



# Dash & DARA - working together on multi-agency risk assessment Q&A

## DASH QUESTIONS

### HOW TO USE DASH

**Q:** At SafeLives are you advocating for us in Domestic Abuse services, to use the DARA rather than the Dash?

**Q:** Will this be used only by police, or any/all 1st responders, social workers, etc?

**Q:** Can you clarify if this is only for Police, or for any practitioner to use?

**Q:** Shall we be using the DARA in practice now, rather than the dash?

**Q:** I am domestic support worker but work within the police force shall I be using DASH or DARA?

**A:** As we've said in our [briefing document](#) the recommendation to use the DARA is only for police first responders. Everyone else should continue to use the **Dash**.

**Q:** I've recently had conversations that DASH should not be used for male victims, is that accurate?

**A:** The Dash is suitable for all adult victims of domestic abuse.

**Q:** Could managers use this for staff?

**A:** *(answered in the chat)* The Dash can be used for victims experiencing current domestic abuse so absolutely, if a member of your staff is experiencing abuse you can use this checklist.

**Q:** How can you access DASH training please?

**A:** Details of Dash training can be found on our website [HERE](#).

### RISK

**Q:** Is there consistency around what is high risk between local authorities?

**A:** Our work within local authorities has identified different thresholds of high risk; We advise that if a professional has serious concerns about a victim's situation, regardless of whether the other Marac criteria is evident, *Visible High Risk and/or Escalation*, they should refer the case to Marac. There will be occasions where the particular context of a case gives rise to serious concerns even if the victim has been unable to disclose the information that might highlight their risk more clearly. This could reflect extreme levels of fear, cultural barriers to disclosure, immigration issues or language barriers particularly in cases of 'honour'-based violence.

**Q:** I have experience managing DA services and chairing DHRs amongst other DA-related work. Absolutely agree that resources need to be proportionate to case specifics but I am interested in the interaction between risk and need. In my experience risk does not always correlate with need. Many cases are assessed as medium or standard risk but may yet have complex needs and require more multi-agency and/or intensive one-to-one work. Does a risk-led approach explicitly take this into account and how might it dovetail effectively with a needs/complexity led approach?

**A: A robust risk led approach is also a trauma informed, person centred one. To ensure the safety of all victims, it is imperative that a multi-agency approach is applied to all domestic abuse cases. This enables specialists in different agencies who have relevant information of the victim, to inform the context of the case and therefore increase the level of risk and of course, the support.**

**Q: If a Dara shows low/med risk, do the specialist,/ community services need to complete a dash?**

**A: It is very important that you work within your local systems and with the processes that are in place. SafeLives and the College of Policing recommends the continued use of the Dash for all community and specialist services. The DARA is to be used by Police who are the first responders, and so it is important for a Dash to be used by the professional who supports the victim(s), thereafter.**

### **SAFELIVES' RISK LED REVIEW**

**Q: Which care experienced led organisation have been involved in the review of Dash?**

**Q: Have stakeholders for the risk led review included LGBT specialist services like Galop?**

**A: We approached many specialist service organisations as part of the project, and due to demands on their own services, some were unable to be involved, but those involved did include LEAPCC, Barnardo's, and LGBT Youth.**

**Q: Marac models are being reviewed and revamped across Lancashire a review from Safelives on Marac's would be helpful.**

**Q: There are lots of worries around the DARA in South Yorkshire in terms of lack of questions which would really identify risk such as complexities, sexual abuse, consent etc. If DARA identifies more high-risk we need a full review of MARACs that are currently flooding with high-risk victims and falling apart.**

**Q: Given the growing awareness of the risk of suicide as a result of DA being as great, if not more so, than homicide, is there scope to expand on the question in the DASH that asks about suicidal thoughts?**

