

**HALTON**

**SAFEGUARDING**

**ADULTS**

**BOARD**



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

## **Operating Protocol**

**December 2024**

Policy, Performance and Customer Care Team

Adult Social Care | Adults Directorate

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## Policy Summary

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*If you require this policy or any associated documents in another format (e.g. other languages, easy-read or any other format), please email details of your requirements to: [asc servicedevelopment@halton.gov.uk](mailto:asc servicedevelopment@halton.gov.uk).*

***This policy has been based on the Warrington Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Operating Protocol 2024 – Warrington Borough Council and we would like to acknowledge the use of this document in the development of this protocol.***

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of MARAC

The purpose of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meeting is to:

- ❖ Share information to increase the safety, health and wellbeing of domestic abuse victims – adults and their children
- ❖ Determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community
- ❖ Construct jointly and implement a risk management plan that provides the professional support to all those at risk and that reduces the risk of harm
- ❖ Reduce repeat victimisation
- ❖ Improve agency accountability
- ❖ Improve support for staff involved in high risk domestic abuse cases

This protocol sets how partner agencies contribute to the effective operation of the MARAC. It sets out the aims and describes the processes of the Halton MARAC, to ensure that a helpful and consistent response to domestic abuse is provided by all agencies who have a duty of care towards adults and children. It states the accountability, governance and performance management structures of MARAC in Halton. The protocol is designed to enhance existing arrangements and does not replace associated policy and procedures concerning:

- ❖ Safeguarding Children
- ❖ Safeguarding Adults
- ❖ Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

The MARAC's role is to share sensitive information safely and securely amongst partners to provide effective support for the service user and ensure any information processes, collected or shared is in line with the Data Protection Act.

**The responsibility to take appropriate actions rests with the individual agency and is not transferred to the MARAC.**

## 1.2 Aims

The aims of the MARAC are:

- ❖ To share relevant information to increase the safety, health and wellbeing of victims, adults and their children
- ❖ To make links with other public protection arrangements in relation to children, perpetrators and vulnerable adults
- ❖ To determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any individual or to the general community and implement appropriate interventions with those who harm
- ❖ To jointly construct and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support to all those at risk and that reduced the risk of harm
- ❖ To reduce repeat victimisation
- ❖ To improve agency accountability
- ❖ To improve support for and the safety of staff involved in high risk domestic abuse cases

## 2.0 Definition of Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 emphasises that domestic abuse is not just about the physical violence that occurs, but encompasses all forms of abuse. The definition also recognises that children are victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or are directly affected by domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) if:-

- ❖ A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and;
- ❖ The behaviour is abusive

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

- ❖ Physical or sexual abuse
- ❖ Violent or threatening behaviour
- ❖ Controlling or coercive behaviour
- ❖ Economic abuse
- ❖ Psychological, emotional or other abuse

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

Two people are defined as personally connected to each other if any of the following applies:-

- ❖ They are, or have been, married to each other
- ❖ They are, or have been, civil partners of each other
- ❖ They have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- ❖ They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- ❖ They are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- ❖ They each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child
- ❖ They are relatives

### 3.0 MARAC Framework

The MARAC operates under the SafeLives framework of the 10 key principles of an effective MARAC. These are as follows:

1. Identification **Professionals recognise domestic abuse, risk assess and identify high-risk cases based on the referral criteria for MARAC**

2.	<b>Referral to MARAC and IDVA</b>	All victims who meet the MARAC threshold are referred to MARAC and the IDVA
3.	<b>Multi-Agency Engagement</b>	Agencies that can contribute to safeguarding high-risk victims, associated children and vulnerable adults attend the MARAC
4.	<b>Independent representation and support for victims</b>	All high-risk victims are offered the support of an IDVA; their views and needs are represented at MARAC
5.	<b>Information Sharing</b>	MARAC representatives share relevant, proportionate and risk-focused information

6.	<b>Action Planning</b>	Multi-Agency action plans address the risk to the victim, safeguard children and adults at risk and manage perpetrator behaviour
7.	<b>Number of cases</b>	The MARAC hears the recommended volume of cases
8.	<b>Equality</b>	The MARAC addresses the unique needs of victims with protected characteristics
9.	<b>Operational Support</b>	There is sufficient support and resources to support effective functioning of the MARAC
10.	<b>Governance</b>	There is effective strategic support and leadership of the MARAC and IDVA response, and agencies work together effectively

## 4.0 MARAC Process

### 4.1 Identification of MARAC Cases

Agencies will routinely screen for domestic abuse as part of their day-to-day role. The MARAC Steering Group will work to raise awareness of the MARAC process and agencies' ability to identify abuse and make appropriate referrals to MARAC.

Screening for domestic abuse and the process of referring high risk cases to Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and police will form part of domestic abuse training for all agencies delivered by Halton Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Partnership Board and Halton Safeguarding Adults Board.

#### 4.1.1 Referring High Risk Cases to Other Appropriate Professionals

Officers submit all Vulnerable Persons Assessments (VPA's) through the centralised Vulnerability Hub. The Officer who attends gives the VPA a grading of either High, Medium or Standard priority. In addition, there is a DASH grading of High, Medium or Standard for all domestic abuse cases. The Vulnerability Hub use these gradings to prioritise the processing of VPA's. Staff are also acutely aware of the age of VPA's i.e. those over 24 hours old.

