Human Rights Act.

The protocol reflects the requirements in terms of GDPR and DPA 2018 as outlined in Article 6c (GDPR). There are a number of legal obligations which require data to be processed, these include:

The **Crime and Disorder Act** 1998 permits any person to disclose information to a relevant authority where the disclosure is necessary to address crime and disorder issues.

Under the prevention of crime exemption of the **GDPR**, disclosures may be made to members of the MARAC if considered necessary to prevent a crime against a named individual or specified household. The risk of crime must be a genuine or likely risk.

In line with the **common law duty of confidence** – an obligation of confidence will exist where an individual has provided information to another in circumstances where it is reasonable to assume that the provider of the information expected it to be kept confidential. Where there is a clear duty of confidence the information can only be disclosed to “third parties” if there is informed consent, compulsion of law or public interest.

Under the **Human Rights Act** – disclosures between signatories to MARAC will comply with the HRA if it:

* Is made for the purposes of preventing crime, protecting the health and/or safety of alleged victims and/or the rights and freedoms of those who are victims of domestic violence including children;
* Is necessary for the purposes referred to above and is no more extensive in scope than is necessary for those purposes; and
* Complies with all relevant provisions of law, including the DPA and the Caldicott Guidelines.

Under the **Caldicott Guidelines,** where an individual has not consented to the use of their information, that individual’s wishes should be respected unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as where there is a serious public health risk or risk of harm to the victim or other individuals, or for the prevention, detection or prosecution of serious crime. The Caldicott Guidelines are not law and, if there is an apparent conflict between legislation and the common law, legislation takes precedence.

Article 6e, processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the Data Controller.

And in terms of any Special Category, data will be processed as provided for in Article 9.2 (g) substantial public interest together with DPA 2018 amendment 85 which further empowers organisations to process personal data for safeguarding purposes.

**9. Storage of information**

9.1. Signatories to this Protocol are to ensure that they have adequate security arrangements in place to receive, store and send MARAC information securely.

9.2. MARAC information should only be distributed to individuals within the agency that either attend the MARAC or conduct research on MARAC cases on behalf of the agency.

9.3. Personal information that is shared for the purposes of MARAC **must** be:

* E-mailed via secure government approved links; many MARAC members use secure email which is available from the Criminal Justice Secure Email Service at [www.cjsm.justice.gov.uk](http://www.cjsm.justice.gov.uk)
* Stored in secure, password protected systems that can only be accessed by approved persons
* Stored in a secure filing cabinet when not in use (for paper files)
* Accessed only by relevant staff in appropriate settings.

9.4. Each agency that attends a MARAC meeting can hold relevant information for as long as a risk to the victim, including children remains. The information retained should be proportionate to the perceived risk.

9.5. It would be good practice for each agency attending a MARAC meeting to review its own initial recording of a case after six or twelve months and decide whether it was still relevant for it to retain all or some of the information that was initially recorded.

9.6. All MARAC related data that is held by agencies should be kept for no longer than is strictly necessary. Data should be destroyed in line with agencies’ retention procedures.

**10. Data Access Requests**

10.1. The MARAC is not a legal entity and therefore the owner of information shared at a MARAC is the original supplying agency.

10.2. Any request for information recorded at the MARAC may only be shared with the **consent of all agencies that supplied information to that MARAC**. Individual agencies are expected to have and comply with their own data access procedures, and would be encouraged to seek their own legal advice prior to sharing any information.

**Disclosure to Individuals through the GDPR**

10.3. In accordance with Article 15 (GDPR) individuals have the statutory right, subject to some exemptions, to see information which organisations hold about them. Individual agencies are expected to have and comply with their own data access procedures. The DPA 2018 requires every organisation processing personal data to register with the Information Commissioners (ICO) [www.ico.co.uk](http://www.ico.co.uk) unless they are exempt, and forward their unique number to the MARAC administrator. (If exempt agencies must provide MARAC Support Officers with their agencies data information policy highlighting how they store their information). There maybe circumstances where a restriction applies under GDPR to access the past data.

10.4. Given that the MARAC is not a legal entity and that the owner of information shared at a MARAC is the original supplying agency, any request for information will be directed to the most appropriate agency in the first instance. Individual agencies would then need to seek their own legal advice prior to sharing any information.

10.5. Data access requests pertaining directly to MARAC should be made in writing to the MARAC chair(s).

**Disclosure into Family Court Proceedings**

10.6. The Family Justice Council and Safelives have produced guidance regarding MARACs and disclosure into Family Court Proceedings. Three key principles underpin this guidance -

* A MARAC is not a legal entity and therefore the owner of information shared at a MARAC is the original supplying agency
* MARACs should only be required to disclose information by an order of the court
* Any request for information must be an informed request setting out the nature of the information sought i.e. there must be no ‘fishing expedition’

10.7. The question of disclosure should be considered well in advance of a contested hearing and be dealt with by an order for directions. Notice should be given to the Chair of the MARAC; if that is not practicable, the order should allow a MARAC representative to appear and object before compliance is required.

10.8. When any such order for disclosure is made and served on a MARAC, the Chair is under a duty to raise formal objection if disclosure will interfere significantly with a safety plan or may cause harm to any relevant child. If, however, a decision is made not to make a formal objection:

* The MARAC Chair should identify the documents currently held (which in practice will usually only be the minutes)
* If the minutes refer to information supplied and held by another organisation, the court should be invited to make an order directed to that organisation (if necessary) unless the Chair has that organisation’s consent to disclose
* If any document ordered to be disclosed is believed by the Chair to be potentially unreliable (e.g. the minutes), the court should be so informed
* If a MARAC is in doubt whether to disclose they may make disclosure to the court setting about their concerns and reservations (e.g. any potential impact on safety) but, in so doing, they accept that the court may nevertheless order disclosure
* The MARAC Chair may also draw to the attention of the court, the parties or the relevant organisation (as the case may be) that the significance of any information held depends upon other information held by a participating organisation and identify that organisation

10.9. MARAC Co-coordinator, Support Officers and IDVAs (as opposed to professional representatives of organisations attending a MARAC) should not ordinarily be called as a witness in court proceedings.

1. Definition and identification of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as:

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

**a. A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and**

**b. The behaviour is abusive.**

Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following:

a. Physical or sexual abuse;

b. Violent or threatening behaviour

c. Controlling or coercive behaviour;

d. Economic abuse (see below);

e. Psychological, emotional or other abuse;

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

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

a. Acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or

b. Obtain goods or services.