**Q: Is DASH being reviewed for older people who experience domestic abuse?**

**Q: Is DASH being reviewed for familial abuse cases?**

**A: We have done a review of the Dash, pulling together a number of experts and organisations, and stakeholders have said it is still fit for purpose for multi-agency partners. We know it could be improved, more accessible to different survivors & communities, and recognising other risk factors such as non-fatal strangulation, but it is a valued tool which identifies the basic level of understanding of risk than can support professional judgement & helps open up the right conversations with victims & survivors. We are continuing to work with the Home Office and hope to work with the Ministry of Justice, as well as Louisa Rolfe & other leaders in the field to see when the right time would be to evolve the Dash and Marac to the next stages, but at the moment, we continue to use Dash and the Marac model.**

**Q: We still have to introduce ourselves as IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors) I was trained through SafeLives as an IDVA but do we now need to review our titles?**

**A: No, the role of an Idva is important to keep and promote, it is well recognised and respected. The Idva qualification is an important accredited programme and demonstrates professionalism and required knowledge, skills, and attitude to support clients experiencing domestic abuse. Hopefully this will be identified as part of The Victims Bill.**

**Q: Jo I know you said you will be speaking to the MOJ, is this in line with the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) which they still use?**

**A: The SARA and the Dash are both useful but intended to support different practitioners working with separate client groups. When we review the Dash, we will be**

**looking at other risk assessments and frameworks to improve assessing risk to victims and children, and looking for methods to better align safeguarding families.**

## **OTHER**

**Q:** Could we have a MARAC webinar? if we will get more high risk from this?

**A:** Thank you for your suggestion, we will continue to host webinars and will take this into consideration as a potential future topic.

**Q:** Will the DARA training be incorporated into the DA Matters programme?

**A:** DA Matters is part of a wider cultural change programme including training local trainers, a network of champions and a local health check, and currently does not specifically cover risk assessment.

**Q:** Are you able to confirm if West Yorkshire police are engaging in The DA Matters Programme?

**A:** They are currently having DA Matters in West Yorkshire.

## **DARA QUESTIONS**

### **How to use DARA**

**Q:** Is Sexual Violence / CSA included in the DARA?

**A:** The DARA does not have a question on sexual victimisation. Our research suggests many victims are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse at first response and it is often the last thing disclosed to specialist support services. Emerging evidence from Op Soteria suggests many victims who disclose sexual violence through the Dash don't want it recorded and that opening a rape investigation frequently results in victims disengaging, including from safeguarding for wider DA. Currently, the evidence suggests it is preferable to explore sexual victimisation at a later stage of an investigation, when the victim may be more comfortable disclosing. There has been no significant impact on rates of recorded sexual offences in forces testing the DARA.

The DARA has a question asking whether the abuser has harmed children. Again, it would be for officers or specialists to probe if there was a sexual element to the offending at an appropriate stage.

**Q:** Can we (police) still refer to Marac off the back of a DARA, or does it need to be a DASH?

**Q:** Can the DARA lead directly to a Marac?

**Q:** Following DARA - then is Marac referral completed?

**Q:** What if police refer to Marac, is it DARA or DASH they will be sending?

**A:** The Marac referral process for the police remains the same whether the police are using a Dash or the DARA. The Police will therefore continue to refer to Marac based on professional judgement when a DARA is completed and a victim is assessed as being at high risk of harm. We do not advocate a numerical score as a threshold for police referral to Marac, combinations of risk factors and wider context are key. In forces where specialist DA teams complete a further risk assessment, Dash may be used for the referral.

**Q:** Not all victims/survivors give full disclosure to police - especially following an incident - who will determine Marac threshold.

**A:** You're absolutely right that a victim may decide to disclose the abuse they are experiencing to someone other than the police. This is one of the reasons why if a victim is identified as being at high risk of harm, then they should be referred in to the Marac, irrespective of how another agency has assessed them. The responsibility for identifying your local referral threshold rests with your local strategy group which

**oversees the governance of the Marac. Professional judgement is key and information may come from a range of other sources that informs the risk level, Police National Computer (PNC), crime reports, intelligence, witnesses, etc. which should be factored into the assessment.**

**Q:** The DARA guidance suggests DARA is for the frontline officers but DASH is still to be used for secondary assessments and for specialists. Can I check how forces who have already begun to use DARA are doing this? Is it the specialist DA officers and potentially MASH staff who use the DASH and maybe CID officers who are going out for an investigation?

