

The role of Small and/or Specialist Services in an effective Multi-Agency Response

Consultation Summary Report



Joining the dots for an effective multi-agency response.



Ending domestic abuse



Acknowledgements

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With special thanks to:

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About this report

SafeLives are the authors of this report. We are a UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for everyone and for good.




Read more about the work of SafeLives [here](#)

For the past 15+ years, since the first Scottish Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (Marac) began, Maracs have transformed the multi-agency response to domestic abuse across Scotland.

See [SafeLives Marac Scotland Overview](#) for more information on the Marac process.

In Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy to eliminate violence against women and girls, there is commitment to develop and build a national framework for Maracs in Scotland. SafeLives have been funded to support this through the Scottish Marac Development Programme since 2015 and presently through our Safer, Sooner multi-agency programme.

We want to improve multi-agency capability, consistency, and capacity across Scotland by:

-  **Helping victims to better understand the process they are at the centre of, so they get the right support for themselves and can help make others safer, sooner**
-  **Supporting Maracs to become better embedded within wider public protection systems, to help achieve the best outcomes and increase safety for women and children consistently across Scotland**
-  **Supporting decision & policy makers (at local, regional, and national levels) to achieve Equally Safe commitments through robust evidence, expert advice, and the voices of victims.**

We want to be part of ensuring that every victim of domestic abuse in Scotland get the right support, regardless of the risks they experience, how they seek support and where they live. SafeLives is committed to supporting and improving the operation and accessibility of Maracs nationally, so that all victims at high risk of serious harm because of domestic abuse in Scotland, can access excellent support from their local Marac.

Through our engagements with professionals involved in multi-agency systems across Scotland we have been hearing about inconsistencies in the response to cases that involve victims from marginalised communities, and those who experience additional barriers to accessing support. SafeLives' Marac dataset¹ suggests that Black and other racially minoritised victims, LGBT+ victims, male victims and disabled victims are all currently underrepresented at Scottish Maracs. We want to understand this underrepresentation. We also want to know how multi-agency systems are understood and experienced both by professionals and victims. To develop our understanding, we engaged with small and/or specialist services who support victims and survivors from marginalised communities. Our engagement informs this report and the work on our wider engagement with victims and survivors who have been referred to Marac. This work is not a full picture of all practice, nor does it speak for all services, or victims. It does however reflect a range of expertise from small and/or specialist services, and their experience.

Aims of consultation

- 1 To understand what small and/or specialist services' engagement with multi-agency systems, including Marac – and vice versa - looks like.**
- 2 To understand what the multi-agency system and Marac responses are to victims and survivors referred from small and/or specialist services.**
- 3 To understand whether the expertise of small and/or specialist services are recognised in multi-agency systems, including Marac**
- 4 To understand how Maracs ensure that victims and survivors from small and/or specialist services get a robust and appropriate response once a referral is made**

Contact

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

¹Data is submitted to SafeLives by individual Maracs, on a quarterly basis. The Marac Dataset provides data for a number of protected characteristics. Marac figures for these characteristics can be compared with figures in the population to provide a starting point for considering whether Maracs are addressing the unique needs of victims from all backgrounds.

²At SafeLives, if a person is currently living in danger, we refer to them as a victim of domestic abuse, but from the moment they start to receive support we refer to them as a survivor. We have used the terms victim and survivor interchangeably throughout this report. We have consulted with people with lived experience of domestic abuse to check the appropriateness of our language.

Engagement with small and / or specialist services

We consulted 15 small and/or specialist services through semi-structured interviews. Some of these services provide support for specific groups of victims, including for Black, Asian, and racially minoritised people; LGBT+ people; migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers; male survivors of domestic abuse and/or disabled people, and all provide support to those experiencing domestic abuse.

What is a Small and/or Specialist service?

Small and/or specialist services are organisations with expert knowledge and understanding of the supportive factors and additional barriers faced by victims who can be hidden from view and whose needs may not be met adequately by mainstream services.