For the purposes of this Part A’s behaviour may be behaviour “towards” B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B’s child).

Personally Connected is defined in Section 2 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as:

For the purposes of this Part, two people are “personally connected” to each other if any of the following applies—

a. they are, or have been, married to each other;

b. they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;

c. they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

d. they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);

e. they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;

f. they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see below);they are relatives.

A person has a parental relationship in relation to a child if—

a. the person is a parent of the child, or

b. the person has, or has had, parental responsibility for the child.

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

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

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

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

In addition to delivering on the new Act, LCC will also remain mindful of the Home Office definition of domestic violence and abuse: **‘Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse’.**

**This definition includes so-called ‘honour’ based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). It also covers a range of different types of domestic abuse including coercive control.**

The most commonly reported type of domestic violence and abuse is coercive control, which uses both violent and non-violent means of control to gain power over a person. Coercive control is a sustained pattern of abuse that seeks to take away the survivor’s liberty or freedom, to strip away their sense of self. Domestic violence and abuse is a public health issue. It cuts across all strands of society and impacts on all aspects of life. Physical and mental health is impacted greatly by violence and abuse, decreasing life expectancy and life chances.

Building on those partnerships co-production will be central to the development, commissioning, monitoring and evaluation of these services and outcomes.

1.2. All professionals that come into contact with victims of domestic abuse (as per Home Office definition) have a responsibility to consider if the victim, including children, is at risk of serious harm.

1.3. In Liverpool, most agencies use the Merseyside Risk Indicator Toolkit (MeRIT) risk assessment tool included in the MARAC/IDVA referral form (See Appendix Four). This is the preferred risk assessment tool, however health organisations use SafeLives Dash Tool to assess client risk. MARAC accepts SafeLives Dash to support MARAC referral for these cases.

1.4. The MeRIT is intended to be completed with the victim of domestic abuse. It contains 40 questions to quantify domestic abuse as outlined in the definition in 1.

Professionals should note that information provided on MeRIT will be shared with the MARAC Team of Merseyside Police, MARAC Chair and Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA).

1.5. **Professionals that identify high risk of significant harm to victims should take** **immediate action to improve victim safety**. Professionals should follow their own agency procedures for reporting domestic abuse and taking action to reduce the risk of harm to victims, including children. Professionals should not wait until the MARAC to take action to prevent further abuse.

1.6. If the person experiencing domestic abuse is not considered as being at high risk of serious harm, professionals should made appropriate referrals or signpost to other services.

**1.7 Links with Existing Multi-Agency Working Arrangements**

The MARAC is designed to enhance rather than replace existing multi-agency working arrangements:

Agencies should take immediate action to prevent further abuse.

Agencies should follow their own agency procedures to safeguard victims from further harm and discuss cases with designated professionals as appropriate.

Agencies should consider if the family meets the criteria for inclusion in the

**Liverpool** **Families Programme** i.e. adult on benefits; unauthorised absences or child attends PRU/Alternative provision; anti-social behaviour or offences by child/young person; and/or domestic violence, mental ill-health, parents’ offending or in prison, substance misuse, learning disabilities, long term health conditions and/or risk of homelessness. The criteria for the Stronger Families Programme is available from: /...plans...families/liverpool-families-programme

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults procedures should be followed if a professional considers an adult to be at risk of harm:

/council/.../adult.../safeguarding-adults-procedure/‎CachedSimilar

Safeguarding Children procedures should be followed if a professional considers a child to be at risk of harm:

<http://www.liverpoolscb.org/>

Agencies should consider referral to MACE via a CSE1 or MACE if Child Sexual Exploitation is suspected using the MASH referral route.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and arrangements for managing potentially dangerous people take precedence over the MARAC.

Police will make the necessary arrangements to share information between MAPPA and the MARAC as appropriate.

**2. Referral to the MARAC**

2.1. All victims that have been identified as at high risk of serious harm should be referred to the MARAC. Specifically:

* Professionals should make a referral to MARAC for all cases where the MeRIT scores 72 or over. Possible interventions are listed on the MeRIT form (See Appendix Four)
* Professionals may use their professional judgementto make a referral to MARAC if they consider that the victim is at high risk of serious harm (even if they do not score 72 or over on the risk assessment) these referrals will be assessed (see Section 2.5).
* ALL cases of Honour Based Violence cases MUST be referred to MARAC and will be heard in a closed session (notwithstanding what the MeRIT score is)
* Closed sessions may be held for any MARAC cases if the impact of having a full meeting could be detrimental to the victim or child(ren). (See information sharing/restricted information sharing).
* Professionals may make a referral to MARAC in cases of potential escalation, where abuse is escalating and it is necessary to share information more fully at the MARAC.
* Cases that include physical abuse during pregnancy, strangulation, cruelty to animals, the use of weapons and/or threats to kill are usually considered high risk.
* Any professional can refer to MARAC even if they are not a MARAC member (See Section 4:9.15).

2.2. Professionals referring cases to MARAC should complete a MeRIT Risk Assessment and MARAC referral form. Professionals should note that the details provided on the completed referral form will be shared with the MARAC membership, IDVA and MARAC Team of Merseyside Police. (An online form is currently being developed, in the interim referrers should use the paper based form by requesting the form from marac@Liverpool.gov.uk and sending the completed form and risk assessment back to this email address via secure email).

 The referral and MeRIT Forms should include:

* Completion of all questions
* A clear explanation why the referral is being made
* Risk score, patterns of risk/abuse and an analysis of circumstances and events
* Who is at risk of serious harm and the nature of this risk
* Timeframe for recent risk and future risk
* History of abuse of both parties
* What the referring agency has put in place prior to MARAC with the aim of supporting the client/reducing risk

2.3. Professionals should note the referral deadline for each MARAC (the annual MARAC schedule is distributed to all members each year or on request).

2.4. If professionals are unsure whether to refer a case to MARAC, they should seek advice from their designated representative in the first instance and the MARAC Officers if further advice is required.

**2.5. Professional Judgement referrals**

All referrals sent on professional judgement will be quality assured by; the MARAC Chair (Police Referrals) the Vulnerable Victims Lead at Liverpool City Council (agency referrals). The referring agency will be advised if the case is not referred to MARAC.

If inappropriate cases sent on professional judgement are repeatedly referred from one organisation or individual, the MARAC Co-coordinator/MARAC Chair will address this by offering training and support to the individual or organisation.