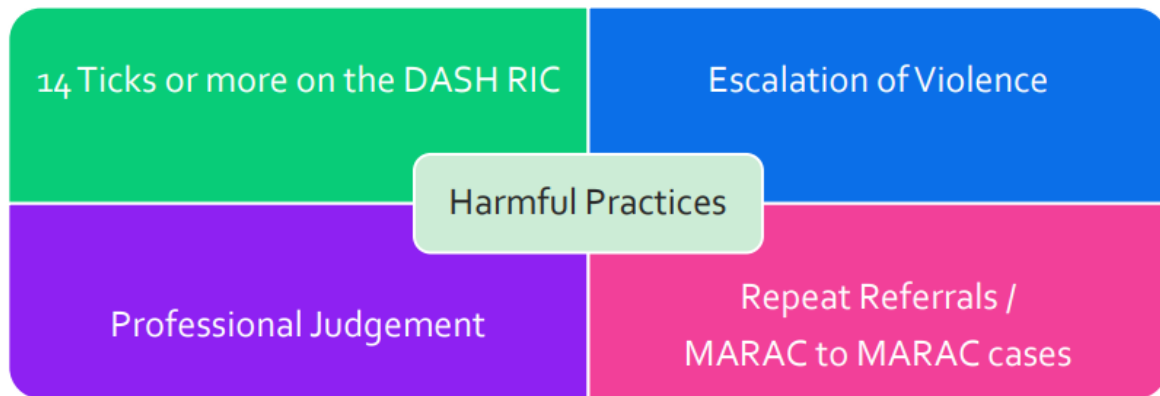
When processing domestic VPA's, the Vulnerability Hub prioritises high graded DASH VPA's, followed by high priority cases. They then conduct a secondary risk assessment, making reference to the DASH, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) risk indicators and 8 stages of Domestic Homicide, in order to give a final grading.

All cases are referred at the point of processing to agencies who can provide a service or safeguarding i.e. IDVA's.



All high DASH and all VPA's graded as High following secondary risk assessment are sent through to MARAC.

## 4.2 Risk Assess – Criteria for MARAC

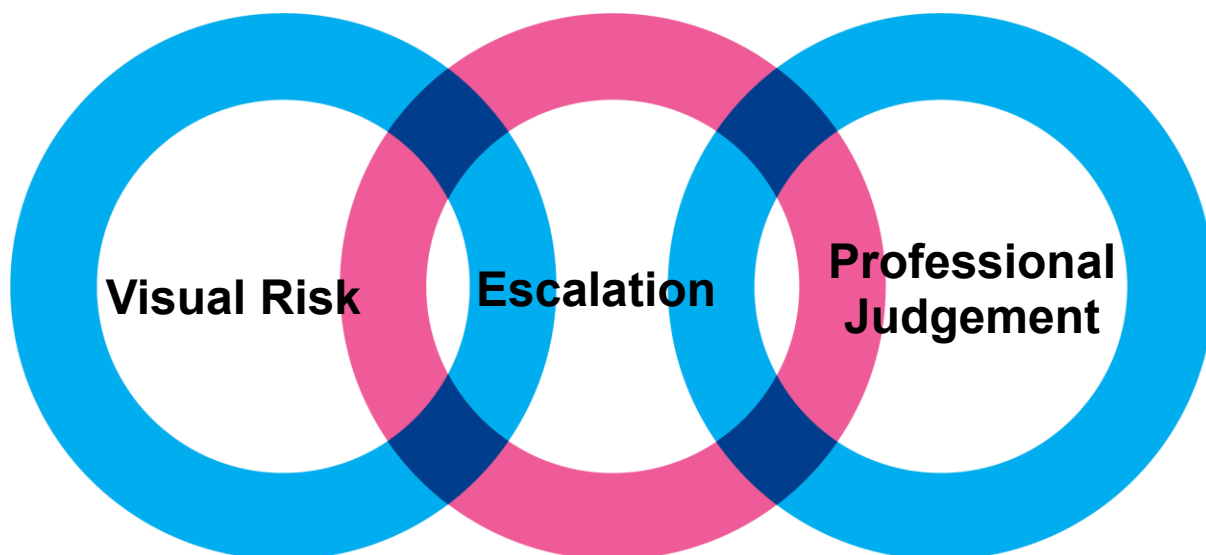


Referring agencies will complete the **Halton Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour Based Violence (DASH) Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC) at the earliest possible opportunity**. A completed RIC must accompany all referrals to the MARAC, to evidence that risk has been assessed and at least one of the criteria for a MARAC referral has been met:

**Visible High Risk:** If there are 14 or more “yes” responses to the questions on the DASH Form (excluding Q10,11,12) a referral to MARAC should be made.

**Potential Escalation:** When there have been three or more police callouts to the victim as a result of domestic abuse in the past 12 months. This can be used to identify cases where visible high risk may not be apparent but where abuse appears to be escalating and where it is appropriate to assess the situation more fully by sharing information at MARAC. Agencies can contact the Police Vulnerability Hub Detective Sergeant for advice.

**Professional Judgement:** If a professional has serious concerns about a victim’s safety, 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 the case of so-called “honour-based violence”. This judgement would be based on the professional’s experience and/or the victim’s perception of their risk of significant harm or risk of homicide. The Halton DASH Form should be used to structure and guide the professional judgement of risk of significant harm.



