



**Safer Somerset
Partnership**
Feel Safe, Be Safe

Somerset Domestic Abuse Newsletter

MARAC Special Edition 1

October 2018



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Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Changes

Welcome To This Special Edition

As has been mentioned in previous newsletters, planning has been taking place for approximately 2 years to take account of an ending in March 2019 of national funding for co-ordination of MARAC.

What this means is that for Somerset the MARAC Co-ordinator role that has been sited in the Police for many years will end in March. But the importance of MARAC to specifically focus on the safeguarding of domestic abuse victim (survivors) and their dependents is crucial. So multi-agency conversations within the remit of the Safer Somerset Partnership (Community Safety Partnership) and in conjunction with safeguarding adult and children’s has led to an alternative way of working to be agreed.

Remember that if you recognise that someone maybe experiencing domestic abuse that you should always complete a DASH. In tandem with the changes to MARAC the Safer Somerset Partnership has also decided that all agencies should change the risk assessment tool and start using the ACPO DASH.

Find information on the MARAC process **and** ACPO DASH and what this means to you in this special edition newsletter.

Key Changes to MARAC in Somerset

- All agencies will adopt the use of the ACPO DASH (as opposed to the Safe Lives DASH) to improve consistency of information across partner agencies.
- SIDAS will be empowered to make decisions along with the MARAC Co-Ordinator on which high risk cases are appropriate to go to MARAC a MARAC face to face meeting based on new MARAC guidelines for Avon and Somerset (see page 6).
- If cases are difficult to assess, SIDAS will have a point of escalation within the Somerset Domestic Abuse Board membership (subgroup of the Safer Somerset Partnership)
- Cases that do not make the MARAC meeting agenda will continue to be progressed by the IDVA with safety planning as standard. The IDVA will have the freedom to determine which route is best for obtaining information and planning with the victim—(the victim will remain at High Risk irrespective if they meet the criteria for a MARAC meeting).
- With a reduced volume of cases, the number of MARACs in Somerset will reduce to three; (1) Sedgemoor with Taunton/West Somerset, (2) South Somerset and (3) Mendip.
- A log of key actions and attendance will be recorded however, as per the current MARAC requirements, all agencies will continue to take responsibility for recording and completing their own actions to ensure there is an audit trail within their own agency.

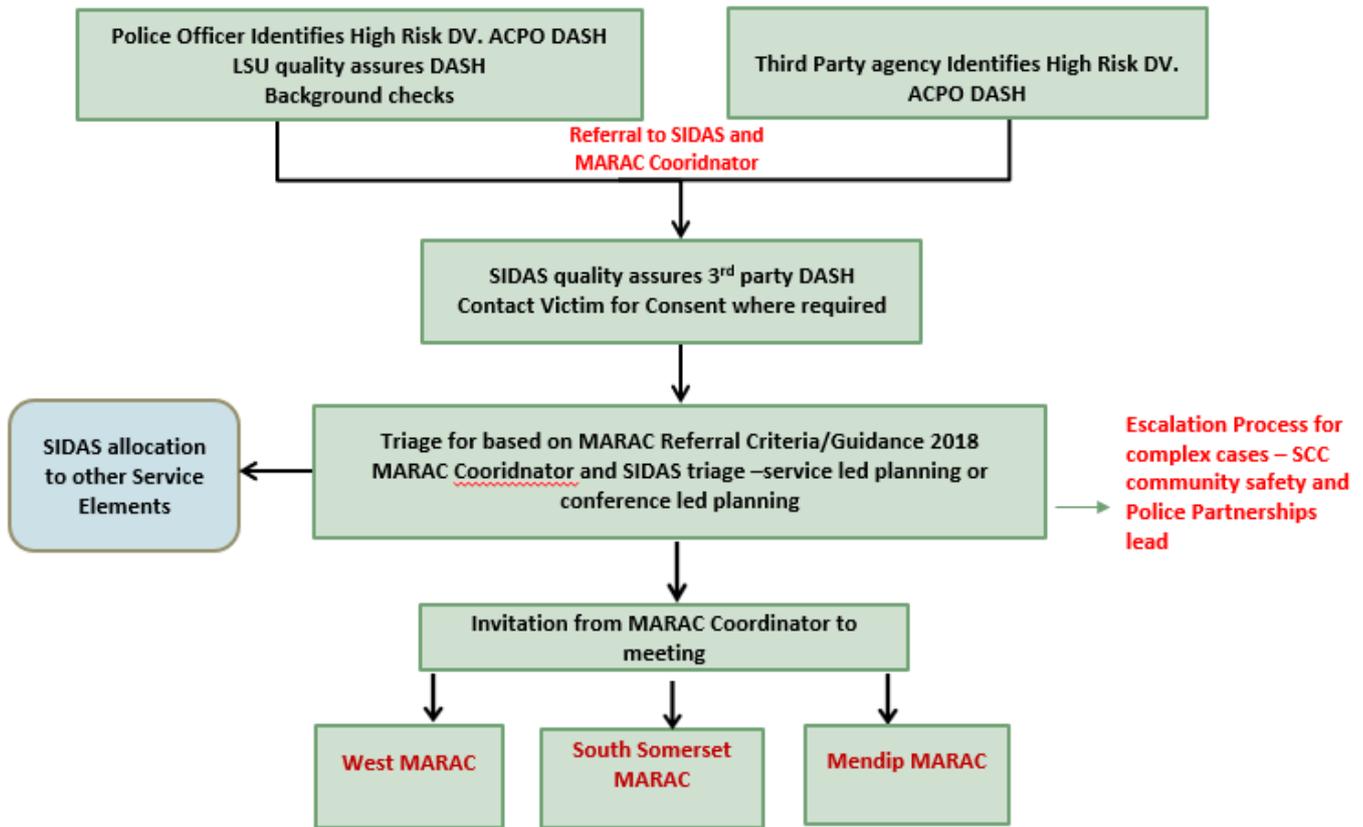
How Are These Changes Being Implemented?