**Repeat Referrals**

2.6. Referring agencies are expected to ‘flag and tag’ MARAC victims in their files for 12 months following a referral so that they are aware if a service user/client experiences a repeat incident with the same perpetrator.

2.7. Agencies should refer all repeat incidents, between the same victim and perpetrator within 12 months of the last referral to MARAC.

Or ANY instance of abuse between the same victim and perpetrator(s), within 3 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.

These events could be disclosed to any service or agency including, but not exclusive to, health care practitioners (including mental health), domestic abuse specialists, police, substance misuse services, housing providers etc.

Referring agencies should identify ‘repeats’ on their referral forms (See Appendix five for complete referral criteria)

2.8. The MARAC Support Officers may also flag cases where a previous victim is referred to MARAC with a different perpetrator, and/or a new victim is referred to MARAC as the partner of a perpetrator that has previously been linked to another MARAC victim.

N.B. MARAC members should ‘flag and tag’ perpetrator files within their agencies with an agency agreed marker to identify involvement in MARAC as a perpetrator of domestic violence and abuse. Organisations which do not flag and tag files must have a rational legal basis for non-compliance.

**MARAC to MARAC Referrals**

2.9. A MARAC to MARAC referral should be made when a victim moves between areas, either on a temporary (e.g. into refuge) or permanent basis. The referring MARAC should send:

* MARAC minutes relating to that specific case
* The original referral form including risk assessment
* A completed MARAC referral form and action plan
* Any other documentation that is relevant to the new MARAC

2.10. The minutes of a MARAC meeting will normally address risks to the victim in the original area. However, it may have been some time since the victim was discussed. As such, the MARAC referral form should provide any new information on the victim and their children.

2.11. If Liverpool MARAC receives a MARAC subject from another area, the MARAC Officer will acknowledge receipt of the relevant documents outlined above and include the case on the MARAC agenda to be heard at the next MARAC unless there is an urgent need for an emergency MARAC..

**3. Multi-Agency Engagement**

3.1. All signatory agencies are required to send an appropriate representative to each MARAC.

3.2. Representatives must be of sufficient seniority within their agency to present cases that have been referred by their agency to the MARAC; share relevant and proportionate information with the MARAC; volunteer actions to safeguard victims, including children; and advise the MARAC Officer of completion of agreed actions**. Further detail about the specific responsibilities for agency representatives at MARAC is in Part 9: Operational Support – MARAC Membership.**

3.3. It is preferred that the same agency representative attends each MARAC, however, if the designated agency representative is unable to attend the MARAC, deputies may attend in their place. Deputies are expected to be fully briefed on the cases to be presented to MARAC, the information to be shared, and to provide an update against actions identified in previous MARACs.

3.4. If an agency cannot send a representative to attend MARAC, written information should be sent via the GCSX MARAC email box at least two days prior to the relevant meeting. The MARAC Officers will share this information with the MARAC membership before the meeting.

3.5. All representatives should act professionally and ensure that respect for members and clients is upheld at all times (See Appendix Three).

3.6. Attendance at MARAC will be monitored by the MARAC Steering Group.

**4. Independent representation and support for victims**

4.1. Victims of domestic abuse are to be supported through the MARAC process by the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service, unless the IDVA has been unable to contact the client; the individual declines this support or the client chooses to access support from another specialist agency.

4.2. Professionals should note that there are 10 F/t and 2P/T Independent Domestic Violence Advisors. This includes one Young Persons IDVA to work with high risk clients across the city.

4.3. The role of the IDVA is to represent the views of the victim at the MARAC and to liaise between the victim and partner agencies to ensure that all relevant resources are being utilised to make the victim and any other vulnerable parties (including children) safe. The IDVA will be responsible for the case management for the duration of their role with the victim unless the victim declines support or chooses another DV agency to facilitate this work.

4.4. Referrals to the MARAC (including the MeRIT) will be forwarded to the IDVA Service within three days of a referral to MARAC. The IDVA will consider the work that has already been completed to keep the victim safe, and make contact with the victim to determine if further support is required and to represent their views at the MARAC. IDVA will share relevant information with MARAC irrespective of whether consent has been provided or not.

4.5. The IDVA will contact the victim after the MARAC to provide feedback about the discussion and actions agreed. If IDVA are not supporting a victim, where possible another suitable agency representative will be nominated by MARAC to provide feedback.

**5. Research and Information Sharing**

**MARAC Agendas**

5.1. All cases referred to MARAC (before the referral deadline date) will be on the agenda for the next MARAC. Referrals received after the referral deadline date will be on the agenda for the subsequent MARAC.

5.2. The agenda contains a summary of information/risk provided in each referral. It will be circulated at least 5 working days before the MARAC.

**Agency Research**

5.3. Upon receipt of the agenda, members of the MARAC will collate any **relevant, specific and proportionate information** they may hold about the victim, the perpetrator and any children in the household. This may include information which indicates a risk to the victim or children and/or work that has been undertaken to improve victim safety including work with perpetrators.

5.4. In the event that a member agency cannot attend the MARAC,

Information should be forwarded to and discussed with the MARAC Support Officer before the meeting. Where possible information should be emailed to the MARAC Support Officer who will share with MARAC partners.

5.5. Agencies are expected to ‘flag and tag’ MARAC victims in their files for 12 months following a referral so that they are aware if a service user/client experiences a repeat incident. Perpetrators files may be flagged to highlight domestic abuse towards a victim and referral to MARAC. **This information should never be disclosed to perpetrators. Member agencies should always follow their organisational data protection policy and procedure to ensure that this information is kept confidential.**

**Victim Contact**

5.6. Where it is safe to do so, the IDVA or referring agency will contact the victim prior to the MARAC to discuss safety planning and to bring the views of the victim to the meeting including consent/non-consent for information sharing. Victims will be provided with feedback after the MARAC meeting from a nominated organisation, preferably IDVA or their supporting agency where there is client engagement.

**MARAC Meetings**

5.7. The MARAC meetings will be held fortnightly with the caveat that extraordinary meetings will be convened if necessary. MARAC meetings will be chaired by Safeguarding Manager, Merseyside Police or nominated delegate. **Should the Chair or Deputy Chair be unavailable, a delegate from one of the MARAC partner agencies will act as chairperson for MARAC.**

5.8. **MARAC Police Support Officers will record meetings when and if required.**

**Presenting Cases**

5.9. Members of the MARAC are required to present the cases that have been referred to the MARAC by their agency, or make arrangements for the member of staff that made the referral to present the case to the MARAC. The agency should contact the MARAC Chair to make appropriate arrangements for additional members of staff to attend the MARAC.