**A: Yes.**

**Q:** Is the DARA also suitable in relation to non-intimate DA which we are seeing an increase in?

**A: Yes, as it explores perpetrator behaviour and a victim's concerns and fears.**

**Q:** Can I ask about the suitability of DARA for male victims and those experiencing abuse in LGBT+ relationships? I've recently had conversations that DASH should not be used for male victims.

**A: Both Dash & DARA are suitable for all adult victims.**

**Q:** Are victims "at risk" of being contacted again for the DASH by specialist police DA officers (if they exist in the force, not always the case)? How will the DASH be completed if only DARA completed at first point?

**A: Where a secondary risk assessment is completed, specialist DA investigators are trained to consider the implications of further safe contact with victims. As DARA prompts curiosity and for first responders to delve in to why victims may be fearful and what/ how the perpetrator is behaving, it is possible there may be enough for specialists to progress referral but further contact may be necessary for the purposes of evidence gathering or safety planning.**

**Q:** Will police forces share the completed DARA to DA services?

**A: This would depend upon local arrangements. There is no reason why not if it provides useful information for safeguarding and safety planning. If both Dash and DARA have been completed, and if local services prefer a Dash due to familiarity and local practice, then we could share both.**

**Q:** Will operation encompass identify if a DARA has been completed?

**A: This would depend upon local arrangements and the purpose of sharing the information. If the DARA elicits information that a school may require to safeguard or support a child then this would be a basis for sharing the information. Operation Encompass referrals are normally prompted by attendance at domestic settings where children are present and it follows that DARA should be completed.**

**Q:** Is there a DARA for CYP? Or a way to ensure their voice is heard?

**Q:** how will voice of the child be recorded on the DARA as victims in their own right?

**Q:** In the new Domestic Abuse act, children are recognised as victims of DA in their own rights. I was wondering how the voices/ needs of and risks to children are identified and captured with the DARA tool? And how does that compare with the DASH?

**A: The DARA contains a question on whether the abuser has hurt children. A positive response should prompt further investigation by attending officers. This sits alongside work within policing and learning from domestic homicide reviews that the 'voice' of children is very important in assessing domestic abuse. There is no template set of questions to be asked specifically of children. Several forces are using and training AWARE (similar to the VAF) to prompt considerations for concern rather than a set of questions to be asked. Records should include these concerns. The College will be holding a KSE online on 1<sup>st</sup> August in relation to this.**

**Q:** Does it [Dara] include any developments around additional support/risks for marginalised groups/communities e.g. BAME, LGBTQI+? These communities are often excluded and not prioritised or supported adequately.

**A:** **The DARA is a set of questions to identify risk and make a primary assessment of threat of harm to the victim. Safeguarding and support measures are an issue for wider force policies.**

**Q:** What happens once the DARA is completed. How do you assess the level of risk when much of the information is qualitative?

**A:** **The first phase of development for the DARA was a review of international academic research on DA Risk Assessment. The review identified limited evidence to support the predictive validity of actuarial style risk assessments. The DARA is a tool for primary identification and assessment of risk. The tool is designed to guide and support professional judgement. The definitions of standard, medium and high risk provided with the DARA prompt officers to focus in particular on whether there is ongoing abuse. The College of Policing's Domestic Abuse Matters training helps officers to better understand DA and controlling and coercive behaviour which can help officers to better understand and assess risk. The specific DARA training also helps in this respect.**

**Q:** Would a trauma informed approach be adopted within Police to ensure that the process is as holistic as possible if there are less relevant questions regarding protected characteristics?

**A:** **Ideally yes, we are working hard across policing to develop trauma informed approaches.**

**Q:** With the introduction of DARA will Met Police now be changing the term 'domestic violence' to 'domestic abuse' in line with the DA Act. It really does create issues for victims when police still refer to it as 'violence'.