#### 4.2.1 Repeat MARAC Cases

A MARAC case is defined as a repeat MARAC case as any instance of abuse between the same victim and perpetrator(s), within 12 months of the last referral to MARAC. The individual act of abuse does not need to be “criminal”, violent or threatening but should be viewed within the context of a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Some events that might be considered a “repeat” incident may include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Unwanted direct or indirect contact from the perpetrator and/or their friends or family
- ❖ A breach of police or court bail conditions
- ❖ A breach of any civil order between the victim and perpetrator
- ❖ Any dispute between the victim and perpetrator(s) including over child contact, property, divorce/separation proceedings etc.

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

The MARAC Support Officer advises partner agencies on whether cases meet the criteria for repeat MARAC or not. If there is a repeat incident, it should be referred

back to the MARAC so that the MARAC can respond to further incidents effectively through the adjustment of the multi-agency action plan. In the interests of effective information sharing, MARAC attendees should only share additional relevant information from the date of the last MARAC.

Repeat cases are often complex involving:

- ❖ Substance misuse
- ❖ Mental health issues
- ❖ Non-Engagement
- ❖ Serial perpetrators

Action plans must:

- ❖ Address the needs of the individuals including their access to substance misuse, mental health and health services and housing
- ❖ Show creativity in attempts made by all agencies to engage the victim and the perpetrator into appropriate support/services
- ❖ Address the behaviour of the perpetrator through management, disruption, diversion or prosecution
- ❖ Consider whether a professionals meeting would be helpful

### 4.3 Referral Process

Any agency/professional can make a referral where the MARAC criteria are met.

They can refer the case via the Police Vulnerability Hub:

[Vulnerability.Hub@cheshire.police.uk](mailto:Vulnerability.Hub@cheshire.police.uk)

Referring agencies must send information securely and will need to identify the reason(s) for the referral to demonstrate how the case meets the criteria/threshold for referral.

Agencies will be required to refer high risk cases to the MARAC promptly via the Vulnerability Hub. The Vulnerability Hub will notify the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service so contact can be made with the victim prior to the MARAC meeting and allow the victims views to be represented. Referring agencies are encouraged to inform the victim that a referral to MARAC is being made and seek consent, where it is safe and appropriate to do so. A MARAC referral must continue with or without consent of the victim.

Referring agencies will need to complete the following documents:

- ❖ **DASH Form – see Appendix 4**
- ❖ **MARAC Referral Form – see Appendix 5**

All referrals need to be made by the agreed deadline to allow for the case list/agenda to be distributed to representatives in sufficient time to carry out the necessary checks. The deadline is 11 days prior to the MARAC meeting.

The Vulnerability Hub both monitors and quality assures referrals upon receipt to ensure all documentation is present and correct. Where there is missing information or incorrect forms submitted the agency will be asked to resubmit the referral.

The MARAC referral must include the names, dates of birth and addresses of the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and all associated children/any other adult at risk. There is also space for additional comments. It is important to establish whether the victim consents to have their information discussed or where consent has been withheld, if possible please explain the reasons why. If consent has not been gained the **'Information Sharing without Consent Form (Appendix 7)** should be completed and retained by the referring agency to evidence the legal grounds for disclosure without consent. For further guidance please refer to the **MARAC Information Sharing Protocol Checklist (Appendix 11)** and own agency information governance arrangements.

#### **4.3.1 Emergency or Late MARAC Cases**

Emergency or late MARAC cases can be requested by any agency via the Vulnerability Hub.

Emergency/late referrals will be considered and assessed by the MARAC Chair. The reason for the later referral must be explicitly stated on the referral form and the reasons why should be heard at the next MARAC.

Only those cases where the risk is considered exceptional will be listed at late notice. All agencies who attend MARAC should attend an emergency MARAC.

#### **4.4 Research**

The MARAC Support Officer will check MARAC records to identify whether the case has been referred to MARAC within the last 12 months to establish whether it meets the definition of a repeat (please see section 4.2.1). If the case has been heard at MARAC within the last 12 months the MARAC Support Officer will indicate this on the MARAC list. The MARAC Support Officer will provide the MARAC Chair with the original MARAC minutes.

##### **4.4.1 Flagging MARAC Cases**

All cases reviewed at a MARAC should be flagged by agencies on their own records and should remain there for a total of 12 months after the most recent MARAC review.

If a new incident has occurred on an active (flagged) MARAC case, agencies should make a repeat referral to MARAC for that case.

#### 4.4.2 Researching Cases

Agencies will need to research the information that is held on each of the cases on the MARAC list. There is a research form available to use to share relevant information held in relation to the victim, the perpetrator and the children.

Agencies must check all details given on the MARAC list including the victim, perpetrator(s) and all children for any relevant information they may hold. **It is of vital importance and in the interests of protecting the public from significant harm and effective information sharing that should any agency identify any additional victims/perpetrators/children, it is brought to the immediate attention of MARAC Mailbox ([halton.marac@cheshire.police.uk](mailto:halton.marac@cheshire.police.uk)).** The MARAC Support Officer will then disseminate this additional information to partners immediately in preparation for MARAC.

Key partner representatives will be expected to personally attend the MARAC to provide their expertise and present their research, regardless of whether they are currently involved with an individual victim.

Agencies that advise of non-attendance will provide a report or research form prior to the MARAC meeting that can be shared/read out at the meeting. This is to ensure an effective and complete action plan is developed for the safety of the victim.