5.10. The referring agency will introduce the case, identify the risk to victims, including children and provide an update of any further incidents or work undertaken since the referral was made.

**Sharing Information**

5.11. Following the presentation of the case by the referring agency, the MARAC Chair will invite other MARAC members to share information about the victim and about their agencies’ involvement with the victim, the perpetrator, and any children affected by the abuse (see section 2 information sharing).

5.12. Information sharing should be restricted to information that may indicate a risk to the victim or children, and/or work that has been undertaken to improve victim safety.

**Restricted Information Sharing**

5.13. There may be circumstances, such as when a victim at risk of being murdered as a result of honour-based violence or where the case involves a known professional as the victim, where information sharing may be restricted to a small number of agencies that attend the MARAC. These cases will be heard outside of MARAC meetings and may be referred to as a ‘closed or emergency MARAC’.

Closed sessions may be held for any MARAC cases if the impact of having a full meeting could be detrimental to the victim or child(ren). The referring agency is best placed to identify the possible impact on the victim and or children. Referring agencies and organisations can request a closed session via the MARAC mailbox. The MARAC Officer will list the case on the closed MARAC list and inform the Chair. Participants of closed sessions are the core MARAC members recommended by Safe Lives, the referrer and any specialist agencies relevant to the case.

**6. Action planning**

**Identifying Risks to the Victim, Including Children**

6.1. Referring agencies are required to identify risks to the victim and/or their children, and steps that have been taken to reduce those risks, including any referral or work with perpetrators.

6.2. As a result of the information shared during the MARAC, agencies may identify further risks to the victim and/or their children and make appropriate referrals and actions to e.g. Children or Adult Services.

**Safety Planning**

6.3. Action planning should include ways to bring the perpetrator to account and/or offer support to perpetrators where safe to do so. An agency that has contact with the perpetrator should take any actions agreed. On no account should the perpetrator be advised that the action has come from the MARAC meeting.

6.4. Agencies will recognise where staff within their organisation may provide additional support, and volunteer actions to be undertaken by themselves and other staff within their agency to safeguard victims, including children. Agencies may also suggest actions that could be taken by other agencies to improve victim/child safety.

6.5. Based on the risks identified above, further actions may need to be taken to improve safety for victims, including children. Agencies will jointly draw up a safety plan to reduce the risk of harm to victims and their children.

6.6. The actions in the safety plan aim to encourage the victim to engage with support in future and increase their safety; and ensure that the MARAC has exhausted all relevant resources to make the victim and any other vulnerable parties (including children) safe.

**Feedback to the Victim**

6.7. Where it is safe to do so, the IDVA or other identified lead agency will contact the victim to provide feedback on what has been discussed at the MARAC and the actions that will be taken.

**Feedback to Relevant Staff**

6.8. Following the MARAC, agencies will feedback relevant and appropriate information and actions to relevant and appropriate practitioners within their agency. Agencies will provide constructive feedback to those staff that made the referral to the MARAC, and advise any other practitioner if they need to undertake action to safeguard the victim and/or their children. This may include updating organisations working with perpetrators.

**Monitoring Actions from the MARAC**

6.9. All safety plans will be recorded by the MARAC Support Officer.

6.10. Members of the MARAC are responsible for updating the Officer when they complete their actions by the agreed deadline.

6.11. Agencies should liaise with each other outside the MARAC meeting to ensure they are monitoring the situation and updating one another about completed actions. Risk levels can change at any time so it is vital that the case is managed outside the meeting by the relevant agency partners.

6.12. **Actions from MARAC are the responsibility of the MARAC member, they should ensure they have been distributed within their agency to be completed.** They are required to inform the MARAC Officers via the MARAC mailbox that their actions are complete within 14 days of the MARAC meeting.**N.B. It is the responsibility of individual agencies to complete their MARAC Actions. If there is a serious issue or Domestic Homicide it is the agency not the MARAC that is accountable.**

**7. Number of Cases and Capacity**

7.1. The MARAC Steering Group will monitor the number of referrals to ensure that:

* All high risk victims who meet the MARAC threshold can receive support from Liverpool MARAC.
* There is sufficient capacity to provide independent representation for all MARAC cases.
* There is sufficient administrative capacity to support the MARAC effectively.

**8. Equality**

8.1. The MARAC Steering Group will ensure that the MARAC process does not preclude any person from being referred to the MARAC on the basis of age, disability, race, belief, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity.

8.2. The MARAC Steering Group will consider data from the MARAC to: enable understanding of MARAC referrals; target gaps through awareness raising and promote MARAC attendance from specialist agencies to meet the needs of the client group.

**9. Operational Support**

**MARAC Members**

9.1. Members of the MARAC attend each meeting. All partner agencies are required to send an appropriate representative to each MARAC.

9.2. Members of the MARAC must be of sufficient seniority within their agency to fulfil the responsibilities outlined below. Agencies should allow their representatives sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the MARAC.

9.3. Members are required to attend the MARAC regularly and participate fully.

9.4. Members should ensure their representatives are punctual and if possible remain for the duration of meetings. All members should sign in and out of meetings (including relevant times). This information is shared with Safe Lives and HMIC / CQC or Ofsted, as required.

The MARAC agenda is risk driven, every effort is made to hear the highest risk cases (as stipulated in the completed risk assessment form) on the first morning of the fortnightly meeting.

If an agency representative is unable to attend all of a meeting they should liaise with the MARAC chair who can agree to change the order of cases for discussion. Any such request should be made to the chair **prior** to the commencement of the meeting.

Movement of any cases on the agenda should be at the discretion of the MARAC chair. **NB: no more than two cases per agency should be moved on any day to promote smooth running of the meeting.**

9.5. Members are required to support staff within their organisation to make appropriate referrals to the MARAC. This may include acting as a point of contact and source of support for staff regarding MARAC; providing advice on the circumstances in which professionals should complete a MeRIT and/or a referral to MARAC; and signposting professionals to domestic abuse services and/or other forms of support.

9.6. Members are required to present cases that have been referred by their agency to the MARAC. Members will need to introduce the case, the risk to victims and/or their children and any action that has been taken to mitigate those risks. Members may find it useful for the member of staff who made the referral to be present at the MARAC, and should contact a MARAC Support Officer to make arrangements for this to occur.

