

‘Honour’-based abuse and forced marriage cases at Marac in Scotland

Current and best practice responses

**Safer,
Sooner**

Joining the dots
for an effective
multi-agency
response.



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Introduction

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance will give professionals involved in the Marac process in Scotland, such as Marac Chairs, Representatives and referrers, an overview of the best practice guidance for responding to cases involving so called 'honour'-based violence or abuse, including where this involves potential threat of forced marriage to any of the parties involved, including any children.

What is a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (Marac)?

Marac is a local meeting where representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies meet to discuss individuals at high risk of serious harm or murder because of domestic abuse. The meeting provides a safe environment for agencies to share relevant and proportionate information about current risk, after which the Chair will summarise and ask agencies to volunteer actions to reduce risk and increase safety. Each case should take between 12 and 15 minutes from start to finish.

The primary focus of the Marac is to safeguard the adult victim. However, the Marac will also make links with other agencies to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator. At the heart of the Marac is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. Ensuring that the victim is supported throughout, and their needs represented at the Marac is crucial to managing risk, improving, and maintaining safety, and reducing repeat victimisation.

What is so called 'honour'-based violence or abuse?

There is currently no statutory definition of so called 'honour'-based violence or abuse in Scotland. Scottish Government includes 'honour'-based violence in the wider definition of violence against women and girls (VAWG) as:



So called 'honour based' violence, including dowry related violence, female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and 'honour' crimes.

(Equally Safe, 2016)



The terms honour-based abuse, honour crime, honour-based violence and Izzat embrace a variety of incidents or crimes of violence (mainly but not exclusively against women), including physical abuse, sexual violence, abduction, forced marriage, imprisonment, and murder where the person is being punished by their family or community. They are punished for actually, or allegedly, undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour. In transgressing this, the person shows that they have not been properly controlled to conform by their family and this is to the shame of the family. Honour crime may be considered by the perpetrators as justified to protect or restore the honour of the family.

(Scottish Government, 2014¹)

There is currently no specific statutory offence of so called 'honour'-based abuse in Scotland, and abuse perpetrated by family members is not covered by the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018. Instead 'honour'-based abuse perpetrated by family members, or the wider community will be dealt with using existing legislation, for example threatening or abusive behaviour (section 38 of Criminal Justice & Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010) or assault².

¹ Multi-agency practice guidelines: preventing and responding to forced marriage, Scottish Government (2014)

² Other legislation may also apply

We have chosen to use the term ‘honour’-based *abuse* rather than *violence* in this guidance in recognition of this encompassing a range of behaviours not limited to physical violence, and in line with the Scottish understanding of domestic abuse.

It is important to understand that there can be no honour in abuse, the concept of ‘honour’ is used to control the victim to comply with expectations of what is understood as acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. Specialist organisations in Scotland who fed into this guidance emphasise that ‘honour’ can mean different things to different families, and in different contexts, but ‘honour’-based abuse should be understood as any act and/or behaviour by the victim that is perceived as bringing shame to the family or community³.

‘Honour’-based abuse can be perpetuated by family members, partners and ex-partners, and wider communities. It is primarily experienced by women and girls, but men may also be victims. When identifying or coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans may be a trigger for ‘honour’-based abuse for both men, women, and non-binary people⁴



Some families/communities abuse women, saying it is because they want to protect the family or community ‘honour’ or ‘izzat’.

(Shakti Women’s Aid)

What is Forced Marriage?

A forced marriage is different from an arranged marriage, where the marriage is arranged by one or both families, but both parties are free to accept the arrangements or not. Forced marriage is a form of ‘honour’-based abuse and may be seen by a family as a route to restore ‘honour’.

Forced marriage involves one or both spouses being forced to marry without their consent.



A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of children and some adults at risk, cannot) consent to the marriage and coercion is involved. Coercion can include verbal, physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional pressure and taking advantage of a person’s inability to give consent.

(Scottish Government, 2014⁵)

‘Force’ in this context includes behaviours to:



(a) coerce by physical, verbal, or psychological means, threatening conduct, harassment, or other means, (b) knowingly take advantage of a person’s incapacity to consent to marriage or to understand the nature of the marriage.

(Forced Marriage etc. (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011)

³ HBA & Marac - Research Report

⁴ ‘Your Choice: Honour-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse’ (SafeLives, 2017)

⁵ Multi-agency practice guidelines: preventing and responding to forced marriage, Scottish Government (2014)

Background & overview

For the past 15+ years, since the first Scottish Marac (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) was set up, Maracs have transformed the multi-agency response to domestic abuse across Scotland. In Equally Safe⁶, Scottish Government committed to developing and building a national framework for Maracs in Scotland and SafeLives have been funded to support this through the Scottish Marac Development Programme (MDP) since 2015.

SafeLives is committed to supporting and optimising the operation and accessibility of Scottish Maracs, both through the MDP and latterly through our [Delivering Equally Safe](#) funded *Safer, Sooner*⁷ multi-agency programme. Our aim is to ensure that all victims at high risk of serious harm because of domestic abuse in Scotland, regardless of who or where they are, can access support from their local Marac.