Small and/or specialist services often provide a lifeline by responding to additional barriers faced by Black, Asian, and racially minoritised, D/deaf and disabled, blind and partially sighted, LGBT+, older, and migrant and refugee victims of domestic abuse. Supporting small and/or specialist services is an important part of closing gaps in provision, and safeguarding more victims from harm sooner, in a way that works for them.

We have used and/or to recognise that some of the services we consulted with don't necessarily fit the 'small' criteria but are specialist services who represent many different victims, including those who face additional barriers to support. We also consulted with services located in, and supporting victims in, remote and rural areas, including some of Scotland's island communities, in recognition that they face a number of unique challenges and barriers.

Characteristics of small and/or specialist services

Ten out of the 15 small and/or specialist services that we consulted were also specialist domestic abuse services. One was an organisation that specialised in all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The other four services, although they supported victims and survivors of domestic abuse, did not sit within the domestic abuse or VAWG sector.



10 specialist domestic abuse services

1 specialist in all violence against women and girls

4 services outside domestic abuse/VAWG sector

We found a range of support options and approaches provided by the small and/or specialist services; most services (13) providing advocacy work for their clients. Support to children and young people was provided by over half of the services (8) with a similar number (7) supporting clients with court proceedings⁴. All the services we consulted offer one-to-one support to their clients, two-thirds of services provide group work (11) and half (7) run a drop-in service for their clients.

⁴The activities undertaken ranged across services from attending court for support to providing court advocacy.

Current Practice: Multi-Agency Working and Marac

Current barriers within multi-agency working and Marac

Recognising Individual Needs

In our consultation small and/or specialist services told us that the unique and individual needs of their clients are often not taken into consideration or recognised by other organisations when they refer, or support clients in multi-agency settings. This can lead to poor, unsafe advice and a lack of support aimed at the needs of their clients.

Focus on Physical Violence

Services told us they did not think Maracs had a full understanding of the risks in relation to coercive control and economic abuse. One service noted that their Marac was police led and the focus was often on physical safety and criminal offences. Another told us that highly complex cases can be missed by Marac where there are no prior incidents of physical violence. Services felt there was limited understanding of the danger, fear and destruction of financial abuse and coercive control. There was felt to be a lack of curiosity around coercive and controlling behaviour and patterns of abuse in general, with a focus on one off incidents, in compounded by a lack of understanding of specific experiences of marginalised victims.



Recommendation

Implement effective training and awareness raising for multi-agency partners to increase confidence and knowledge of all aspects of domestic abuse including coercive and controlling behaviour and economic abuse.

'Honour'-based Abuse and Forced Marriage

The lack of understanding about domestic abuse was felt to be especially heightened when there were additional needs or barriers to accessing support for victims and survivors, for example in cases involving so called 'honour'-based abuse and forced marriage. Services were concerned that risk and coercive control was often ignored or not recognised around so called 'honour'-based violence and forced marriage.

The risks from extended family members or the community can be high, and the types of abuse, such as controlling immigration status, financial abuse, or implications for the victim around divorce need to be discussed, including when extended family are part of the abuse. It was felt that Marac struggles with how to support a victim or survivor with no recourse to public funds and where their immigration status is unknown or waiting for a decision.



'Honour'- based abuse and forced marriage cases at Marac in Scotland guidance. This guidance will give anyone involved in the Marac process in Scotland 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.

Cultural Understanding

Services also told us that they felt victim blaming sometimes took place when victims and survivors experience additional barriers to accessing support or additional needs. It was shared that the lack of cultural understanding for Black, Asian, or racially minoritised victims and survivors meant there can be blame towards victims at Maracs for example when their actions or behaviour does not 'fit' within expectations (or misconceptions) of 'how domestic abuse victims behave'.