9.7. It is the role of representatives at MARAC to bring information about the alleged perpetrator’s circumstances and their behaviour for every case, as well as information about the victim and any children.

9.8. Members are required to research all MARAC listed cases and share relevant and proportionate information with the MARAC. This will include liaising with the MARAC Steering Group Chair to ensure that their agency has the necessary procedures in place to research all MARAC listed cases; conducting (or coordinating) information gathering for every MARAC; compiling relevant and proportionate information to the MARAC; and sharing this information with MARAC.

9.9. During the course of the MARAC, it may become apparent that further actions will need to be taken to improve safety for victims and their children. Members will need to recognise where staff within their organisation may provide additional support, and volunteer to do so.

9.10. It is good practice for members to feedback relevant and appropriate information and actions to practitioners within their agency on a ‘need to know basis’. Following MARAC, members should **provide feedback to those staff that made the referral to MARAC**, and to any other practitioner that may need to undertake action to safeguard the victim and their children. **MARAC is not accountable for what processes are used to share information within a partner agency, however any information sharing should comply with relevant legislation**

9.11. Members are required to inform the MARAC Support Officer by email of progress on agreed actions.

9.12. Members of the MARAC that have any difficulty in fulfilling these responsibilities, or other issues, should raise it with the MARAC Chair for discussion in the Steering Group.

**Deputies**

9.13. If the designated member of the MARAC is unable to attend MARAC, deputies may attend in their place. Deputies are expected to fully briefed on the cases to be presented to MARAC, the information to be shared, and progress against any actions identified in previous MARACs.

9.14. If neither a MARAC representative or a suitable deputy is able to attend, the agency should notify the MARAC Support Officer and send detailed information about the information to be shared at MARAC, including progress against work carried out or previously identified actions. The MARAC Support Officer will present the case to MARAC as a ‘one off’ situation. However Officers will not present cases for referring agencies on a regular basis.

9.15. If the agency has referred a case to MARAC yet is unable to attend, suitable arrangements will need to be discussed with the MARAC Support Officer or the MARAC Chair. While it is understandable that an agency may not be able to attend every MARAC it is good practice for all agencies to present their own cases.

**Other Agency Involvement**

9.16. Agencies that are not signatories to this protocol may refer cases to MARAC. These referring agencies are bound by the terms of this combined protocol.

9.17. As such, agencies that are not signatory to this protocol are required to:

* Make appropriate referrals to MARAC (i.e. refer cases where a victim of domestic abuse is at high risk of harm on an appropriate form and supported by a MeRIT)
* Attend MARAC at the beginning to present cases referred by their agency, leaving when their case has been heard
* Bring relevant and proportionate information to the MARAC
* Commit their agency to action which will further safeguard MARAC clients
* Feedback relevant and appropriate information and actions to practitioners who have supplied information within their agency
* Inform the MARAC Officer on completion of agreed actions
* Raise agency concerns to the MARAC steering group

9.18. If an agency that is not a signatory to this protocol regularly makes referrals to MARAC, the MARAC Steering Group will approach that agency to become a signatory to this protocol and nominate appropriate representatives to attend the MARAC and MARAC Steering Group.

**MARAC Chair**

9.19. The role of the MARAC Chair is to ensure that the MARAC addresses the safety of the highest risk victims of domestic abuse (in partnership with other agencies) and to focus on addressing perpetrator behaviour. The Chair is **not** responsible for the actions of each attendee, but will aim to foster an ethos of accountability and responsibility in the MARAC, keeping victim safety central to decision making.

9.20. The Chair will ensure that the MARAC focusses on the risks to victim and/or their children.

9.21. The Chair will ensure that all information relevant to the perpetrator and factors that are likely to increase the risk of abuse or re-abuse to others, is heard at the meeting. This would be in addition to the usual proportionate and relevant information shared on the victim and any children. It is essential that the Chair outline the risks identified from this information and invites other representatives to highlight any additional concerns that may have been overlooked.

9.22. The Chair will encourage participation from all agencies to help create a proactive safety plan where the risks and needs of victim, children and perpetrator are addressed by the MARAC safely and appropriately. **For Chair guidance on how to manage perpetrators see: (Guidance for MARAC’s – Managing Perpetrators-** [**www.safelives.org.uk**](http://www.safelives.org.uk)**)**

9.23. Issues with attendance, the completion of actions, and the recording of data in relation to the MARAC should be raised with Chair (or the MARAC Co-coordinator) in the first instance. The issues will be taken to the MARAC Steering Group for discussion.

**9.24 The Chair will receive and consider any requests for the release of information including minutes and action plans for example to enable the support of victims, including children, the learning from domestic homicides.**

**During the MARAC Meeting**

9.25. At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair will introduce any new representatives, explain briefly how the MARAC meeting will proceed, read out the confidentiality statement and remind representatives of the focus on risk.

9.26. The Chair will remind members that they have responsibility for completing outstanding actions and encourage them to send notification to the MARAC Support Officers once their action has been completed as soon as possible after the meeting.

9.27. The Chair will encourage all representatives to participate in the meeting and encourage representatives to provide relevant information succinctly, to help keep the meeting focused and running on time. The Chair will ensure that the victim’s needs and views are clearly stated, and that agencies focus on risk.

9.28. The Chair will encourage agencies to volunteer relevant actions and ensure that the MARAC has exhausted all relevant resources to make the victim and any other vulnerable parties (including children) safe.

**MARAC Support Officers**

9.29. The MARAC Support Officers support the Chair to ensure that the MARAC runs smoothly, and provide information to enable the Steering Group to oversee the MARAC.

9.30. The Officer establishes and maintains effective communication between all parties who attend MARAC. This includes providing appropriate information to partner agencies about the MARAC process and working with the Chair to identify gaps within agencies that attend the MARAC and work to include these agencies in the MARAC process.

9.31. The Officer will also identify and, with the approval of the Steering Group, implement improvements to the MARAC process.

9.32. The Officer will coordinate relevant information to enable the Steering Group to monitor the effectiveness of the MARAC.

9.33. The Officer will record completion against MARAC actions and share this information with the Chair and MARAC membership.

9.34. The Officer will prepare the MARAC agenda to ensure that cases are reviewed in the most time effective manner. As part of this work, the Officer may provide feedback to agencies on their referrals, and liaise with the Chair to ensure any specialist attendees are present at the MARAC.

9.35. The Officer will support MARAC members with queries relating to MARAC, risk assessment and high risk referral processes.

9.36. The Officer will prepare accurate notes of the meeting, summarising the information presented by agencies, and include agreed actions.