**A:** *(answered by Louisa in the chat)* **All forces should be referring to domestic abuse as we know violence is only one aspect of it.**

**Q:** Leaving out HBV (Honour based violence) is like leaving out physical violence and coercive control etc- this excludes many women/victims some of whom are at the highest risk (were DHR's examined?)- this would surely be a training issue- the led by and for sector have spent time training police very successfully- this is all very disappointing and surely breaches equalities measures, if the police are capable of learning about coercive control they are capable of learning about SV and HBV etc.

**A:** *(answered by Louisa in the chat)* **The Dash did not contain a question on HBA specifically. Rather it had a question on multiple perpetrators, and a couple of prompts to consider HBA as part of other questions. A question on multiple perpetrators doesn't necessarily identify HBA specifically. It is not possible to include a single question asking about HBA as it is a potentially stigmatised term that may not be understood by all victims. We believe that the expanded question set relating to controlling and coercive behaviour will help identify cases of HBA more effectively. Officers are prompted to consider HBA prior to writing their general assessment of the threat posed to the victim at the end of the DARA. We agree that greater awareness of HBA by officers will be best achieved through training rather than a question on a risk assessment. To support this the College have published a brief for responders to raise awareness [Honour-based abuse: Advice for first responders \(college.police.uk\)](https://college.police.uk).**

## **EVIDENCE FOR DARA**

**Q:** How has the DARA been evaluated and the tool calibrated? The few independent studies been completed have indicated the DASH is no better than chance in identifying cases as a screening tool. How is the DARAs development different in terms of an evidence based approach to responding to risk.

**Q:** Louisa you stated the DARA has had rigorous evaluation can you provide a link to the publish evaluation and if there have been any validation and reliability studies that have been completed.

**A:** **The Evaluation of the DARA pilot can be found [HERE](#). The rational for development, structure and content can be found [HERE](#). Neither the Dash nor the DARA were designed to be actuarial style risk assessments that predict specific future acts of abuse. Both are risk identification tools that help officers identify risk factors identified by international research as associated with harm and make a primary assessment of threat to the victim, using their professional judgement. Work is underway within policing to develop predictive tools that might also inform an on overall assessment of risk, in conjunction with the primary assessment.**

**The DARA was evaluated by assessing to what extent first response officers' primary assessments of risk were consistent with the judgements of people with more specialist knowledge.**

**Q:** Could we discuss how your pilot went please – Cumbria are beginning to look to roll out DARA and we are interested in how we continue to use DASH with our secondary officers.

**A:** **The evaluation identifies the pilot forces (link attached). I'm sure they would be happy to discuss their experience. The College hosts regular meetings for forces on DARA implementation to share practice and network. Please contact [sharon.stratton@college.police.uk](mailto:sharon.stratton@college.police.uk) for information.**

**Q:** Given the research and creation of the tool, would you say the DARA is okay to use for US populations?

**A:** **The tool was designed with reference to the international research evidence-base and is designed to be used with all victims, but you would need to consider the policing context if applying elsewhere.**

**Q:** Were there certain groups or settings that the tool was not validated for?

**A:** **No. It was evaluated over three police forces for a time-limited period and has been further tested in three force areas over an extended period.**

**Q:** If DARA is used by frontline officers and sexual and HBA questions omitted, if there are no specialist units, then who asks these questions?

**A:** **The Dash did not contain a question relating specifically to HBA. Rather, officers were prompted to consider HBA as a follow-up to other questions. Research has shown that the use of Dash by first responders is very inconsistent, with specific questions often re-phrased and sub-clauses and prompts omitted. Every force has a Public Protection Team, some within a wider Investigation or CID team, and some split into distinct teams for domestic abuse, sexual offences and child abuse investigation. Whatever the force structure, there will be investigators with expertise to follow up on these offences.**