#### 4.4.3 Actions prior to the MARAC

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Police will ensure critical markers are placed on the victims address and all relevant phone numbers (landline and mobile) and will consider making additional steps in line with their own procedures

Halton Children's Social Care will be notified by the police of every incident of domestic abuse where there is a child/children under the age of 18 years resident in the household or present during the incident

Halton Adult Social Care will be notified by the police of every incident of domestic abuse where there is an adult at risk and in need of care and support (within the definition of the Care Act 2014) resident in the household or present during the incident

Halton Health Agencies will be notified by the police of every incident of domestic abuse where there is a child/children under the age of 5 years resident in the household

Halton Health Agencies will be notified by the police of every incident of domestic abuse where the victim is or is believed to be pregnant

**Any concern by any professional regarding significant harm involving a child should not wait until discussion at a MARAC meeting and contact should be made with Children's Social Care on 0151 907 8305 (out of hours call the Emergency Duty Team on 0345 050 0148)**

**Any concern by any professional regarding significant harm involving an adult in need of care and support who is unable to protect themselves should not wait until discussion at a MARAC meeting and contact should be made with Adult Social Care on 0151 907 8306 (out of hours call the Emergency Duty Team on 0345 050 0148)**

**The MARAC does not take away responsibility for immediate actions from agencies in relation to the safety of high risk victims**

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#### **4.4.4 Victim contact Pre-MARAC**

Referring agencies are encouraged to inform the victim that a referral to MARAC is being made and seek consent, where it is safe and appropriate to do so. A MARAC referral must continue with or without consent of the victim.

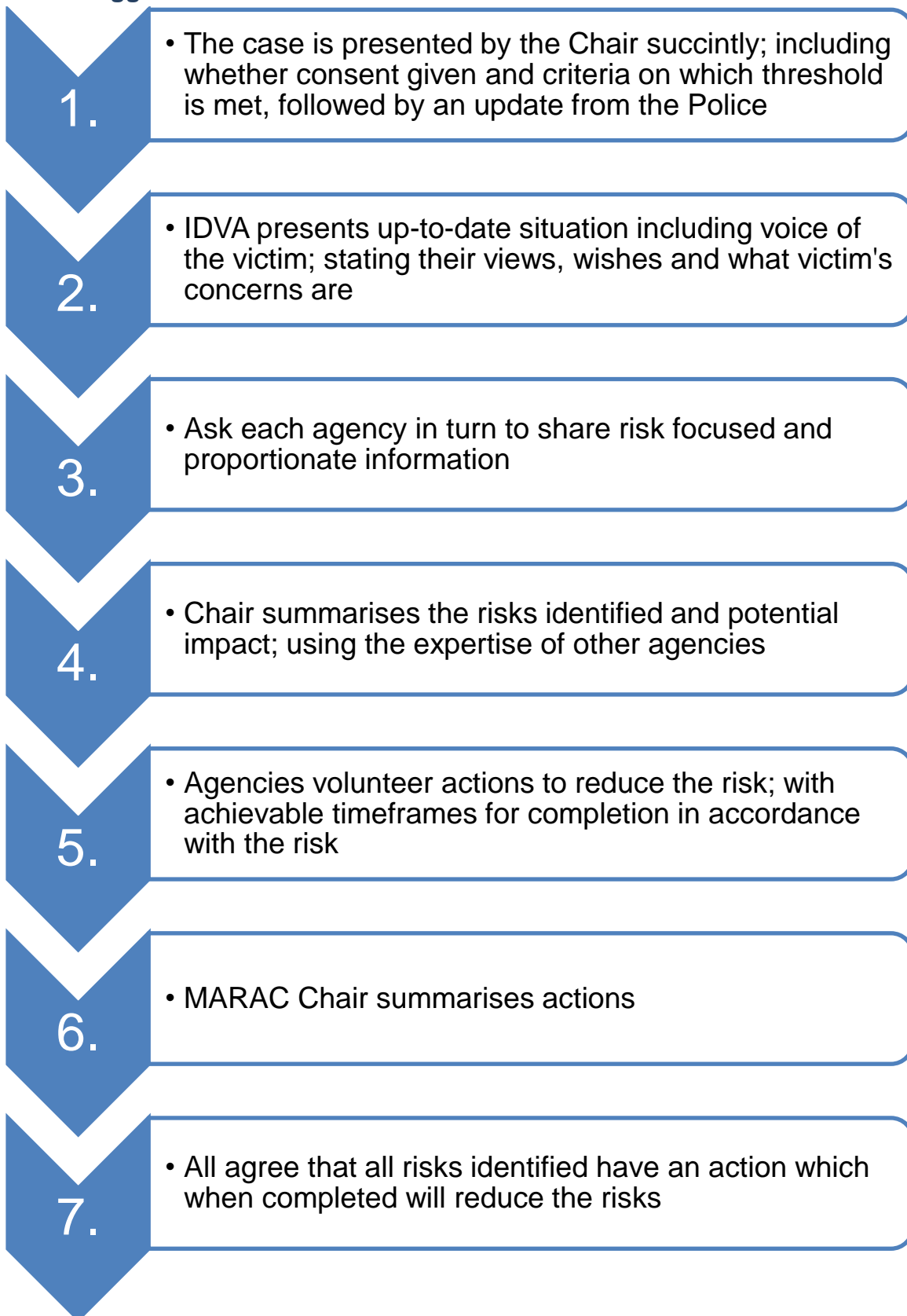
The IDVA service will contact the victim at the earliest opportunity prior to the MARAC, in order to ensure they are receiving appropriate support, review the DASH, address immediate safety issues, identify the victim's key concerns and views on what would make them safer and answer any questions victims may have about the MARAC process. The IDVA or lead professional will inform the victim verbally that their case will be heard at MARAC. The IDVA will be invited to attend to represent any views the victim has and will provide the 'voice of the victim', as well as ensuring that the victim is informed of the outcome of the MARAC. The role of the IDVA is to ensure that victim safety and that any children is maximised and that this remains central to the MARAC process.