Through our engagements with Maracs and Marac professionals across Scotland we've been hearing about inconsistencies in the response to cases that involve so called 'honour'-based abuse, including where there is a threat of forced marriage, and when the perpetrator(s) is not a partner or ex-partner. This has also been continuously highlighted by specialist services in other forums at local and national level, including during the Scottish Government Marac deep-dive events in 2021⁸ following the consultation on the future of multi-agency risk assessment arrangements in Scotland⁹.



We all feel like there just hasn't been enough captured around women's experiences and there's not enough research done. Their voices are just not being heard well enough

(Focus group participant)

'Honour'-based abuse, including forced marriage or threat of forced marriage, is a form of violence against women and gender-based violence. As such it is appropriate for referral to Marac, and cases should be accepted for discussion at Scottish Maracs. Marac has been highlighted as effective in responding to these cases by the Scottish Government¹⁰. A multi-agency approach may be even more important for cases involving 'honour'-based abuse, due to the nature of risks and victims potentially being less likely to have reported the abuse to Police or be engaged with specialist services, making a coordinated response particularly important.

Through *Safer, Sooner* we have consulted with professionals from specialist services who support victims of domestic abuse and so called 'honour'-based abuse in Scotland, and colleagues from Police Scotland, to explore how Scottish Maracs currently respond to these cases and how responses can be improved. We wanted to understand what the current response looks like and what guidance is needed to improve consistency across the country to ensure a consistent, safe, and robust response to all victims.

The research report that accompanies this guidance¹¹, outlines the findings from a survey of Scottish Maracs and themes from focus groups conducted with specialist practitioners in Scotland. The development of this best practice guidance has been informed by these findings and created with support and input from staff from [Shakti Women's Aid](#), [Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid](#), [Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre](#), [LGBT Youth Scotland](#) and [Police Scotland](#).

⁶ Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy to eradicate violence against women

⁷ Marac in Scotland

⁸ Scottish Government Marac deep-dive learning report (to be published)

⁹ Risk assessment and interventions for victims of domestic abuse: consultation response analysis (Scottish Government, 2019)





¹⁰ 'What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls' (Scottish Government, 2020)

¹¹ HBA & Marac - Research Report

Current practice & data

To understand current practice and any gaps in provision and responses we surveyed Scottish Maracs and conducted focus groups with specialist practitioners to explore the prevalence of cases involving so called ‘honour’-based abuse, and/or forced marriage, at Scottish Maracs. We asked about current responses and what best practice should look like.

Key findings

	<p>The number of ‘honour’-based abuse cases estimated to have been referred to each Marac over 2021 is less than three for most Maracs surveyed.</p> <p>Of the Maracs surveyed, only one in ten (11%) record the numbers of ‘honour’-based abuse cases that are referred to them.</p>
	<p>There is very little consistency in the way that Maracs across Scotland respond to ‘honour’-based abuse referrals, with some accepting the referrals while others do not.</p> <p>For some Maracs, the decision on whether to accept a referral depends on the identity of the primary perpetrator. Some Maracs do not accept an ‘Honour’-based abuse case if the primary perpetrator is a family member rather than a partner or ex-partner (as per the definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018).</p> <p>Many of the focus group participants would like to see this aspect of the law changed to include family abuse as a form of domestic abuse.</p>
	<p>The specialist service practitioners who formed part of the focus groups were not confident in referring ‘honour’-based abuse cases to Marac, usually because they did not believe they would be accepted.</p> <p>Focus group participants were concerned that staff in non-specialist services often lack the understanding of ‘honour’-based abuse necessary to recognise this type of abuse as well as to adequately support victims/survivors.</p>
	<p>Staff in specialist services and almost all the Marac representatives felt that Maracs would benefit from more support in managing ‘honour’-based abuse cases.</p> <p>Suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard guidance created for Maracs. • Greater involvement of specialist services in the Marac process. • Tools specifically designed for ‘honour’-based abuse victims/survivors including specific referral tools and risk assessments. • Training on ‘honour’-based abuse • Longer-term safety plans. • Family members and wider family members who are perpetrating abuse to be treated in the same way that perpetrators who were partners or ex-partners would be treated.¹² • More robust safety plans for victims/survivors who have no recourse to public funds, are immigrants or asylum seekers, identify as trans or who are not confident English speakers.

¹² For brevity, for the remainder of this report ‘family members’ will refer to extended family members, including family members of a person’s partner or ex-partner, as well as their immediate family.

Best practice guidance responding to cases involving so called ‘honour’-based abuse at Marac

Victims who experience or are at risk of experiencing so called ‘honour’-based abuse deserve a coordinated response to the risks they are experiencing, including from wider family and/or community members and Maracs are ideally placed to provide this.

The premise of Marac is to increase safety through a coordinated action plan that addresses the risks identified. Actions should relate to identified risks and be volunteered by the attending agencies. Action plans should consider unique aspects of each victim’s individual situation and consider both short-term immediate safety needs and longer-term support for recovery and (re-)establishing independence.

It is essential that specialist services supporting victims of so called ‘honour’-based abuse are involved from the start, to inform risk assessments and to feed into immediate safety planning, however, all agencies will have a role to play in keeping victims safe through a coordinated multi-agency response.

Multi-agency approaches, including Marac, have been highlighted as effective in responding to cases involving ‘honour’-based abuse¹³. A coordinated multi-agency action plan may be particularly important in cases that involve ‘honour’-based abuse and/or (threats of) forced marriage, due to the nature of risk.