9.37. The Officer will liaise with IDVA to enable the tracking of risk against actions. IDVA will report progress to the MARAC Steering Group to highlight outcomes for high risk victims.

**10. Governance**

**MARAC Steering Group**

**Purpose**

10.1. The Steering Group is responsible for monitoring and conducting regular assessment of the overall performance of the MARAC. This includes addressing operational issues, ensuring relevant information is shared appropriately, raising awareness of the MARAC, and maintaining effective partnerships with key local bodies.

10.2. The Steering Group aims to promote sustainability of MARAC and ensures that MARAC demonstrates that it is a process which is structured to deliver equality of outcome to all.

**Aims**

10.3. The MARAC Steering Group has 3 aims:

* To provide strategic governance to the MARAC in order to reduce repeat victimisation and reduce levels of harm posed to high risk victims of domestic abuse
* To provide quality assurance to the MARAC
* To monitor the recommendations and actions and share learning from DHRs

**Governance**

10.4. The MARAC Steering Group reports to the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (DASG) and the Merseyside MARAC Steering Group

**Responsibilities**

10.5. The MARAC steering group is responsible for monitoring and steering the Liverpool MARAC performance by:

a) Monitoring and evaluating data from MARAC, evaluating performance through data analysis and review of repeat cases, to ensure relevant information is shared and risk assessed appropriately

b) Ensuring that effective partnerships are maintained with other safeguarding and public protection bodies and other MARAC areas

c) Monitoring and regularly assessing the overall performance of the MARAC and ensuring it operates in line with the principles of an effective MARAC

d) Addressing operational issues and responding to issues raised by the MARAC

e) Reporting to the Citysafe Board on an annual basis

f) Overseeing efforts to raise awareness of the MARAC to key stakeholders and ensure that training is available in risk identification, referral pathways, safety planning and MARAC processes

g) Participating in reviews following a homicide where appropriate, monitoring recommendations and actions and sharing learning with MARAC partners

h) Ensuring that the MARAC operates in line with legal responsibilities and keeps up to date with changes in legislation and national guidance

h) Promote regular MARAC awareness raising and training which is linked with the wider Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) training priorities

i) The Steering Group will oversee the annual review of this combined protocol

**Terms of Reference**

10.6. The Terms of Reference of the MARAC Steering Group can be found at Appendix Six.

10.7. Membership of the MARAC Steering Group shall consist of managers of an appropriate level of seniority from the following organisations:

Police, Safer and Stronger Communities Domestic Abuse Lead, Liverpool City Council Children’s Services, Liverpool City Council Adult Services, Clinical Commissioning, Probation, CRC, IDVA Service and Housing representatives.

10.8. Any individuals or organisations wishing to join the MARAC Steering Group should be invited to contact the Chair for their application to be considered and approved.

10.9. The MARAC Steering Group may invite any other individuals or organisations with compatible aims and objectives to become members of the MARAC Steering Group.

10.10. The MARAC Steering Group shall maintain an up-to-date list of members of the MARAC and of those organisations who are to receive copies of the minutes of the meetings.

**Responsibilities of Individual Members**

10.11. Members of the Steering Group must be of sufficient seniority within their agency to address the practical and resource implications of MARAC. Agencies should allow their representatives sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the MARAC Steering Group.

10.12. Members of the Steering Group are required to attend the MARAC Steering Group regularly.

10.13. Members of the Steering Group are required to ensure that their agency has clear procedures for staff in relation to recognising domestic abuse, assessing risk

(including the circumstances in which a MeRIT should be completed) and making appropriate referrals domestic abuse services and to MARAC.

10.14. Members of the Steering Group are required to ensure that their agency has the necessary procedures in place to enable members of the MARAC Operational Group to research all MARAC listed cases and share relevant, proportionate information for MARAC purposes.

**Performance Monitoring**

10.15. The MARAC Steering Group oversees the regular collection of anonymised data on the MARAC.

10.16. This data may be shared with Merseyside MARAC Steering Group, the Liverpool DASG, Safe Lives, LSCB/LSAB and wider audiences as appropriate.

10.17. Data will be used to develop the operation of the MARAC, problem solve for repeat victims and identify and share best practice.

Further information on policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding can be found on Liverpool City Council’s website (www.):

Safeguarding Adults

http:///council/strategies-plans-and-policies/children-and-families/safeguarding-adults-procedure/

Safeguarding Children

http:///council/strategies-plans-and-policies/children-and-families/safeguarding-childrens-procedure/

**Appendix 1:**

**10 principles for an effective MARAC**

The MARAC in Liverpool aims to operate in line with the ten principles for an effective MARAC, identified by Safe lives www.safelives.org.uk whose website also contains information about wider MARAC good practice.

At the core of each principle is the safety of the victim, which needs to be considered at all stages of the process from identification to information sharing, and from action planning to governance. Ensuring that the victim is supported throughout the process and represented at the MARAC is crucial to managing risk, improving safety and reducing repeat victimisation.

1. Identification- All agencies identify high risk victims through completing a risk assessment and/or referral to a specialist agency within safe timeframes once domestic abuse is disclosed.

2. Referral to the MARAC- all high risk victims who meet MARAC referral criteria are referred to MARAC by a range of agencies within safe timeframe

3. Multi-agency engagement- all relevant agencies are appropriately and consistently represented at MARAC

4. Independent representation and support for victims- all high risk victims are consistently supported and represented by an IDVA or other independent representative who prioritise safety throughout the MARAC process

5. Research and information sharing- MARAC representatives research cases and share relevant and proportionate information that identifies risk and informs safety planning. Procedures are followed to ensure that safety and confidentiality are maintained at all times.

6. Action planning- action plans are developed which address the risks identified

7. Number of cases and capacity- the MARAC has the number of referrals and capacity to ensure that all high risk victims who meet the MARAC threshold can receive support from their local MARAC.

