

## Daily Maracs – A Briefing September 2019

At the heart of a Marac is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim/survivor of domestic abuse and their families, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. Victim/survivors of domestic abuse are represented by an Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (Idva or Idaa in Scotland) who brings their voice to the meeting, ensuring that agencies are working effectively and efficiently to support and empower.

The role of the Marac is to;

- safeguard each individual by sharing information to increase the safety, health and well-being of adult and child victim/survivors of domestic abuse,
- determine whether the alleged perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community,
- construct jointly, and implement a risk management plan, that provides professional support to all those at risk and that reduces the risk of harm,
- reduce repeat victimisation, improve agency accountability, and improve support for staff involved in high risk domestic abuse cases.

In addition, the Marac will often act as the forum in which applications to the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) is discussed.

**The core of a good Marac process is effective collaboration between agencies, ensuring that families affected by domestic abuse are provided with comprehensive support and protection, and that those causing harm are held to account.**

There have been considerable changes in the domestic abuse sector in the last 13 years, including a drive for better awareness, new legislation to better support victims and respond to perpetrators, and new multi-agency processes to improve practice. These changes have contributed to greater identification of domestic abuse and improved understanding of risk. This is a huge achievement and we know that through the hard work of Maracs, many families have seen an end to the domestic abuse they had been experiencing.

Linked to this, we have seen an increase in the number of cases discussed at Marac. In the last 3 years, there has been a 10% increase (from 82,000 to 92,000)<sup>1</sup>. Increasing the frequency of Marac meetings and/or combining them with other safeguarding processes have been some local responses to these challenges.

In some areas, the improvement in multi-agency working has led practitioners to consider how they can increase the expediency with which they can respond to families affected by domestic abuse. Over the last two years, SafeLives has worked with a number of these areas to examine one approach; making Marac meetings daily.

We have observed that there are potential benefits to this approach, but that these are weighed against potential, significant problems.

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<sup>1</sup> SafeLives Marac data 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 compared to 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

## A summary of our findings

Through this information gathering exercise, we have found that areas that have or are planning to create a daily Marac meeting see it as a solution to some or all of the following challenges:

- To managing high volume of referrals including reducing repeats
- To share information and respond to the family in a timelier manner with a coordinated multi agency response to reduce the risk.
- To make use of resources and practices already established in other forums in their local area, such as their Mash.

### Defining a daily Marac model

There is no consistent definition, or indeed practice, of a daily Marac model. The only consistent factor in all areas we looked at was that a daily meeting was held. In some areas cases would be heard within 24 hours of being referred. This would often mean conducting research in the morning and attending the Marac meeting in the afternoon.

Other areas would implement a delay between the referral and Marac meeting, so each daily Marac meeting was hearing cases from 2-5 days before. Implementing a delay, meant the Idva/Idaa service had a greater opportunity to engage with survivors, which is a fundamental element of an effective Marac process.

Other areas operated a form of strategy meeting that did not resemble the Marac process.

### Does a daily model manage Marac volume & reduce repeat cases?

We found that commonly, this approach was used in response to an increase in volume of referrals. Increased frequency of the meetings offered the opportunity to hear a fewer number of cases, more often, thus shortening the length of time of each meeting.

However, we found that although this approach was used to reduce volume, implementing a daily Marac model actually *increased* the volume of referrals. In some instances, this increase was significant and soon unmanageable. Similarly, we have seen a significant increase in cases discussed as a repeat at the Marac where daily meetings have been implemented.

### Survivors at the heart of the process

It is essential that victim/survivors are at the heart of the Marac process. It is only by hearing their voice that agencies can create the most effective, impactful and supportive plans to keep families safe. One of the disadvantages of a daily Marac approach is that the opportunity for the Idva/Idaa to engage with victim/survivors is greatly reduced. Whilst we advocate that Idva/Idaas attempt contact within 48 hours of receiving a referral, they may not be able to actually make contact for a number of days.

The approach also put pressure on agencies to conduct their research in a much shorter timescale. We observed that the impact of this in some areas was a lack of survivor engagement and voice within the Marac, a lack of research, culminating in poorer action plans. A lack of survivor voice, research and action planning are significant deviations from the Marac model.

## Key conclusions

- Daily Maracs do not appear to be a solution for managing high numbers of referrals – it is likely to increase the volume.
- Marac is a systematic approach to high risk domestic abuse. Idva/Idaas are pivotal to that approach ensuring that the victim receives a coordinated multi-agency response to reduce the risk they face from the perpetrator at the earliest opportunity, engaging the victim into the process which is essential to effectiveness.
- Daily Maracs offering a delay between the referral of a case and the Marac meeting *may* be more effective in ensuring the victims are engaged in the process and their risks, needs, concerns and wishes are heard - but we do not have the evidence that this is the case.
- Daily Maracs need to be firmly based in the 10 principles of an effective Marac if they are to achieve improved outcomes for families.
- SafeLives can provide data to help you determine if you are experiencing high volume, please contact us if you would like help in understanding your local data.

## What are SafeLives doing?

SafeLives have produced [Marac Guidance](#) specific to managing and addressing high volume. We also offer online [Marac learning modules](#) and a range of training packages for Marac Chairs, Co-ordinators and Representatives. Find out more and register for updates at [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk) or email [training@safelives.org.uk](mailto:training@safelives.org.uk)

The focus of the Spring 2019 Multi-agency National Scrutiny Panel was mapping the current responses to domestic abuse with a specific focus on Marac, Matac, and Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panels to identify where the multi-agency responses overlap, where there are gaps, and establish a current picture of how domestic abuse is approached in statutory and non-statutory meetings. The findings from the panel will be published this Autumn on our website.

SafeLives are working on several projects looking at mapping and improving the multi-agency response to domestic abuse as well as looking at ways to address the pressures that areas face specific to Marac.

Building on our recent pilot of the [One Front Door approach](#), and as evidenced in the Government review of Mash published July 2014, there is a clear benefit to timelier information sharing and sharing of expertise to better understand risk and respond in the most appropriate way at the earliest opportunity. During the pilot phase, we worked with [7 areas](#) and following further funding, we hope to work with 10 additional sites in 2020 to further develop this approach. To register your interest in this project, please email [OFD@safelives.org.uk](mailto:OFD@safelives.org.uk)