Marac has to trust our judgment because not all of these cases may be reported to the police.

(Focus group participant)

Effective Marac responses should be led and informed by the expertise of specialist services, inclusive from the point of referral through to action plans and follow up after the meeting. This expertise is crucial both for assessing risk and informing action plans. As these cases may be less likely to be reported to the Police, the input and expertise of specialist services in assessing risk is particularly important.

Although specialist services will play a particularly central role in action plans for victims of ‘honour’-based abuse, it is important that all agencies consider how they can meaningfully contribute to increasing the safety of victims and addressing any safety concerns. This may involve working closely with and being guided by the specialist service supporting the victim, in relation to ensuring any actions do not create service-generated risks or the victim becomes overwhelmed by agency involvement. Safe accommodation and support to rebuild social networks were highlighted in our focus groups as particularly important for longer-term safety for victims of ‘honour’-based abuse.









Having a specialist organisation is so important because if it was as easy as ‘oh can you just can you give me a list of things so I can identify this better?’ We would have done that ages ago.

(Focus group participant)

¹³ ‘What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls’ (Scottish Government, 2020) emphasises multi-agency working, including specific reference to Marac, as effective in both raising awareness of and responding to ‘honour’-based abuse

We recognise Marac professionals may feel less familiar or confident assessing risk and creating action plans for 'honour'-based abuse cases involving wider family or community members as perpetrators, however, there are transferable skills from other domestic abuse cases which can be applied. This includes looking at perpetrators from the wider family or community in a similar way to partners and ex-partners to identify patterns of abusive behaviour and consider any relevant previous and current criminal history or other intelligence when assessing risk.

	<p>Marac professionals need to be equipped with the right tools and knowledge to identify and respond effectively to 'honour'-based abuse. This is particularly important as this form of abuse may be less likely to be reported to the police.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals to 'think 'honour'-based abuse' to be able to effectively identify victims potentially at high risk of harm and refer to Marac.</p>
	<p>Professional judgement may be more important when assessing risk of harm in cases involving so called 'honour'-based abuse.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals should be open-minded and consider intersecting and contributing factors when assessing the potential for harm, alongside the use of risk identification tools such as the SafeLives Dash.</p>
	<p>Assign a single-point-of-contact for victims to coordinate action plans and agency involvement is good practice in domestic abuse cases in general, however, it may be even more important in cases where the victim has limited trust in services due to the abuse, and/or past experiences of poor service responses.</p>
	<p>Professionals also need to be mindful of how perpetrators manipulate systems and victims' views of systems to keep them isolated and dependent on the perpetrator. Because of this, action and safety plans for 'honour'-based abuse victims may need to be longer-term and should be guided by the victims' pace and space for action.</p>



Identify

‘Honour’-based abuse, although distinct from domestic abuse, is a form of gender-based violence and violence against women and girls. As such, cases involving this type of abuse, including from wider family members, are appropriate for referral to Marac and cases should be accepted for discussion at Scottish Maracs.

As a multi-agency forum, bringing together representatives from local voluntary and statutory services, Marac is a unique opportunity to address risk through a joint action plan, and has been highlighted as effective in responding to cases involving ‘honour’-based abuse¹⁴.

Marac brings together multiple perspectives and provides opportunities for coordinated action, which may be even more important in cases involving ‘honour’-based abuse, where risk is often high, but can be misunderstood or difficult to spot. Timely and proportionate information sharing is crucial to support victims and address risk, and it is important that:



Marac professionals are aware of the signs of ‘honour’-based abuse and how it may differ from other forms of domestic abuse.

¹⁴ ‘What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls’ (Scottish Government, 2020) emphasises multi-agency working, including specific reference to Marac, as effective in both raising awareness of and responding to ‘honour’-based abuse

Dynamics of 'honour'-based abuse

'Honour'-based abuse is defined in relation to the motive (to defend or restore perceived honour) and can involve multiple perpetrators, including family, extended family, and community members, who may be strangers to the victim. In other cases of domestic abuse, family members may be seen as protective factors.




Participants in our focus groups also emphasised the involvement of extended family members such as the mother-in-law and highlighted that even where the victim's partner is not the primary perpetrator they may become 'absorbed into the rest of the family' and be unable or unwilling to act against them¹⁵. What is perceived as 'honour' can also differ widely between families and abuse often involved high levels of coercion and isolation of the victim.

Victims who are at risk of, or who experience 'honour'-based abuse may be more likely than other domestic abuse victims to be at high risk of serious harm¹⁶. However, as highlighted in our focus groups, victims may be less likely to contact the police or disclose to other statutory agencies. Lack of police involvement can be seen as a proxy for 'low risk' when there may be deeply embedded patterns of coercive control which mean victims are at high risk of harm.



People take the opinion if it's not reported to the police, it is not as risky. Or if it's not reported to the police, it is not as real. And that cannot be further from the truth, because most of the ['honour'-based abuse] cases are actually considerably riskier than ... typical domestic abuse cases.