One service informed us that family members had been used as interpreters at Marac, which is unsafe and inappropriate for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

In small communities, confidentiality can be an issue for translators and services told us that family members or community members are still being asked to translate for victims and survivors. Specialist services where staff can speak to victims and survivors in their language are essential for support and for the victims understanding of the risks to them.



Guidance for Maracs: Cases involving victims who are black or minority ethnic at Marac (Scotland) This guidance will give anyone involved in the Marac process in Scotland guidance for supporting victims who are a black and minority ethnic (BME) through the Marac process.

Small and Rural Communities

The risks of being in a small community were also discussed in relation to small, rural communities and an example was given of a survivor fleeing the perpetrator only to then be housed in a street near to where the perpetrator was based.

Actions to increase safety, such as changing the locks to a home can be difficult if the landlord or locksmith knows the family and the perpetrator in the community. Small and/or specialist services felt that Maracs must be more creative when supporting victims and survivors in small, rural and remote communities and to link with community hubs which can provide support.

“There might be people around the table who [are] related or connected to the perpetrator.”

(Consultation Participant)



Recommendation

Training and awareness raising for Marac professionals on responding to victims and survivors is needed where there may be additional barriers to accessing support and/or additional needs for the victim identified locally. This training and awareness should be more diverse to include an understanding of working with different cultures and communities and be informed by those with lived experience and/or small and/or specialist services who are expertly placed to highlight the nuanced needs of victims from diverse backgrounds, within a local context

Substance Misuse

For victims and survivors with needs in relation to drug and alcohol use, one service told us that organisations can be dismissive of domestic abuse and the overarching feeling was the victim and survivor should just stop using drugs or alcohol. Services feel that Maracs are not always seeking specialist support or asking them for training about their expertise. The organisations involved in Marac should set up meetings with specialist services to raise awareness, engagement and safety support for victims and survivors.

“There is a real gap around drugs and alcohol and the intersection with domestic abuse. Services become paralysed in terms of their ability to safety plan for a victim who is still taking drugs or alcohol”

(Consultation Participant)

Learning Disabilities

Concerns were also raised around Marac’s lack of understanding around learning disabilities and how this impacts engagement and the experiences of abuse for victims and survivors. We were told that victims and survivors of domestic abuse with learning disabilities may not identify they are experiencing domestic abuse. They may understand the behaviour of the perpetrator as normal or not have the words to describe the abuse they are experiencing. There are also additional risks for victims and survivors with learning disabilities.

Social media can be a risk, with perpetrators targeting individuals with learning disabilities because of their vulnerability. The risks of isolation are increased for victims and survivors with learning disabilities, especially if the perpetrator is acting as a carer for the victim or survivor, or supervising contact with children. There can also be an ongoing impact of trauma from past abuse and institutionalised stigma which needs to be taken into consideration when risk and safety plans are being discussed by agencies.

LGBT+ Understanding

Services told us there was also a lack of knowledge around risk and how to respond appropriately to LGBT+ victims and non-binary victims. The risks for LGBT+ victims and survivors can be very different, and we were told that homophobia, including internalised homophobia, plays a huge role in risk.

The victim or survivor's sexual orientation or trans identity can be used to control victims and survivors and then the real or perceived homophobia can be an additional barrier to accessing support. Societal views and heteronormativity can often lead to male gay victims and survivors being missed by services who assume that injuries are just male 'rough and tumble' as opposed to serious high risk domestic abuse and a risk assessment is not considered. For trans and non-binary victims and survivors, the fear of the reaction from women and women's services is particularly heightened, and it was felt that for all members of the LGBT+ community, websites advertising help for domestic abuse focus on men abusing women, potentially leaving out victims who may be experiencing abuse in other relationship dynamics.

"Everything in Scotland is framed around violence against women (from men) which leaves a gap for same sex relationships, and male victims. There are few services available, and there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of LGBT victims' experiences."