**Q:** Looking at the DARA it mentions a PVP for any children. What does PVP stand for?

**A:** *(answered in chat)* **Protecting Vulnerable People.**

## **RESOURCES**

**Q:** Could the link to PVP forms be included on the information coming out please?

**A:** **Forces use different means of sharing information on children/adults.**

**Q:** Can we see the DARA questions please?

**A:** **<https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/2022-12/CoP-Domestic%20Abuse%20Risk%20Assessment.pdf>**

## ROLLOUT OF DARA

**Q:** When is the roll out date for all forces?

**Q:** Have all forces been informed and agreed to roll out DARA?

**Q:** Is there a timeline for DARA rollout?

**A:** **The College of Policing and NPCC lead have asked all forces to roll out DARA as soon as possible but this is not straightforward as it needs a detailed implementation plan and some changes to infrastructure like technology. Every force is building this into their change activity and balancing with competing priorities.**

**Q:** How will we manage risk whilst using 2 different tools (DASH and DARA)?

**A:** **The DARA tool is designed to complement Dash. It should give a richer picture and greater confidence that first responders have done this well (the research certainly showed improvement in initial risk assessment) The ‘tools’ are the means to gather the information to inform risk. Risk management plans and options that respond to the assessment will need to be recorded within appropriate systems.**

**Q:** Can I ask about where DARA is going throughout UK, does it include Scotland?

**Q:** Has DARA rolled out in Scotland and if not yet then when?

**Q:** Is DARA being considered for implementation with PSNI in Northern Ireland as part of The College of Policing?

**A:** **I’m only NPCC lead for forces in England and Wales but both Police Scotland and PSNI attend my stakeholder group and I know they are interested.**

**Q:** Can we use DARA now in South Wales?

**A:** **In my NPCC role, alongside a full-time day job in the Met, I support forces nationally but I’m afraid I don’t have an overview of all local activity. You could contact the DA rep within South Wales- contact Superintendent Ritchie- [Clayton.Ritchie@south-wales.police.uk](mailto:Clayton.Ritchie@south-wales.police.uk).**

**Q:** When will DARA be rolled out for the MET?

**A:** **We are currently building our overall plans to strengthen the Met’s Public Protection response and DARA roll out is within that. The timeframe is yet to be agreed but I’m keen this is soon.**

**Q:** When will the DARA be rolled out in Sussex?

**A:** **In my NPCC role, alongside a full-time day job in the Met, I support forces nationally but I’m afraid I don’t have an overview of all local activity. You could contact Superintendent Miles Ockwell - [miles.ockwell@sussex.police.uk](mailto:miles.ockwell@sussex.police.uk).**

## OTHER

**Q:** Do the police keep records of whether trained or untrained police officers are first response to victim/survivors? I work on the Leeds Voices Project and the feedback I get is when trained female officers attend the experience is good but this unfortunately is not a consistent experience

**A:** *(answered by Louisa in the chat)* **We aim to train all our first responders but this is difficult &, with so many new recruits, we have lots of catching up to do. The DA Matters programme is proven to increase officer empathy and understanding of the dynamics of abuse and all forces are rolling this out (35 out of 43 so far). It also includes ‘train the trainer’. Every force who has delivered DA Matters has also trained their training team so new recruits then receive an input as part of recruit training.**

**Q:** I’m also curious to know if children are now being recorded as victims on crime reports rather than ‘involved persons’.

**A:** **It is critical that we see children affected by DA as victims in their own right, we give them their voice and their experience influences our policing response and safeguarding. The change to the law confers the rights of victims upon children but it**

**doesn't mean we record an individual crime report for each child in the household or family. This would skew recorded crime data which could detract from dealing with the perpetrator.**

**Q: Would Social Workers do Police Checks as part of a Family Assessment?**

**A: I would expect Social Workers to explore any concerns they have with the police through Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. Where there is information relevant to safeguarding the family, the police should share it.**

**Q: Do all DA cases get referred to specialist units in the Met?**

**A: No. The DA definition is so broad that a domestic abuse incident could involve siblings having a dispute over something minor with no signs of coercion or violence. Where risk is identified, cases should be referred to our specialist CSU teams but I know the system isn't fail safe which is why we have an improvement plan.**