(Focus group participant)




	<p>Maracs need to be conscious of the involvement of family members in any action planning, as coercive control maybe perpetrated and reinforces by those individuals in cases involving 'honour-based abuse.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals should try to maximise opportunities to speak to the victim alone to explore dynamics further, especially in relation to coercive control.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals should explore these dynamics in more detail and be aware that risks may be in relation to multiple perpetrators. Where abuse has not yet been reported to the police this should not be taken as proxy for lower risk, and although it may be appropriate to explore ways to encourage reporting this should not be the sole focus of action plans.</p>

¹⁵ HBA & Marac - Research Report

¹⁶ 'Your Choice: Honour-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse' (SafeLives, 2017)

Coercive control

Coercive control in cases of 'honour'-based abuse may take different forms than in other cases of domestic abuse and be perpetrated by wider family members. Coercive control can be a powerful tool for compliance of victims.

	<p>Professionals should also be aware of barriers to reporting for victims and how cultural stereotypes can influence access to support from services.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals should try to maximise opportunities to speak to the victim alone to explore dynamics further, especially in relation to coercive control.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals should be conscious of what victims lose when leaving their family and culture behind and how this may influence their decisions to leave. Action plans need to take this into account and not solely rely on the victim leaving for support or services to be available.</p>

Forced Marriage cases at Marac

There may be significant overlap between cases involving forced marriage, or threat of, and 'honour'-based abuse being referred to Marac, and Maracs should be aware that some victims who experience 'honour'-based abuse may also be victims of forced marriage. This could include risks to any children involved in the cases discussed.

Age is a significant risk factor in relation to risk or threat of forced marriage¹⁷. Data from the Forced Marriage Unit¹⁸ show that:



over half the cases reported in 2021, involved a victim under the age of 21



of victims aged between 16-17



of victims being under 16








Younger victims may be less likely to be in contact with specialist services, or to recognise what they are experiencing as 'honour'-based abuse. In these cases, it will be important to consider who the most appropriate service or process to coordinate support is.

The Scottish Government (2014) [multi-agency practice guidance](#)¹⁹ provides guidance for Scottish professionals responding to forced marriage cases, including signs that may indicate someone is at risk of forced marriage and good practice points in relation to safety planning.

¹⁷ 'Your Choice: Honour-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse' (SafeLives, 2017)

¹⁸ Forced Marriage Unit Statistics 2021 (UK Government, 2022)

¹⁹ Multi-agency practice guidelines: preventing and responding to forced marriage (Scottish Government, 2014)

	<p>Marac professionals need to be equipped with the right tools and knowledge to identify and respond effectively to 'honour'-based abuse. This is particularly important as this form of abuse may be less likely to be reported to the police.</p>
	<p>For victims aged under 16, Marac will not be the most appropriate forum and child protection processes should instead take precedent.</p>
	<p>For victims aged 16 and over, a Marac referral may be appropriate to coordinate a multi-agency response to risk. This should be considered alongside any other processes that need to happen in tandem with Marac to safeguard the victim, and efforts should be made to minimise potential duplication between processes.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals should also ensure there is no delay for support and safety planning taking place whilst waiting for the Marac to take place, this might involve contacting the Forced Marriage Unit to explore forced marriage protection orders and, crucially, linking the victim in with specialist support.</p>
	<p>Professionals should consider appointing a single point of contact for the victim to avoid overwhelming them with agency contacts.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals should familiarise themselves with this guidance and the 'one chance' rule. Refer to this when considering what actions Marac can take to address potential risk of forced marriage for any cases referred to them. Importantly, there may be specific risks around use of interpreters which should be considered and addressed in action plans²⁰.</p>
	<p>Marac professionals should also consider the intersection of forced marriage and other forms of abuse, as well as the longer-term impact of forced marriage, and recognise that some victims referred to Marac experiencing domestic abuse and/or 'honour'-based abuse may have been subject to forced marriage arrangements in the past. Marac should consider any support needs victims may have in relation to processing trauma related to forced marriage, even where this is not a current risk or threat.</p>




²⁰ Multi-agency practice guidelines: preventing and responding to forced marriage (Scottish Government, 2014)

LGBT+ victims

LGBT+ victims may be at particular risk of 'honour'-based abuse, in relation to their sexual orientation or identity, and any perceived 'shame' this brings on their family or community. Participants in our focus groups emphasised how intersectional identities may make some victims more vulnerable to 'honour'-based abuse, especially for those who identify as trans²¹. LGBT+ victims may also be more vulnerable to forced marriage, for example by being forced into a heterosexual marriage because their family does not accept their sexuality.

For LGBT+ victims, their sexuality and identity may be used against them to further control and isolate them. 'Honour'-based abuse is closely linked to a perception of 'family honour', and as such, for young LGBT+ people coming out to their family may be a significantly risky time.

Internalised homo-, bi- and trans-phobia can also contribute to victims feeling like they 'deserve' the abuse they are experiencing because of their gender or sexual identity. The lack of appropriate services for LGBT+ people experiencing abuse from their wider family can further isolate victims and force them to stay in an abusive situation²². This may be particularly true for male survivors as service provision is limited for male survivors in Scotland.




	Marac professionals need to be aware of the risk of being 'outed' and that the wider community may be a risk factor for LGBT+ victims.
	Maracs should ensure they are identifying the most appropriate service to provide the Idaa role and support for anyone referred to Marac.
	Marac professionals should consider intersecting needs of LGBT+ survivors and be mindful of any 'honour'-related risk for young LGBT+ survivors in relation to their sexual or gender identity, and how this may impact on their access to services and support.