(Consultation Participant)

Age

Services felt that young victims and survivors had the abuse they experience minimised and multi-agency organisations do not always consider the best way to contact young people e.g. texting rather than calling. Similarly, Marac did not take into consideration the full picture of domestic abuse for older victims and barriers they can face around seeking help, support, and the use of technology, for example.

Male Victims

Idaa provision for male victims and survivors is a gap in service provision in Scotland and many Idaas work within organisations who are not able (and/or do not have the understanding) to support male survivors and bring their voice to the Marac.



Recommendation

Creative, 'SMART'⁶ action and safety plans need to be developed for all victims and survivors. The Marac Steering Group should create links to specialist services to reduce barriers to accessing support, to ensure victims can become, safer, sooner.

Counter allegations

There is concern that perpetrators, across all groups of victims and survivors, are making counter allegations of abuse and potentially presenting as victims at Marac. Counter allegations can be devastating and lead to increased isolation for the primary victim or survivor. This impact was highlighted as being particularly significant in rural, remote and small communities.

Services told us that perpetrators are using the system to manipulate organisations, and the malicious allegations about the victim or survivor in every part of their life (social work, education, benefits etc.) are not recognised as a tool of domestic abuse and instead looked at in isolation. When recognised as a pattern of behaviour these actions highlight high risk/high harm domestic abuse. This again highlights a gap in understanding of the nuances of domestic abuse and coercive control which can undermine appropriate responses at Marac.

"Being seen as a perpetrator due to a counter allegation can have a devastating and isolating impact"

(Consultation Participant)

⁶'SMART' is the acronym for – specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, and timed, used widely

Positive reflections

Multi-Agency Collaboration

We were told that when multi-agency collaboration works well, it is positive for both clients and members of staff. Multi-agency working allows services to share the responsibility for their client's safety, which in turn makes them feel less isolated and more supported.

Staff also felt it allowed them to focus on their expertise and allow for work outside of this remit to be undertaken by other organisations.

"It helps to feel less lonely and to overcome the feeling of "what if something happens and I'm the only person that knows about the risk."

(Consultation Participant)

Marac Referrals

For those services that do refer to Marac, the referral makes staff feel that they have done everything in their power to keep their client safe. The services believed Marac opened extra doors and resources for clients and gave all organisations in the multi-agency setting an opportunity to share information. The small and/or specialist services we consulted, recognised the positive outcomes for clients when they referred them to Marac. Victims and survivors who were heard at Marac did not have to re-tell their account of the domestic abuse they were experiencing to different agencies.

This can often be re-traumatising for victims and survivors and Marac ensures all organisations have access to the same understanding of risk at one time. Services also felt that Marac allowed victims and survivors to know that the other agencies are supporting them and taking actions to keep them safe. Their clients felt believed and the sense of loneliness and isolation around the abuse was mitigated by an understanding that key agencies were now involved to keep them safe. Small and/or specialist services felt that being heard at Marac allowed their clients to have more trust in statutory and larger organisations and this, in turn, increases opportunities to access the support at the right time.



Recommendation

The Marac Steering Group should include diversity as a standing agenda item and invite the expertise of small and/or specialist services to ensure appropriate action is taken to address any gaps such as training or local referral processes.

Small and/or Specialist Services Included in Marac

When specialist services are invited to attend Marac, staff feel they can bring their knowledge and expertise to the other organisations at the Marac and share the specific and unique risks for their clients. When they attended, services felt heard at Marac, had the opportunity to advocate for their client and challenge any poor practice.

"If we were at the meeting itself, we would be able to provide a bigger picture and more nuanced information. There are risks of information being missed by us not being engaged directly in the process."

(Consultation Participant)



Recommendation

The Marac Steering Group should ensure specialist services are included, invited to, and recognised as experts in the Marac process. They should bring the voice of their clients and contribute to an effective multi-agency action plan, **ensuring victim safety.**

How to better respond to unique needs of clients

Domestic abuse is everyone's business

Where a specialist service staff member assessed their client as at the highest risk of serious harm or homicide, most services make a referral to Marac. Nine of the 15 services we consulted 'always' referred high risk clients to Marac. One service told us they 'often' referred high risk clients to Marac, one service told us they would 'sometimes' refer high risk clients and one told us they would 'rarely' refer clients to Marac. The small and/or specialist service that 'rarely' referred into Marac did not often hold high risk cases and where they did, the Marac referral was often made by another agency.