In the event an IDVA is unable to contact a victim, attempts should be made in partnership with agencies who are currently involved with the victim. If the IDVA is unable to make contact with the victim, this fact is relayed to the referrer in order that they can take any protective or investigative measures necessary.

If it is considered that informing or contacting the victim prior to the MARAC meeting would increase risk or compromise the safety of the victim and any children, then this should be set out clearly within the referral form.

## 4.5 MARAC Meetings and Information Sharing

### 4.5.1 Suggested Case Structure



#### 4.5.2 Information Shared at the MARAC

The MARAC Information Sharing Protocol is the framework used for sharing information within MARAC meetings. All MARAC representatives must have signed the MARAC Information Sharing Protocol and any new agencies in attendance also need to sign it. Requests for this need to be made via the MARAC Support Officer. The protocol will be annually reviewed.

A Confidentiality Statement (Appendix 6) is agreed by all agencies in attendance at the start of the MARAC meetings. Information shared during the MARAC meeting should not be disseminated outside the meeting without the consent of the Chair.

Only information directly relevant to the safety of the victim and associated others should be shared at the MARAC. Agencies should ensure that personal data is clearly marked and kept securely in accordance with the MARAC Information Sharing Protocol (see Appendix 11).

The MARAC Mailbox is the single point of contact for the information to be collected.

#### 4.5.3 Person in a Position of Trust (PIPOT MARAC)

A PIPOT MARAC is when the discussed case(s) are ones that need additional sensitivity around case discussion. This could involve either the victim or perpetrator being: professionals working within the safeguarding sector within Halton, those who work with vulnerable adults or children or relevant professionals (police, social worker, elected member, judge etc.).

PIPOT MARACs will have limited representation. Dependent on the case discussed, it could be as limited as the IDVA Service Manager and the MARAC Chair. Where the case involves children, the Head of Children's Services will also be present. The minutes will only be circulated to attendees and any agencies/representatives not present will not have access to recording and actions.

#### 4.6 Action Planning

At the MARAC meeting a joint multi-agency action plan will be developed by agencies to reduce the risk of significant harm to the victim, children, other vulnerable parties and any professionals.

Actions will be tasked at the MARAC and reflect the risk as a result of the information shared. Actions will be listed within the minutes for each case.

A separate summary of actions will be produced and circulated to attendees by the MARAC Support Officer at least 7 days prior to the following MARAC.

The action plan will:

- ❖ Summarise key risks



- ❖ Detail the action agency (with named staff) and timescale for completion

There are two standard actions for all cases:

- ❖ All agencies, where possible, to flag and tag all victims, perpetrators and children discussed as a MARAC case on their internal recording systems (to remain flagged as a MARAC case for a total of 12 months after the most recent MARAC review)
- ❖ A lead agency, usually IDVA, will be identified to inform the victim (where safe to do so) of the actions

## 4.7 Follow Up

### 4.7.1 Follow Up Actions

Actions are the responsibility of the named agency and they should update the MARAC Mailbox in writing when the actions are completed.

At the following MARAC any outstanding actions shall be noted and agencies asked to provide a verbal update as to the status of this action/reason for non-completion. Further non-compliance will be escalated by the MARAC Chair to the line manager of the responsible MARAC representative.

Agencies who fail to complete actions or update the MARAC Mailbox within timescale on three occasions within a 12 month period, will be subject to escalation.

### 4.7.2 MARAC Plus

Where there is a failure to engage a victim following 4 MARAC meetings held during the previous 12 months (and all attempts to secure engagement have been exhausted) a final MARAC Plus discussion will be held with invited representatives. This should take place within 7-14 working days from the previous MARAC. However, there may be times whereby a case is such, that is cannot be effectively discussed within the 12-15 minute timeframe suggested by SafeLives and may require a longer discussion.

## 5.0 MARAC to MARAC Referral Procedure

The MARAC to MARAC process sets out the procedure for a consistent and safe approach to the transfer of cases between MARACs. A referral between MARACs is appropriate when a victim's relocation is a permanent or long-term move. The aim is to promote the safety of high-risk victims, regardless of where they live and to ensure that all agencies at MARAC are clear about their roles and responsibilities at each stage of the transfer process. The procedure has a number of key points:

**That where a victim moves between areas, a MARAC to MARAC referral should always be made**

**That the procedure should promote a consistent, victim focused response to the transfer of cases across MARAC areas**

**That a referral to a new MARAC should not be contingent on that victim meeting the local MARAC threshold in the area to which they are referred; and**

**That the originating and receiving MARAC should have clear responsibilities at both the point of referral and in the 12 months since last referral (i.e. 'flagging and tagging' for further incidents**

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

### 5.1 Referrals to Other MARACs

All agencies are responsible for informing the MARAC Chair via the MARAC Support Officer if they identify that a case reviewed at MARAC within the last 12 months is leaving the MARAC area and where they have moved to. This information will be shared via the MARAC list so all other agencies are able to update their records.