²¹ HBA & Marac - Research Report

²² Supporting LGBT Survivors (LGBT Youth Scotland)

Risk Assess

Cases involving so called 'honour'-based abuse, where primarily perpetrated by a non-partner or ex-partner, referral rates are lower than other high-risk cases. From our survey of Scottish Maracs 'honour'-based abuse cases were routinely not recorded, and where they were recorded, they made up less than 5% of referrals. This is regardless of cases involving 'honour'-based abuse being more likely to be classed as 'high risk. It is therefore important that:





	Marac professionals are skilled in identifying cases involving 'honour'-based abuse and assessing risk, including being aware of how risk may present differently in these cases compared to other domestic abuse cases.
	Where professionals are unsure or lack the skills or confidence to carry out appropriate risk assessments, they should reach out to specialist services in their area for support and advice. It is crucial that the expertise and skill of specialist services is recognised and considered when assessing the risk that someone is experiencing and whether they meet the threshold for Marac discussion.
	Marac professionals should be aware of indicators that someone may be experiencing 'honour'-based abuse, including from wider family and/or community members, and should explore these dynamics as part of routine risk assessments.



Be open minded when it comes to hearing a woman's experiences. Cultural practices can overlap across cultures and communities but there can also be differences that influence and shape the abuse. Creating a safe space for the woman when doing risks assessments is so important

(Focus group participant)

Victims may not fully recognise their experiences or situation as ‘honour’-based abuse, or in fact as abusive. Assessing risk in cases involving ‘honour’-based abuse may rely on using professional judgement to a higher degree than for other cases involving domestic abuse, and professionals should use this alongside formal risk assessments such as the SafeLives Dash. Where a risk of ‘honour’-based abuse has been identified:

	<p>Professionals should consider escalation, isolation, and the victim’s perception of their own risk, in particular relation to contravening family perceptions of ‘honour’, alongside risk factors like physical abuse and/or threats. Coercive and controlling behaviours, such as monitoring agency and social contacts, especially when perpetrated by wider family members, should be taken into consideration alongside other risks such as physical abuse or threats.</p> <p>In fact, focusing solely on risk or threats of physical harm may result in under-estimating risk and lead to missed opportunities for early intervention and to provide appropriate support to victims of ‘honour’-based abuse.</p>
	<p>Professionals should consider individual aspects of the victim’s situation and any intersecting needs that may impact on their safety and space for action.</p>
	<p>Whilst ‘honour’-based abuse may be considered primarily in relation to victims from Black, Asian, and other racially minoritised communities, professionals must not risk excluding victims from other backgrounds (White, Scottish) from accessing support.</p>
	<p>Professionals should be mindful that victims may use different language to describe what they are experiencing and consider their experiences within the context of family or cultural expectations.</p>









The idea that honour-base violence ... will only happen in black and brown families. It's like false. I'm sure that happens in lots of different spaces, but there is a lack of willingness to then look at your own culture.






(Focus group participant)

Risk factors to consider

Whilst there is currently no risk assessment developed specifically for 'honour'-based abuse and/or forced marriage cases for multi-agency use, tools like the SafeLives Dash do include sections specifically in relation to so called 'honour'-based abuse. It may be more important for professionals to use professional judgement to assess risk of harm in these cases, alongside use of tools like the Dash. Some professional judgement considerations when assessing risk in 'honour'-based abuse cases include:

NB. This is not an exhaustive list and should not be considered a stand-alone risk assessment for 'honour'-based abuse, rather it is intended as an aide for professionals when using professional judgement to consider whether a victim experiencing 'honour'-based abuse may be at high risk and should be referred to Marac

	<p>Controlling and coercive behaviour, including from wider family members.</p>
	<p>Isolation – is the victim allowed to speak to or engage with professionals, friends, and family without the presence of the perpetrator(s).</p>
	<p>Language barriers – particularly where family members are acting as interpreters.</p>
	<p>Pressure from family members to behave/act in a certain way – also consider potential repercussions of not doing so.</p>
	<p>Cultural expectations and/or rules – when linked to ideas or perception of family 'honour'.</p>
	<p>Victim's perception of their own risk, and/or what would happen if they contravened spoken or unspoken rules or expectations for their behaviour.</p>

	<p>Any intersecting needs and identities – e.g., Victim’s immigration status and access to public funds and support, language barriers, sexual and/or gender identity (where this may contravene family expectations of marriage and relationships), and disabilities (including learning disabilities and where this is impacting on a victim’s ability to keep themselves safe.</p>
	<p>Threats to take the victim and/or any children out of the country – including to be married.</p>
	<p>Use of technology, social media, GPS tracking devices, as well as children, neighbours, and wider community, to monitor victim’s movement.</p>
	<p>Financial dependency on perpetrator(s) and potential for economic abuse.</p>
	<p>Risk of being subjected to conversion therapy for LGBT+ victims in response to sexuality.</p>
	<p>Risk of forced marriage, including for LGBT+ victims into ‘straight’ marriages and risk of being ‘outed’ by or to community.</p>

Referral

There is very little consistency in the way that Maracs across Scotland respond to 'honour'-based abuse referrals, with some accepting the referrals while others do not.