Three of the 15 services we consulted do not refer high risk clients to Marac. There were different reasons for this. One service felt that referring to Marac was not in their remit as they did not support clients directly for domestic abuse. One service did not refer clients to Marac as they did not use the SafeLives Dash risk checklist and their experience was that the Police will make the referral. This service did, however, state if they needed to make a referral to Marac then they would. One service did not refer to Marac as their staff were not Idaa trained and there is, therefore, a feeling that they do not have a full understanding of the process of Marac and how to engage in the most effective way for their clients.



Recommendation

Small and/or specialist services should be able to access training and support to engage with Marac and other multi-agency systems. This should include a focus on, risk-assessment, the Marac process, and referral pathways.

Representation and Diversity at Marac

Representation and diversity at Marac were two key themes that services felt were lacking and would enable Maracs to better respond to the unique needs of their clients. Inviting experts to Marac who can advise on the unique risks and enable referrals to these specialist organisations would be hugely beneficial. Having small and/or specialist organisations at the Marac table, or a champion who can provide this information can bring a wealth of knowledge, a nuanced understanding and have an impact on the support that victims and survivors receive.

It was felt that Maracs need to reflect and consider how diverse and representative their own processes are. It has also been noted as a response to this question and others, that the links between Adult Support and Protection and Marac need to be stronger to avoid siloed working for these victim and survivors.

“Diversity is everybody's business. Everyone who plays a part in multi-agency risk assessment and management, safeguarding etc, need to be involved in embedding diversity and inclusion.”

(Consultation Participant)

Training and Guidance

Training and guidance for Maracs and for specialist services could help Maracs better respond to the unique needs to victims and survivors. It was felt Marac professionals would benefit from training on the unique needs and additional barriers of victims to increase awareness and amplify the profile of small and/or specialist in the community. Training would also raise awareness and increase understanding of Marac and referrals, better ensuring the safety of the victim.



Recommendation

The Marac Steering Group should review local training needs around appropriate responses victims from diverse backgrounds. They should engage with local and national specialist services to ensure training reflects the needs of victims and survivors from diverse backgrounds.

Training must be backed up by processes to enable referrals and attendance at Marac. As one service noted; although training is important, members of the Marac locally can change and organisational memory can be short if not used or implemented. The service suggested that guidance notes could be produced to support Maracs with what to consider, who the experts were and how they can best support victims who experience additional barriers or support needs.



Recommendation

The Marac Steering Group should consistently review and increase their Marac's links to specialist services to ensure victims and survivors get the right support at the earliest opportunity.

Where specialist local services are not available, there should be clear processes in place for representatives to access information/support from national specialist services and established referral pathways into small and/or specialist services.

Training was also seen as important for the services to increase knowledge about Marac, and to raise the profile of Marac across all areas of supports, especially outside of the domestic abuse sector. Services also considered that training would help services understand when and how to refer their clients to Marac. Domestic abuse should be seen as everybody's business, and services identified the need for a culture change in statutory services in relation to their response to domestic abuse. Training was seen as one way of ensuring domestic abuse is not seen as an add-on but an integral part of all agencies work.

Services saw training for both core Marac agencies and small services as an opportunity to increase shared responsibility for victim safety. Victim safety needs to be at the heart of Marac, ensuring the expertise of small and/or specialist services around the Marac table is crucial to ensuring victims and survivors are not 'hidden' and that their safety is the priority of all agencies.

Perpetrator Focus

Two services raised the need for more of a perpetrator focus in the Marac process. They felt all the responsibility was placed on the victim or survivor to stay safe and the person causing harm remained invisible.