Where a MARAC victim has moved out of Halton, the MARAC Coordinator will advise the receiving MARAC Support Officer, in the new area, at the earliest opportunity.

The information (if known) that will be shared with another MARAC will include:

- ❖ MARAC minutes and actions relating to that case
- ❖ The original referral form
- ❖ A completed MARAC referral form and any other documentation that is relevant to the new MARAC

The minutes of a MARAC meeting will normally address risks to the victim in the original area and/or it may have been some time since the victim was discussed. The MARAC referral form should therefore address and provide any new information from MARAC agencies on the risks to and needs of the victim (for example, becoming aware that a victim was moving area) and any additional information or intelligence that agencies have with regards to risks to the victim and their children in the new area.

MARAC is not a legal entity in its own right and therefore the information shared at MARAC belongs to each agency individually. **Agencies must fulfil any responsibility to liaise with counterparts in the relevant area.**

If it is identified **at the MARAC meeting** that information will need to be shared, this could mean that agencies agree during the meeting that the minutes relating to that case, in addition to any other information, could be shared.

If it is identified **following the MARAC meeting** that information will need to be shared, the MARAC Chair will make the decision on the appropriate process for agreeing what information to share. This may involve contacting the relevant agency representatives and asking for their consent to share information.

## 5.2 Referrals from other MARACs

For a MARAC case being referred from another MARAC outside Halton, the point of contact will be the Vulnerability Hub and copy in MARAC Mailbox. The following information will be requested by the MARAC Support Officer from the relevant MARAC area:

- ❖ MARAC minutes relating to that case
- ❖ The original referral form
- ❖ A completed MARAC referral form
- ❖ Any other documentation that is relevant to the new MARAC

The MARAC Coordinator will acknowledge the referral with the referring MARAC and will place the case on the next MARAC list for discussion and for an action plan to be developed.

The MARAC Support Officer will refer the case to the IDVA service at the point of referral to contact the victim to ensure they are receiving appropriate support, to represent their views and to carry out a SafeLives DASH Risk Assessment.

## 6.0 Membership and Role of Representatives

### 6.1 Chair

The Detective Inspector (DI) of Protecting Vulnerable People Directorate will generally chair the meetings. Should the Chair be unable to attend, there is a pool of MARAC trained Chairs, one of whom can cover if and when needed.

The MARAC Chair's responsibilities are to:

**Ensure that the MARAC meetings are professional, appropriate, confidential and structured**

**Prioritise cases to ensure the best use of the time of attending agencies is achieved**

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**Introduce the Confidentiality Declaration to attendees confirming that all have signed in and read it before attending as sent by email prior to the meeting**

**Lead members through the agenda**

**Run through any outstanding actions from the previous MARAC**

**Ensure that the referring agency presents risk issues and background on cases in a proportionate, risk-focused and succinct manner, using the Signs of Safety principles via the Aide Memoir**

**Encourage participation from all agencies, via the Aide Memoir**

**Balance and facilitate the flow of information around the victim, children and perpetrator**

**Ensure that all key risks, complicating factors and work already undertaken are identified**

**Encourage agencies to proactively offer relevant and SMART actions**

**Aim to link actions to the current identified risks and who is at risk**

**Name the risks that cannot be managed and what the barriers  
Consider the risks to all relevant parties including staff**

**Help the MARAC to improve effectiveness by developing joint actions**

**Supporting the role of the IDVA**

**Challenging effectively and respectfully**

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## **6.2 Agencies**

All partner agencies must send a representative to each MARAC, or a nominated deputy representative in the event they cannot attend. Representatives and their nominated deputies need to be of an appropriate level of seniority to commit to actions of behalf of their agency.

It is recognised that agency representatives will change from time to time. Where a new MARAC representative is identified by one of the partner agencies, the following is recommended:

**A handover from the outgoing representative, particularly highlighting any outstanding or ongoing actions for that agency. Where practicable the incoming representative should shadow the outgoing representative at a MARAC**

**The incoming representative should familiarise themselves with this protocol and its appendices**

**The incoming representative should have an awareness of domestic violence**

**The MARAC Support Officer will offer a one-to-one meeting with the new representative to resolve any queries and will email the representative all relevant MARAC documentation including a list of representatives and their contact details**

**The incoming representative should explore SafeLives website and read further background materials (e.g. The SafeLives Representatives Toolkit) as required**

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SafeLives recommend that we need the following agencies represented and attending each MARAC:

- ❖ Police
- ❖ IDVA
- ❖ Probation
- ❖ Children's Services
- ❖ Mental Health
- ❖ Primary Health
- ❖ Substance Misuse Services
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Adult Safeguarding

Also valuable agencies include:

- ❖ Education
- ❖ Specialist Domestic Abuse/Minority Support Services
- ❖ Secondary Health (such as Health Visitors and Midwifery)

Halton MARAC has representation from the following agencies:

- ❖ Police
- ❖ IDVA
- ❖ Adult Social Care
- ❖ Children's Social Care
- ❖ iCART
- ❖ Primary Health
- ❖ Change Grow Live
- ❖ Probation
- ❖ Halton Housing

- ❖ Onward Housing
- ❖ Mental Health
- ❖ Whiston Hospital (email updates)
- ❖ Warrington and Halton Hospitals (email updates)
- ❖ Youth Justice Service (email updates)
- ❖ RASASC (email updates)
- ❖ Fire Service (email updates)
- ❖ Riverside Housing (email updates)

All partner agencies will be signatories of this protocol and key agencies must send a representative or, when this representative is unable to attend, a nominated deputy representative to each MARAC. Representatives and their nominated deputies need to be of an appropriate level of seniority to commit to actions on behalf of their agency.