For some Maracs, the decision on whether to accept a referral depends on the identity of the primary perpetrator. Some Maracs do not accept an 'Honour'-based abuse case if the primary perpetrator is a family member rather than a partner or ex-partner (as per the definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018). Many of the focus group participants would like to see this aspect of the law changed to include family abuse as a form of domestic abuse.

'Honour'-based abuse, although distinct from domestic abuse, is a form of gender-based violence and violence against women and girls. As such, cases involving this type of abuse, including from wider family members, are appropriate for referral to Marac and cases should be accepted for discussion at Scottish Maracs. This includes forced marriage, threat of forced marriage or any other type of abusive act that constitutes so called 'honour'-based abuse.

Cases involving 'honour'-based abuse, where primarily perpetrated by a non-partner or ex-partner, referral rates are lower than other high-risk cases. From our survey of Scottish Maracs 'honour'-based abuse cases were routinely not recorded, and where they were recorded, they made up less than 5% of referrals. This is regardless of cases involving 'honour'-based abuse being more likely to be classed as 'high risk'.

Effective Marac responses should be led and informed by the expertise of specialist services, inclusive from the point of referral through to action plans and follow up after the meeting.

Safety Planning

Effective action planning is one of the key outcomes of Marac. Whilst we would expect there to be a good level of transferable skills in action planning from other domestic abuse cases discussed at Marac we recognise that some Marac professionals may feel less confident in relation to 'honour'-based abuse.









Agency representatives should be empowered by their organisations to be able to take appropriate action and commit resources to address the risks identified through information sharing.



I think there needs to be more robust safety planning for HBV cases. And those safety plans have to be longer term because ... the needs of the women and their children who come to us are considerably more complicated

(Focus group participant)

Here are some key questions to consider in aiding action planning for cases involving so called 'honour'-based abuse at Marac²³:

	<p>Has entry been denied to a professional during a visit (planned or unannounced)? Consider expedited action to visit again and escalate internally to ensure it is followed up appropriately.</p>
	<p>Has any agency had meaningful engagement with the victim? If not, consider any opportunities for joint working to achieve this. Identify a lead agency who has built a trusted relationship with the victim, e.g., GPs, other health professionals or third sector organisations.</p>
	<p>Have the victim's views been expressed? If not, ensure an organisation is identified who can engage with the victim, offer support, and seek their views on any safety/action planning.</p>
	<p>Is a specialist support service involved, and if not, can you reach out to one to ensure you're well equipped to deal with the issues presented?</p>
	<p>Is statutory responsibility being fulfilled? This relates both to the welfare of vulnerable adults with care and support needs and/or experiencing domestic abuse, as well as any children.</p>
	<p>Are the appropriate experts taking the lead – and a single point of contact nominated? This will normally be the Idaa, but may be a different specialist service or agency, depending on the victim's priorities and who has managed to develop a relationship with the victim.</p>
	<p>Have the victim's finances been considered? there may be financial implications when perpetrators or victims visa and/or immigration status are insecure or there may be no recourse to public funds. There may also be further financial safety considerations not related to immigration status which should be considered to support the victim to increase their space for action and rebuild their lives.</p>

²³ Adapted from SafeLives BME briefing

?	Can the fire service assist with welfare checks?
?	Could Marac agencies (such as the Idaa service or Adult Support and Protection) facilitate engagement with victims, particularly those within rural communities?
?	Are you considering risks from other family members, the wider family and community?
?	Where relevant, have you considered the impact of previous experiences of agency contact, including both inside and outside of the UK? Previous poor responses may impact or influence a victim's readiness to engage with and trust agency involvement, especially from statutory services.
?	Have child protection issues been identified and are the whereabouts and current situation of all children known? Consider any specific support needs for young victims, including financial support or support to complete or return to education.
?	Does family/community control or influence the victim's expression of their gender or sexual identity? How does this impact their mental health and wellbeing? Consider access to appropriate supports around this but be led by the victim and their ability to engage at this time.
?	Have you considered additional or intersecting needs and/or barriers which may impact on the victim's safety or access to services?