“Marac itself needs to get better at placing responsibility of abuse on the perpetrator. Focus is purely on making and keeping the victim and children safe, but what where is the part about keeping him accountable?”

(Consultation Participant)

Lived Experience

Services told us that Marac needs to operate in a victim centred way and have an understanding of the victim's background as a starting point.

Services told us about the importance of engaging with those who have lived experience so Marac professionals can better understand the nuanced needs of victims. Systematically embedding survivor voice is important to ensure multi-agency systems can improve their local response for victims and survivors with unique needs. One service highlighted the powerful impact of survivor voice on local decision making. The services felt connecting survivor voice with decision makers was a powerful tool, leading to better outcomes for victims and survivors.

“There’s been some really positive outcomes from that and the work that’s been done since to hear the voices of women where the decisions are being made. We need to build on that, it is so powerful to hear the words of women themselves.”

(Consultation Participant)



Recommendation

Multi-agency processes, including Marac, should be victim centred. There needs to be a comprehensive approach nationally and locally to actively listen to victims and survivors and embed learning into system design, operation and evaluation.

Diversity and Inclusion

On a national level, small and/or specialist services felt that the conversation needed to change around domestic abuse. The domestic abuse sector needs more diverse voices across the board, whether from government and funders, Maracs and services, courts or victims and survivors representing their experiences. Everyone working with victims and survivors of domestic abuse need to understand **all** groups experiences and the extra barriers, needs and safe support that is essential for safety.

“There needs to be more representation and diversity at all levels across the workforce visible diversity across services, promotional materials, strategic forums, government, beyond a tokenistic effort.”

(Consultation Participant)

Better Funding

Small and/or specialist services are funded from a range of funding sources and for most services this is often from more than one funder. Scottish Government funding or Local Authority funding was most common, with smaller ‘top up’ pots of funding coming from other sources including charitable and trust organisations, National Lottery funding and NHS schemes. Services noted that the ‘patchwork’ of different pots of funding made resourcing more difficult to manage. Only two services, which were services that supported a wider population of victims and survivors, had permanent or statutory funding. All other services had a funding cycle that lasted between one and three years.

To ensure victims and survivors get the right support, at the right time, substantial and long-term, and equitable funding needs to be in place for services who understand the political and social context of the victims and survivors they support. This funding needs to be in line with mainstream organisations to ensure that small and/or specialist services can retain and train up staff and the inclusion of these services is core to the response to domestic abuse as opposed to an add on. These findings echo themes identified in the Scottish Government’s recent Independent Review of the Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services which highlighted the piecemeal funding provision across the country.

“One of the biggest barriers is funding and resources to be able to both support the client and attend and engage with Marac and take the lead in the process. Every agency is under-resourced and under-staffed and that impacts on ability to engage with Marac and other agencies in multi-agency processes.”

(Consultation Participant)



Recommendation

Long-term sustainable funding needs to be provided for small and/or specialist services so victims and survivors can be provided with the right support at the earliest opportunity to become safe sooner.

⁷See [The Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Services](#) for more information.

Conclusion

Through our engagements with professionals involved in multi-agency systems across Scotland we heard about inconsistencies in the response to cases involving victims from marginalised communities. We wanted to understand this underrepresentation better. We also want to know how multi-agency systems are understood and experienced both by professionals and victims. To develop our understanding, we engaged with 15 small and/or specialist services who support victims and survivors from marginalised communities across Scotland.

Our findings suggest that the unique and individual needs of victims or survivors are not always taken into consideration or recognised in the multi-agency setting which can lead to a poor response to high risk domestic abuse. Our findings highlight a gap in understanding and awareness of domestic abuse (especially coercive control and financial abuse) and the additional barriers and needs that some victims and survivors face, amongst wider domestic abuse and Marac professionals.