Please refer to Appendix 12 for type of information brought to MARAC by different agencies and Appendix \* for list of strategic and operational leads for each agency

The MARAC representative is the key link between the MARAC and their service and acts as a single point of contact (SPOC) for relevant advice to that service about the MARAC. This person must be able to bring research, offer action(s) on behalf of their agency and where appropriate make decisions at the meeting.

The MARAC representative is responsible for:

- ❖ Agreeing the internal process for their agency's involvement with MARAC
- ❖ Ensuring their staff are familiar and compliant with agreed MARAC processes
- ❖ Scrutinising cases from their sector before referral to MARAC
- ❖ Ensuring practitioners have access to the information and outcomes of both the decision making and full MARAC meetings so as to inform their ongoing work with families
- ❖ Raising agency concerns with the MARAC Steering Group or responding to concerns of others
- ❖ Promoting appropriate referrals to MARAC within their sector

Attendance will be recorded on the MARAC minutes, as will apologies. Frequency and consistency of attendance will be monitored to ensure representation is effective.

Partner attendance and participation in the MARAC will be subject to ongoing review by the Halton MARAC Steering Group.

Any changes to the Information Sharing Agreement or information governance arrangements will be in conjunction with the appropriate organisation's Information Governance Team.

### 6.3 Other Representatives

Other agencies will be invited on a case-by-case basis, as appropriate, where a referral has been made by that agency or because additional professional support or specialist advice is required. Agencies should send a representative or report if the representative is unable to attend. They will be required to sign a Confidentiality Declaration at the beginning of the MARAC meeting.

### 6.4 Observing MARAC Meetings

Individuals who are permitted to observe a MARAC are as follows:

- ❖ A practitioner who is to become a MARAC representative or Chair
- ❖ Their Line Manager who has responsibility for safeguarding the practitioners against vicarious trauma while attending MARAC and managing their role as representative or Chair
- ❖ Or the Senior Manager of their organisation who has responsibility for safeguarding and/or domestic abuse in their organisation. This individual will need to have first-hand experience of the MARAC to then understand the processes and the extent to what their organisation has signed up to both operationally and strategically

To arrange an observation the individual needs to email the MARAC Mailbox giving information as to why they want to observe a MARAC. If agreed they will then be given a date to observe, with instructions on observing in a GDPR and Information Governance manner. There may be the rare occasion when individuals require to observe for other reasons; however, these occasions will always be on a case by case basis and will always have to be made via the same email address. The decision as to whether they can observe or not will be made by the Chair and will always comply with GDPR and Information Governance as to why they are observing or not. Anyone observing should be sponsored or attending with another agency representative to 'sponsor' them accordingly.

## 6.5 The Need for a Multi-Agency Approach

No one partner holds all the information required to effectively assess the needs of victims and their children, or to fully assess the risk of serious harm or murder to victims. In the majority of cases, the support of more than one agency is required to ensure the long term safety of the victim and their children. Clear information sharing creates a supportive structure to ensure improved outcomes across services.

## 7.0 Governance and Performance Management

The MARAC Steering Group governs the performance and effectiveness of the MARAC and reports to Halton Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Partnership Board. The Steering Group membership is drawn from but not limited to senior staff in agencies who are represented at MARAC.

The MARAC Steering Group maintains a strategic overview of the operation of MARACs and ensures their effectiveness by:

**Ensuring the MARAC Operating Protocol and Information Sharing Protocol is fit for purpose in line with legal responsibilities and updated with changes to legislation and national guidance**

**Conducting regular quality assurance audits**

**Addressing policy and practice issues**

**Assessing the overall performance of the MARAC in line with the 10 principles of a effective MARAC**

**Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the MARAC Review Action Plan**

**Identifying unmet training needs and solutions in relation to MARACs**

**Ensuring local, regional and national performance data is monitored and evaluated and progress is reported to all relevant bodies**

The MARAC Steering Group meets quarterly.

## 8.0 Administration and Coordination

### 8.1 Meeting Frequency

There are two MARACs held in Halton on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month.



## 8.2 MARAC List/Agenda

The MARAC Mailbox will circulate the list of the cases to MARAC representatives 7 calendar days prior to the MARAC meeting date, to allow all agencies time to research any information available on the victim, perpetrator(s) and any children involved.

## 8.3 Minutes and Administration

The MARAC Support Officer will take notes and record actions to then produce an accurate record of the MARAC meetings. The minutes will detail the information shared on each case and will clearly distinguish between fact and opinion. The minutes will be circulated within 5 working days of the meeting and will include the actions list. The minutes contain sensitive information and are not to be shared outside of the MARAC meeting and MARAC representatives as stated.

