

# Domestic Abuse

## 5 steps to Effective Safeguarding in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

*This guidance is designed to help practitioners who have assessed their client as high risk on the domestic abuse risk assessment tool (known as DASH).*

**There is significant overlap between direct harm to children and domestic abuse.** The MARAC process aims to safeguard the victim and all children who [may] remain at risk from the perpetrator.

This guidance offers tips when working with cases involving children and is further expanded in the Somerset MARAC Operating Protocol available to download from the Somerset Survivors website ([www.somersetsurvivors.org.uk](http://www.somersetsurvivors.org.uk))

### Before the MARAC

All professionals who come into contact with children and families, including those working with adults in a family, should be alert to their needs and the risks that individuals may pose. It is recommended that all MARAC representatives have working knowledge of the guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2015).

### Step 1: Get the right people around the table

Dates for MARAC are pre-scheduled and you must ensure you brief your MARAC representative about the case. Attend the meeting yourself if you are able. Potential MARAC partner agencies include:

- |                        |                            |                        |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| ⇒ Children Social Care | ⇒ School nurse             | ⇒ Somerset partnership |
| ⇒ Adult Social Care    | ⇒ Health visitors-midwives | ⇒ Police               |
| ⇒ Education            | ⇒ Youth offending service  | ⇒ Housing              |

### Step 2: Do your research

MARAC representatives should bring information which identifies the impact the abuse is having on the children such as details of:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ⇒ Any current and historical child protection proceedings                      | ⇒ Early Help Assessments, children in need or child protection plans                                       |
| ⇒ Children known to have a connection with either or both parents              | ⇒ Agreements with parents regarding informal and formal contact arrangements                               |
| ⇒ Child protection conferences/strategy meetings, team/school around the child | ⇒ Outline of support in place for the non-abusive parent and work being undertaken with the abusive parent |

### Step 3: Identify all the risks affecting the family

Young people affected by domestic abuse within their family home may also be vulnerable to other forms of abuse within their own intimate relationships, through child sexual exploitation or abuse, or through involvement with gangs.

When a referral is made to MARAC and there are children and young people in the family, another referral should be made to children's social care.

### Step 4: Safety Plans include action to safeguard children

Children's Social Care should be leading on and volunteering actions that further safeguard the children. Where this is not happening, the chair should escalate appropriately through governance procedures, as set out in the operating protocol. Questions to consider include:

- ⇒ Is an initial assessment required?
- ⇒ Has entry been denied to a professional during a visit (planned or unannounced)?
- ⇒ Has any agency had meaningful engagement with the victim?
- ⇒ Have the children's views been expressed?
- ⇒ Is the corporate parent responsibility being fulfilled?
- ⇒ Are contact provisions safe and in the interests of the children?
- ⇒ Have cultural barriers or differences been identified?

### Step 5: Link with other safeguarding arrangements

The likelihood of multiple discussions about the same individual or family is high. Where relevant and proportionate, representatives should share action plans with other relevant multi-agency safeguarding forums/panels.

## Somerset Domestic Abuse Service

Email: [youfirstsidas@theyoutrust.org.uk](mailto:youfirstsidas@theyoutrust.org.uk)

For all other related information: [www.sometsurvivors.org.uk](http://www.somerset survivors.org.uk)