- The changes are being implemented on a phased basis starting in November 2018.
- An implementation group has been set up by the Domestic Abuse Board. This comprises representatives from several Somerset agencies, including Police, SIDAS, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council.
- A project plan is in place, and a core part of the work of the group is to monitor closely how the changes to MARAC in order to mitigate any negative impacts.



New Somerset MARAC Process

This flowchart describes the new process for MARAC. Frequently asked questions can be found below.



Frequently Asked Questions

I work for the Police and have identified a victim of domestic abuse, what do I do?

The process for frontline Police has NOT changed. The Lighthouse-Safeguarding Unit continues in its role to safeguard victims, and they will handle referrals into the MARAC process.

I am a MARAC representative for my agency, what will this mean for me?

Please go to page 4 for more information.

I work for housing, social services, health or a voluntary sector agency and have identified someone as being at risk of domestic abuse, what do I do?

Complete the ACPO DASH and use the referral pathway as you always have—if you think someone is at high risk, then refer to your agency's/services MARAC Representative.

Where do I send my referrals to?

Please continue to send to southernmarac@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk and here.tohelp@knightstone.cjsm.net



MARAC Representatives

Recap of Role Of The MARAC Representative

- (1) Ensure there is a clear pathway within your own agency for handling identifications of domestic abuse and referring into MARAC if required. (Or to specialist service if appropriate and client consented).
- (2) When you have a client who meets the criteria for MARAC, refer into the process.
- (3) If you have identified the client as being a victim of domestic abuse, identify if your agency can take any direct steps to help him or her to be safer, and action these immediately.
- (4) If the client meets the criteria for MARAC—whether there is a professionals meeting or not, you must flag/tag your records to ensure they are identified as a “MARAC level client”. (This will help identify repeat victimisation).
- (5) Attend and participate at all MARAC meetings to agree a joint multi-agency safety plan for the victim and their dependents.
- (6) Record any actions that you (your agency) are allocated in the MARAC on your systems and action as soon as possible (or as agreed in the MARAC).
- (7) Support the IDVA in delivering actions for the client.

The expectations of role of the MARAC Representative will NOT change—only what you do with referrals.

What The MARAC Representative Should Do In The New Process

- Carry out the expectations of the role as outlined above.
- Update your agency’s domestic abuse procedures to ensure that risk assessments are completed using the ACPO DASH.
- If your agency attends the Taunton Deane/West Somerset and Sedgemoor MARACs, do you need to review your agency’s representation as they are now to be merged?

Look Out For The New Information Sharing Agreement and Operating Protocol

Both of these documents have been revised and updated to align to the new process and take account of recent changes in legislation (ie. Data protection and GDPR) .

All agencies need to read and sign up to these documents which will be circulated soon.



ACPO DASH

What Is The ACPO DASH?

The Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH 2009) Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model was implemented across all police services in the UK from March 2009, having been accredited by ACPO Council, now known as National Police Chief Council (NPCC).

This was pioneering and a significant step forward in keeping victims safe, turning a reactive 'it's just a domestic' into a proactive 'you must ask' questions approach. This also meant for the first time all police services and a large number of partner agencies across the UK started to use a common assessment to identify, assess and manage domestic abuse.

Why Is It Going To Be Used In Somerset?

The Police have used the ACPO DASH for many years, and it will mean all agencies are using the same tool.

How Is It Different To The Safe Lives DASH?

It has 3 additional questions relating to children, plus has in-depth tools to respond to stalking / harassment and honour based violence.

Does This Affect The Score?

The ACPO DASH has 27 questions, rather than the 24 questions of the Safe Lives. But the threshold for MARAC remains the same at 14 ticks (visible risk).

Can I Continue To Use Professional Judgement?

Yes, as a professional you may have a serious concern about a victim's situation. This could reflect extreme levels of fear, cultural barriers to disclosure, immigration issues or language barriers particularly in cases of 'honour'-based violence.

Evidence your judgement that an imminent serious event which is life-threatening and/or traumatic could happen at any time based on your professional experience and/or the victim's perception.