## 8.4 Meeting Dates

Meeting dates are set 12 months in advance to facilitate full attendance by partner agencies. Meetings are held on the second and fourth Wednesday of every month.

## 9.0 Equality and Diversity

The MARAC proactively works to include all sections of the community and liaises with specialist domestic abuse support services that represent key minority groups.

Data will be collected by the Vulnerability Hub on the profile of the local population referred to MARAC in order to monitor equality of outcome to all.

This data will be reported quarterly to the MARAC Steering Group and Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Partnership Board which will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing this data and, where actions are required, will either agree ad-hoc activity to be undertaken or ensure that these are included in the relevant partnership Action Plan.

Equality will also be considered annually in relation to the MARAC, as part of the wider Strategic Needs Assessment relating to domestic abuse to identify the needs of the local population (including age, disability, race, belief, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity).

Where appropriate, the MARAC Chair will identify which specialist agencies or representatives will participate in the MARAC, including engaging them for any cases identified as requiring specialist support.

## 9.1 Specialist Services Involvement

For victims with protected characteristics, a referral will be made to specialist support services on a case by case basis to provide expertise and assist with actions. For victims whose first language is not English, the IDVA will consider a referral to

access translation services as appropriate. Specialist agencies will be invited to attend MARAC as/when required, for example, an organisation specialising in honour-based violence may be invited if this is relevant to a case(s) being discussed.

## 9.2 Equality Monitoring

The MARAC Coordinator collects data on the protected characteristics of those discussed at MARAC, which will be shared with the Steering Group.

The Equality Impact Needs Assessment includes an equality analysis for cases reviewed in MARAC, to help identify the needs of the local population.

## 10.0 Data Evaluation

MARAC data is collected by Cheshire Constabulary, the MARAC team and the MARAC Support Officer and is shared with the Steering Group, SafeLives and the Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Partnership Board quarterly. The Steering Group is the lead agency who takes responsibility for reviewing the MARAC data. The data is collated using the SafeLives MARAC Data Form (for guidance please see [Guidelines-for-Marac-data-collection.pdf \(safelives.org.uk\)](https://safelives.org.uk/Guidelines-for-Marac-data-collection.pdf)).

## 11.0 MARAC Complaints and Breaches

### 11.1 MARAC Complaints

If the complaint is about a specific agency, the complaint should follow that agency's complaints procedure.

If the complaint is about the MARAC, the complaint should be directed to the MARAC Chair. On the Chair's response, if the person who submitted the complaint feels that it is still unresolved, they should direct it to the MARAC Steering Group Chair for consideration. If again the complaint needs further consideration, the next course of action would be to submit it to the Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Partnership Board Chair.

### 11.2 MARAC Breaches

Signatories agree that any breach of confidentiality and of the MARAC Operating Protocol will seriously increase the risk to a high-risk victim, affect the credibility of the MARAC and partnership objectives. All agencies undertake at all times to comply with the law on data protection and other legal requirements relating to confidentiality.

All agencies must report any breaches of this protocol to the Chair of Halton MARAC Steering Group. This group will identify appropriate remedial action to maintain effective identification and multi-agency management of domestic abuse cases where there is an identified high risk of serious harm. Suspected information breaches will be reported via the ongoing organisations standard breach reporting process. Where the incident impacts the other agencies, they will be informed.

## 12.0 MARAC Operating Protocol Review

The MARAC Operating Protocol will be reviewed by the MARAC Steering Group at least annually and in the event of any change of legislation. The MARAC Steering Group will review compliance with the Protocol at each meeting and address any issues relating to its use.

Please note that more information and guidance on MARAC is given on the SafeLives website: [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk)












## 13.0 Signatories



The signatories in the Appendix 3 agree as partner agencies of the MARAC to subscribe to procedures in the MARAC Operating Protocol.

## 14.0 Withdrawal

Any partner may withdraw from this Protocol upon giving written notice of their intention to withdraw to the other signatories. Their actual withdrawal will take place at the following review date. Data which is no longer relevant should be destroyed or returned. The partner must continue to comply with the terms of this protocol in respect of any data that the partner has obtained through being a signatory.

## Appendices

Appendix Number	Title	Document
1	MARAC criteria: Quick Reference Guide	 Appendix 1 - MARAC Criteria Quic
2	MARAC Referral Process: Quick Reference Guide	 Appendix 2 -MARAC Referral Prc
3	Halton MARAC Operating Protocol Signatories	 Appendix 3 - Halton MARAC Ope
4	DASH form	 Appendix 4 - DASH form.doc
5	MARAC Referral Form	 Appendix 5 - MARAC Referral For
6	Confidentiality Statement	 Appendix 6 MARAC Confidentiality Declar:
7	Information Sharing without Consent form	 Appendix 7 - Information sharing
8	Halton IDVA Service referral form	 Appendix 8 - Referral form IDVA Team.docx
9	Principles of an effective MARAC	 Appendix 9 - Principles of an effect
10	Representatives Toolkit	 Appendix 11 - Representatives Toc
11	MARAC Information Sharing Protocol Checklist	<a href="#">Marac information sharing protocol checklist - SafeLives</a>
12	Information provided by different agencies to MARAC	 Appendix 12 Information provided

13	Useful Resources	 Appendix 13 - Useful Resources.docx
14	Glossary	 Appendix 14 - Glossary.docx