Recommendations

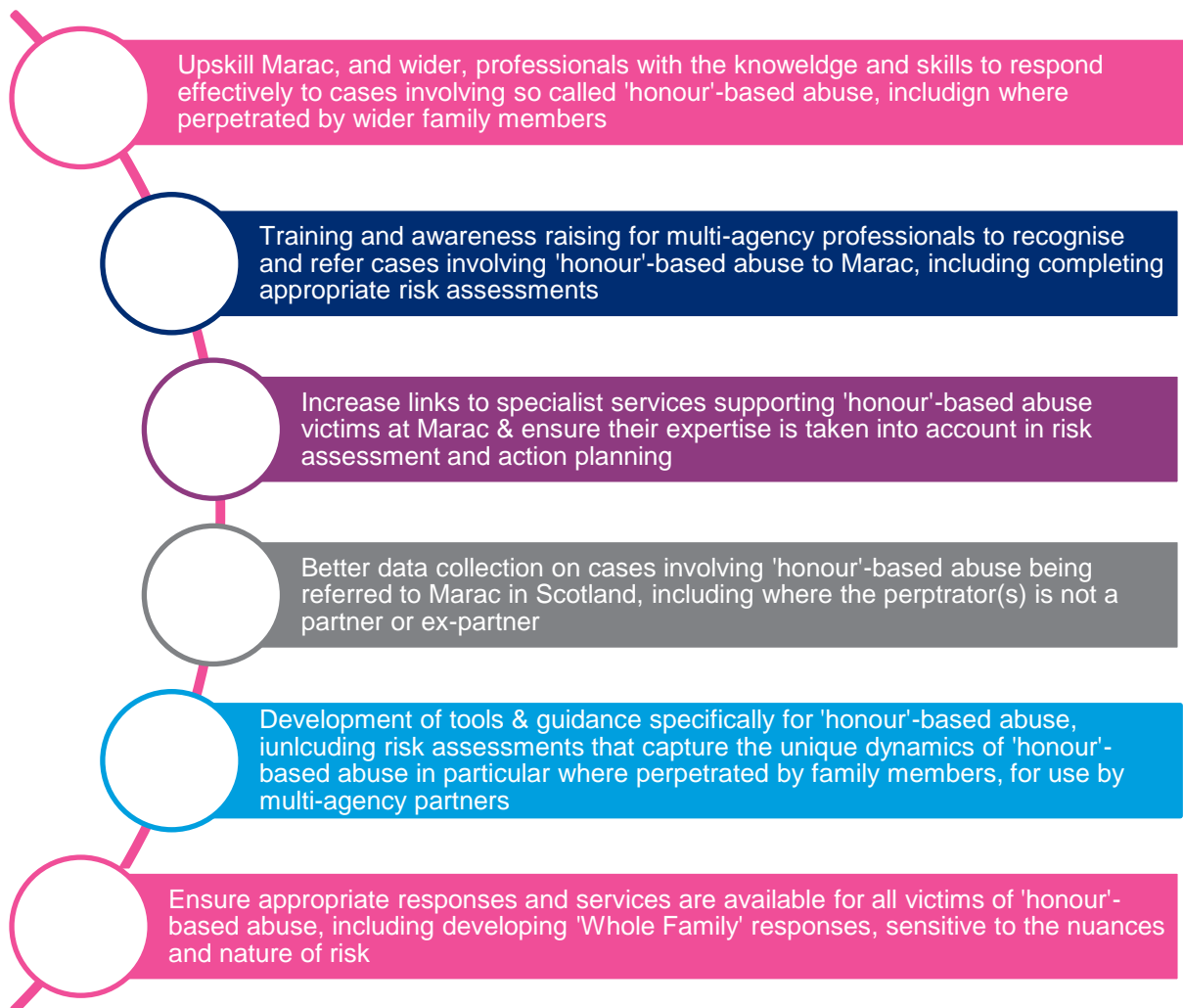
Our engagements with Maracs and specialist practitioners across Scotland suggest there is a lack of confidence from Marac professionals in responding to cases involving so called 'honour'-based abuse.

Our survey of Scottish Maracs suggest referral levels for 'honour'-based abuse cases are low, and there is both a lack of accurate data recording for these cases and inconsistencies across Marac areas in how these referrals are dealt with.

One of the main barriers for cases involving so called 'honour'-based abuse being referred to Scottish Maracs is a lack of clarity over whether cases when the primary perpetrator(s) is not a partner or ex-partner are appropriate for Marac to consider, in line with the Scottish definition of domestic abuse.

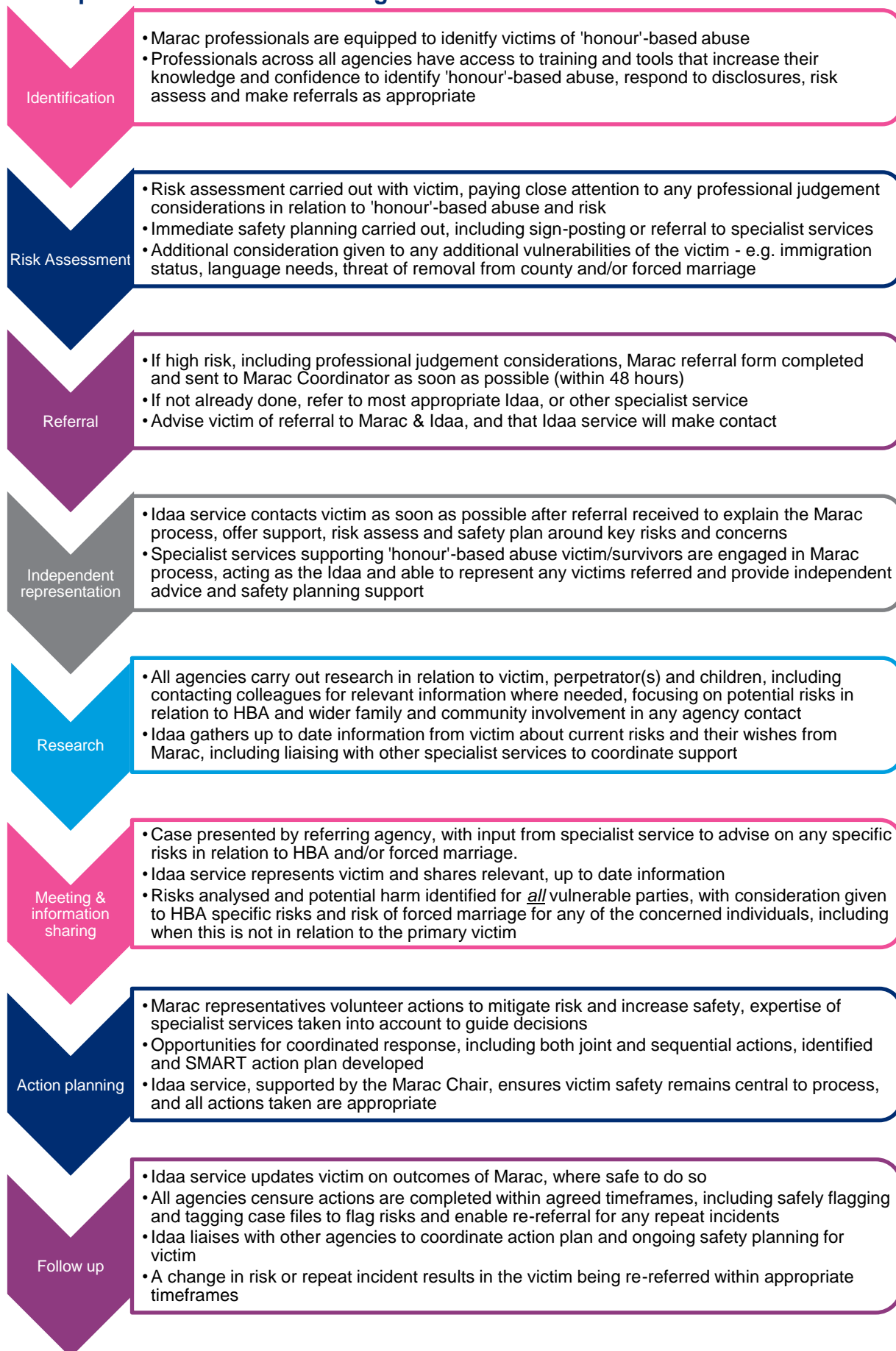
It is SafeLives view that cases involving 'honour'-based abuse, as a form of gender-based violence and violence against women, including where perpetrated by wider family members, are appropriate for referral to Marac and cases should be accepted for discussion at Scottish Maracs.