8. Equality- the MARAC is delivering equality of outcome to all

9. Operational Support- consistent co-ordination and administration support the effective functioning of the MARAC.

10. Governance- effective governance oversees the performance, sustainability and accountability of the MARAC

**Appendix 2:**

**MARAC Member Organisations**

* **Merseyside Police**
* **IDVA**
* **National Probation Service**
* **Children Safeguarding (Children Services and Careline Children)**
* **Adult Safeguarding**
* **Children’s Centre**
* **We Are With You**
* **Ruby Project / PSS**
* **Liverpool Domestic Abuse Services**
* **South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Services**
* **Merseyside Domestic Violence Services**
* **Savera UK**
* **Torus Housing**
* **Cobalt Housing**
* **South Liverpool Homes**
* **Plus Dane Housing**
* **One Vision Housing**
* **Riverside Housing**
* **Jigsaw Housing**
* **Whitechapel Centre**
* **YMCA**
* **Onward Homes**
* **Your Housing**
* **Aintree Hospital**
* **Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen Hospital**
* **Liverpool Women’s Hospital**
* **Merseycare Health Service**
* **Merseycare Mental Health Service**
* **RASA**
* **Women’s Health Information and Support Centre (WHISC)**
* **Early Help Childrens Services**
* **PAUSE**
* **Crisis**
* **GP Service**
* **Liverpool John Moores University**
* **Liverpool Hope University – Awaiting signed MOP**
* **University of Liverpool**
* **Targeted Services for Young People – Awaiting signed MOP**

**Appendix 3:**

**MOP/ISP SIGNATORIES**

I (insert name)………………………………………………………………….….

Hold the relevant authority to represent

(Insert agency...……………………………………………………………………

And agree to work within the guidelines of the Liverpool MARAC Operating and Information Sharing Protocol

(Signed)…………………………………………………………………………….

(Date)………………………………………………………………………………..

The name and contact details for the designated Data Protection Officer in my agency is

……………………………………………………..…………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………….

**Appendix 4:**

**Liverpool MARAC Agreed Groundrules**

* All agencies are expected to contribute to the MARAC meeting in an appropriate manner, with due respect for equality, diversity and the seriousness of the subject matter, and with respect for colleagues and the subjects of the meeting
* The MARAC does not tolerate any form of sexism, racism, harassment or bullying and is committed to ensuring that the membership recognise its duty of care, dignity and respect to the high risk victims it works to support
* Complete MARAC attendance sheet, signing in and out including identifying the last case number you heard before leaving the meeting (if leaving before the end of the meeting)
* If you need to leave a meeting early, you do not need to ask the Chair, leave quietly and sign out as above
* To ensure all cases are given the same attention each case will be allocated 10 minutes for presentation, discussion, action
* Full/positive participation is expected from all representatives
* Discussion should be relevant to cases, succinct and factual, there should be no side conversations
* Mobile phones should be switched to silent
* Punctuality at the start of meetings and breaks is paramount
* When providing information, please speak clearly
* Chair will summarise case actions before moving onto the next case

**Appendix 5:**

**LIVERPOOL MERIT FORM**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Victim Name** |  | **Date of incident** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **ALL QUESTIONS MUST BE TICKED** |
|  |  | **Y** | **N** |
| 1 | Are there issues around separation/divorce, regardless of timescale? |  |  |
| 2 | Are there any child contact issues? |  |  |
| 3 | Have threats been made to the victim? (*consider any possible Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery issues)* |  |  |
| 4 | Has the victim been stalked or harassed, either by the perpetrator or an associated 3rd party? *(Please apply professional judgement and the below when categorising risk: - Has the perpetrator harassed other family members or friends, or has used manipulative or aggressive strategies to gain information about the victim from others. - Any sudden escalation from 'distance' stalking to confrontational stalking and direct threats*). |  |  |
| 5 | Were children present? (If so, where?) |  |  |
| 6 | Did children witness the incident? |  |  |
|  | **Breakdown Assessment - Y Ticks**  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Y** | **N** |
| 7 | Is the victim pregnant/new birth (child under 1 year)? |  |   |
| 8 | Has the victim been heard at MARAC with the same perpetrator within the last 12 months? |  |  |
| 9 | Does the victim have mental health issues? |  |  |
| 10 | Does the perpetrator have mental health issues? |  |  |
| 11 | Is the victim unemployed? |  |  |
| 12  | Is the perpetrator unemployed? |  |  |
| 13 | Has the perpetrator ever self-harmed/threatened to self-harm/threatened suicide? |  |  |
| 14 | Does the victim deny an assault has taken place *(where there are signs of an assault)?* |  |  |
| 15 | Were the victim and perpetrator violent to each other? |  |  |
| 16 | Was violence used in self-defence? |  |  |
| 17 | Alcohol present (perpetrator only) |  |  |
| 18 | Alcohol present (victim only) |  |  |
| 19 | Alcohol present (both) |  |  |
| 20 | Drugs present (perpetrator only) |  |  |
| 21 | Drugs present (victim only) |  |  |
|  | **Social Assessment - Y Ticks** |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Y** | **N** |
| 22 | Drugs present (both) |  |  |
| 23 | Is the victim socially isolated? (*consider any possible Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery issues)* |  |  |
| 24 | Is the victim un-cooperative? |  |  |
| 25 | Does the victim appear afraid? *(please note demeanour)* |  |  |
| 26 | Does the victim feel they are at risk? *(if yes, give details)* |  |  |
| 27 | Is there emotional abuse present? (*consider any possible Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Human Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery issues)* |  |  |
| 28 | Is there any financial abuse present? |  |  |
| 29 | Is there extreme jealousy present? |  |  |
| 30 | UNREPORTED previous incidents? (if so, how many?) |  |  |
| 31 | Have the incidents escalated in terms of severity and/or frequency? |  |  |
| 32 | Does the perpetrator have a recorded history of violence? |  |  |
| 33 | Has the perpetrator ever been (or threatened to be) violent to the children? |  |  |
| 34 | Has the perpetrator ever been (or threatened to be) violent to pets? |  |  |
| 35 | Has the perpetrator ever sexually abused the victim or been sexually inappropriate? (including threats) |  |  |
| 36 | Was there damage to any property/belongings? |  |  |
| 37 | Was there physical violence? |  |  |
| 38 | Did the perpetrator strangle/attempt to strangle or place hands around the victim's throat? |  |  |
| 39 | Was a pre-meditated weapon present? |  |  |
| 40 | Was an opportunity weapon present? |  |  |
|  | **Violence Assessment - Y Ticks**  |  |  |

**TOTAL**

……………

**VIOLENCE Y TICKS**

……………

**BREAKDOWN Y TICKS**

……………….

**SOCIAL Y TICKS**

…………..