Do I Need To Take Any Immediate Action?

Please REMOVE any Safe Lives DASH RIC templates from your files, intranets and other storage. REPLACE with the ACPO DASH, which can be found online at <http://bit.ly/SomersetNewDash>

Please note that until December both DASH's will be accepted, but after this time, if an assessment is not on the ACPO DASH it may be returned to you.

Will There Be Any Training On The New DASH?

Yes, the ACPO DASH from now on will be included in all the Somerset County Council Domestic Abuse Training courses.

The MARAC Representative Training programme is also being re-established and a date will be available soon.



Avon and Somerset MARAC Threshold Guidance

For a referral to be accepted into the MARAC process one of the four criteria must be met and evidenced. Referrals not accepted into MARAC will be returned with a request that this guidance be revisited.

Your choice of criteria must reflect the risk of serious harm being inflicted in the immediate future. The MARAC process serves those at **high risk of murder, death or significant harm**, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.

Criteria to be evidenced on the referral form

DASH Risk Assessment

Dash score 14+

There are identifiable indicators on the DASH of a risk of serious harm being inflicted in the immediate future.

An imminent event which is life-threatening, traumatic or causing injuries and/or sexual harm, whether physical or psychological, is highly likely. The potential event could happen at any time and the impact would be serious.

14 or more ticks on a DASH form

Professional Judgement

Where DASH Score is below 14

As a professional you have a serious concern about a victim's situation. This could reflect extreme levels of fear, cultural barriers to disclosure, immigration issues or language barriers particularly in cases of 'honour'-based violence.

Evidence your judgement that an imminent serious event which is life-threatening and/or traumatic could happen at any time based on your professional experience and/or the victim's perception.

Line management sign off required (TBC)

Potential Escalation

Where DASH Score is below 14 but there is an increase in reported incidents.

Please evidence escalation of abuse or escalating controlling and coercive behaviour, over the past year. If this cannot be evidenced please refer to other criteria.

Abuse appears to be escalating as number of police callouts to the victim as a result of domestic violence in the past 12 months. It is common practice to start with 3 or more police callouts in a 12 month period

Repeat case to MARAC

Repeat incidents

Refer if you have become aware that a further incident of DA has been reported between a couple **previously discussed** at MARAC within the last 12 months.

Any of the following types of behaviour may have taken place:

- Violence or threats of violence to the victim
- A pattern of stalking or harassment
- Where rape, sexual assault or sexual abuse is disclosed

If none of the above criteria has been reached, please refer the person for support from a local specialist domestic violence agency



MARAC Cases Are Already Decreasing

The table below illustrates the volume of cases at MARAC meetings over the previous 3 quarters. As you can see there has been a reduction in cases since the improved focus on assessing referrals against the criteria (see page 6). (Please note Taunton Deane/West Somerset data is approximate).

Area	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane/ West Somerset	Total
Cases (to 31.3.18)	128	156	188	197	669
Cases (to 30.6.18)	124	154	175	158	611
Cases (to 30.9.18)	107	137	151	136	531

Dates of MARAC Meetings

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, the Taunton Deane/West Somerset and Sedgemoor MARAC meetings are combining **from November 2018**, and so new dates are now available for these.

Please find below the dates for upcoming MARACs until March 2019.

Where?	Meeting Date?	Referrals Before?
Taunton/WS/Sedgemoor	November 21 st 2018	November 12 th 2018
Taunton/WS/Sedgemoor	December 12 th 2018	December 3 rd 2018
Taunton/WS/Sedgemoor	January 23 rd 2019	January 14 th 2019
Taunton/WS/Sedgemoor	February 20 th 2019	February 11 th 2019
Taunton/WS/Sedgemoor	March 20 th 2019	March 11 th 2019
South Somerset	November 27 th 2018	November 19 th 2018
South Somerset	December 18 th 2018	December 10 th 2018
South Somerset	January 29 th 2019	January 20 th 2019
South Somerset	February 26 th 2019	February 17 th 2019
South Somerset	March 26 th 2019	March 17 th 2019
Mendip	November 29 th 2018	November 19 th 2018
Mendip	December 20 th 2018	December 10 th 2018
Mendip	January 31 st 2019	January 22 nd 2019
Mendip	February 28 th 2019	February 19 th 2019
Mendip	March 28 th 2019	March 19 th 2019



Professional Choices

One of the main concerns received by colleagues during this process for change, has been in relation to the way discussions about high risk cases and actions agreed are recorded, shared and audited.

This continues to be a challenge not only in planning the new model but in the current process.

The MARAC implementation group are considering the use of a virtual meeting space that is already being used by agencies in Somerset as an option for storing and collecting information about all cases. This work is ongoing and you will be kept up to date with progress.

Where To Find Information

This newsletter and other documents relating to MARAC will be uploaded to the Somerset Survivors website, accessed here [www.sometsurvivors.org.uk](http://www.somerset survivors.org.uk)

Have You Any Concerns or Questions?

Please email communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk

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