A full set of recommendations for Marac professionals, Maracs, and policy makers, are set out in our research report²⁴, however we have also provided a brief overview here:



²⁴ [HBA & Marac - Research Report](#)

Marac process for cases involving 'honour'-based abuse



Further resources

SafeLives Scotland Marac toolkit
for Marac professionals working in Scotland

SafeLives Spotlight report 'Your Choice: Honour-based violence, forced marriage and domestic abuse'
(2017) spotlight on 'honour'-based abuse, forced marriage and domestic abuse

Scottish Government (2014) [Scottish Statutory Guidance – Supplementary Guidance Document](#)
statutory guidance for responding to forced marriage.

NB. Updated statutory guidance is expected to be published in 2022/2023.

Scottish Government (2014) [Multi-agency practice guidelines: preventing and responding to forced marriage](#)
practice guidance for Scottish practitioners responding to forced marriage

Scottish Women's Rights Centre: [Reporting forced/honour crime to the Police](#)
guidance for victims on their rights and what to expect when reporting 'honour'-based abuse and/or
forced marriage to the Police

Specialist support services

[Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre](#)

National support and advice service for Muslim and Black, Asian, and racially minoritised women.
Helpline: 0808 801 0301

[FearFree](#)

Domestic Abuse support for LGBT & male survivors in Scotland

[Galop](#)

LGBT Domestic Abuse
Helpline: 0800 999 5428

[Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid](#)

Specialist domestic abuse service for Black, Asian, and racially minoritised women and children in the
Glasgow area

[Karma Nirvana](#)

UK Honour Based Abuse
Helpline: 0800 5999 247

[LGBT Domestic Abuse Scotland](#)

Domestic Abuse project managed by [LGBT Youth Scotland](#)

[Saheliya](#)

Specialist mental health and well-being support for Black, Asian, and racially minoritised women and
girls (12+) in the Edinburgh and Glasgow area

[Scotland's Domestic Abuse & Forced Marriage Helpline](#): 0800 027 1234

[Shakti Women's Aid](#)

Specialist domestic abuse service for Black, Asian, and racially minoritised women and children in
Edinburgh & the Lothians, as well as outreach services in Fife, Dundee and Forth Valley.
*Including a specific support service for LGBT victims experiencing domestic abuse and 'honour'-based
abuse.*

About SafeLives

We are SafeLives, a UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for everyone and for good.

We work with organisations across the UK to transform the response to domestic abuse. We listen to survivors, putting their voices at the heart of our thinking. We look at the whole picture for each individual and family to get the right help at the right time to make families everywhere safe and well. And we challenge perpetrators to change, asking ‘why doesn’t he stop?’ rather than ‘why doesn’t she leave?’ This applies whatever the gender of the victim or perpetrator and whatever the nature of their relationship.

Our Scottish publication **Whole Lives** highlighted that every year, nearly 130,000 people in Scotland experience domestic abuse. There are over 9,000 people at risk of being murdered or seriously harmed; over 12,000 children live in these households. For every person being abused, there is someone else responsible for that abuse: the perpetrator. And all too often, children are in the home and living with the impact. Domestic abuse affects us all; it thrives on being hidden behind closed doors.



We must make it everybody’s business

Contact

Please contact Scotland@SafeLives.org.uk for further information or questions in relation to this guidance