Our findings show that small and/or specialist services have the skills, knowledge, and expertise to ensure that victims and survivors of domestic abuse receive the right support at the earliest opportunity. When these services refer to and/or attend a Marac meeting they can bring their knowledge and expertise while working alongside multi-agency professionals. Services felt a sense of shared responsibility and increased safety for their client when they attended Marac.

When invited to Marac, small and/or specialist services can share their expertise, the victim's voice, and support Marac professionals to create a unique safety plan for the individual. Without the knowledge of small and/or specialist services, unsafe action plans and a lack of specialist support could compound the domestic abuse risk experienced by the victim or survivor, through service generated risks instead.

For the services who may not be so confident in multi-agency working, training on domestic abuse, risk assessments and Marac (including referral pathways and process) is essential to ensure they can recognise and respond to domestic abuse alongside their area of expertise. Identifying risk and being able to refer to multi-agency processes, including Marac, is key to increasing survivor safety. There is not consistent referring to Marac by small and/or specialist services, at present.

Services, also highlighted the need for more diverse voices at a national and strategic level, representing their experiences and increasing awareness of the often intersectional nature of the additional barriers faced by the victims and survivors they support. The often 'patchwork,' short-term funding, which is often the only available option for some small and/or specialist services impacts on the support available to victim and survivors, and the reach/representation of services in the strategic spaces they need to be in.



Next Steps

Victims from marginalised communities are currently underrepresented at Scottish Maracs. To improve the response victims receive, all professionals involved in multi-agency systems need to consider how they can support the implementation of the recommendations made throughout this report in order to make all victims safer, sooner.

In the first instance, this could be done through operational and strategic groups surrounding the Marac, but also through Violence Against Women Partnerships and Chief Officers Public Safety Groups, where there may be food for thought across other multi-agency systems, processes and more.

Recommendations

These reflect the recommendations throughout the document which have all come from this research, but which will speak to both the wider domestic abuse landscape and small and/or specialist services.

1

Implement effective training and awareness raising for multi-agency partners to increase confidence and knowledge of all aspects of domestic abuse including coercive and controlling behaviour and financial and economic abuse.

2

Training and awareness raising for Marac professionals on responding to victims and survivors is needed where there may be additional barriers to accessing support and/or additional needs for the victim identified locally. This training and awareness should be more diverse to include an understanding of working with different cultures and communities and be informed by those with lived experience and/or small and/or specialist services who are expertly placed to highlight the nuanced needs of victims from diverse backgrounds, within a local context.

3

Creative, 'SMART' action and safety plans need to be developed for all victims and survivors. The Marac Steering Group should create links to specialist services to reduce barriers to accessing support, to ensure victims can become, safer, sooner.

4

The Marac Steering Group should include diversity as a standing agenda item and invite the expertise of small and/or specialist services to ensure appropriate action is taken to address any gaps such as training or local referral processes.

5

The Marac Steering Group should ensure specialist services are included, invited to, and recognised as experts in the Marac process. They should bring the voice of their client and contribute to a safe multi-agency action plan.

6

Small and/or specialist services should be able to access training and support to engage with Marac and other multi-agency systems. This should include a focus on, risk-assessment, the Marac process, and referral pathways.

7

The Marac Steering Group should review local training needs around appropriate responses victims from diverse backgrounds. They should engage with local and national specialist services to ensure training reflects the needs of victims and survivors from diverse backgrounds.

8

The Marac Steering Group should consistently review and increase their Marac's links to specialist services to ensure victims and survivors get the right support at the earliest opportunity. Where specialist local services are not available, there should be clear processes in place for representatives to access information/support from national specialist services and established referral pathways into small and/or specialist services.

9

Multi-agency processes, including Marac, should be victim centred. There needs to be a comprehensive approach nationally and locally to actively listen to victims and survivors and embed learning into system design, operation and evaluation.

10

Long-term sustainable funding needs to be provided for small and/or specialist services so victims and survivors can be provided with the right support at the earliest opportunity to become safe sooner.