 **X x =**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Professional judgement should always be used – if you feel that this case should have been graded HIGHER, please do so and use the next page to explain why** | **GOLD – 72+** |
| **SILVER – 16-71** |
| **BRONZE – 1-15** |

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| --- |
| **SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR IDENTIFIED RISK FACTORS** |
| **ALL TEXT BELOW MUST BE IN LEGIBLE BLOCK CAPITALS** |
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| **Has the Victim or Perpetrator been involved in Domestic Abuse outside the**  | **[ ]  Yes** | **[ ]  No** |
| **Merseyside Area?** *If* ***Yes*** *include location here:* |  |

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| --- |
| **CIRCUMSTANCES OF INCIDENT/ANY OTHER INFO - CONTINUATION SHEET** |
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| **Victim Name** |  | **Date of incident** |  |

*MARAC referrals should be sent by competing the online referral form or if you do not have a username use the* ***secure email*** **marac@liverpool.gov.uk** (marked in subject line – Strictly Private & Confidential).

**Referral Criteria**

Liverpool uses the Merseyside Risk Indicator Toolkit (MeRIT). This is the preferred risk indicator that should be used by agencies when identifying whether or not agencies should refer a case to MARAC. Agencies should refer **ALL** high risk cases to MARAC.

The referral criteria are:

An incident **within the last 3 months**, **and**

* Visible high risk (using MeRIT), **or**
* Professional judgment **and/or**
* Escalation (incidents may not meet high risk threshold but are occurring more often and causing concern).

Or, in an incident that occurred longer than 3 months ago no MeRIT form is needed and referral is made on,

* Professional judgement **and/or**
* Pattern of behaviour historically linked to a recent event that may cause concern (for example, a recent release from custody and contact being made with the victim).

Any case referred to the MARAC should be flagged and tagged by agencies and if there is a further significant incident within a 12 month period the case should be referred back to the MARAC. This can be done by any agency to which the victim discloses a further incident and does not need to be the initial referring agency.

Citysafe will ensure that the definition for repeat victimisation[[1]](#footnote-1) is being applied consistently. Cases that meet the definition will be marked as ‘repeat’ on the agenda for the MARAC

Disclosure of domestic violence (abuse) to agency – agency instigates own domestic violence (abuse) policy/procedure

MeRIT Risk Indicator completed

**Risk Indicator and Guidance thresholds followed**

**Risk meets MARAC Threshold –** *(score 72 or over or high risk* *professional judgment)*

Refer to MARAC rep/manager to QA and discuss safety options to put into place immediately. Complete MARAC/IDVA on-line referral form or paper referral to marac@liverpool.gov.uk mailbox

**Risk does not meet MARAC Threshold** *(not considered high risk)*

Follow agency policy and complete appropriate actions – refer to guidance issued with risk indicator. Refer to local DV/A Service, Police, Safeguarding, MACSE, EHAT (as appropriate) It is the agency responsibility to share information- or call a professionals meeting if needed. **NB: If 3 or more incidents in last 6 months a professionals meeting is recommended**

**QA (cases scoring under 72)** MARAC Chair QA’s police referrals, MARAC Co-ordinator QA non Police referrals

**MARAC Meeting**

Referring Agencies present their case to MARAC membership-Information is shared and actions offered by agencies

**Actions agreed at MARAC**

The MARAC rep takes information shared MARAC and actions offered - back to their agency to enable informed support for the victim/client, including children and to address perpetrator behavior.

**Actions Feedback**

MARAC reps feedback completed actions by email - provide MARAC number, MARAC date and action Completed (no detail is required) NB: It is the responsibility of agencies to liaise outside of MARAC when working with clients

**MARAC Research**

Agencies receive list of MARAC cases to complete background checks

**Appendix 6:**

**MARAC Referral Pathway**

QA decision not to discuss at MARAC \*

QA decision to discuss at MARAC

*\*QA referrals that don’t meet the MARAC criteria are filed for information purposes*

**Appendix 7:**

 **MARAC Steering Group Terms of Reference**

**Chair:**

Michelle Hulse, Safer and Stronger Communities, Victims and Vulnerable People Team Leader

**Vice Chair:**

TBC

**Secretariat**:

Safer and Stronger Communities Risk Assessment Officer

**Membership:**

Safer and Stronger Communities , Merseyside Police, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, Merseyside Probation, Merseyside Community Rehabilitation Company, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, Children’s Services, Adult’s Services, Mersey Care NHS Trust.

**Frequency of Meetings:**

Quarterley

**Vision & Aims:**

To provide strategic governance and quality assurance to the Liverpool MARAC.

**Objectives:**

To ensure accountability on the part of participating organisations in the MARAC to their representatives, to one another and to victims.

Reduce repeat victimisation and levels of harm posed to high risk victims of domestic violence and abuse within Liverpool.

Utilise best practice to develop the Liverpool MARAC

Ensure effective partnerships are maintained with public protection bodies and other MARAC areas

Monitor and evaluate data from the Liverpool MARAC

Monitor and assess the performance of MARAC to ensure it operates in line with the 10 Principles of an effective MARAC (www.Safelives.org.uk) and the Liverpool MARAC Operating and Information Sharing Protocol

Ensure that MARAC operates in line with legal responsibilities and keeps up-to-date with changes to legislation national guidance.

Support the domestic Homicide Review Process ensuring recommendations are carried out and reported to the VAWG Strategy Group.

**Expected Outcomes:** Measurable reductions in harm to high risk victims of domestic violence and abuse

**Links with Other Groups:**

Liverpool MARAC, Citysafe Strategic Groups (specifically Violence Against Women and Girls Group, Merseyside MARAC Steering Group, Multi Agency Child Sexual Exploitation Group, Children’s Board & Alcohol Strategy Group) Safeguarding Boards (Adult & Children), MASH, Liverpool Safeguarding Hub, Channel, Liverpool Domestic Homicide Review Standing Group, Merseyside Specialist Domestic Violence Action Group, BRM Communities and Harmful Practice Groups, Females involved in Criminal Gangs Group, Merseyside Sexual Harm Reduction Group.

**Accountability:**

The MARAC Steering Group is accountable to the Liverpool Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, which in turn accounts to the Liverpool Citysafe Board.

**Remit:**

Children and Adult Safeguarding are specifically addressed through the LSCB and LSAB. Links will be made with these Groups through common members and quarterly updates provided to Safeguarding Board leads.

**Contacts for Further Information:**

Michelle Hulse, Victims and Vulnerable People Team Leader, Safer and Stronger Communities

Michelle.Hulse@liverpool.gov.uk

1. *Repeat victimisation – Violence or threats of violence to the victim (including threats against property), or A pattern of stalking or harassment, or Rape or sexual abuse.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)