



**County Durham and Darlington  
Multi-Agency Risk Assessment  
Conference (MARAC) Standard  
Operating Procedures**

**1.0 POLICY IDENTIFICATION PAGE**

THIS POLICY HAS BEEN DRAFTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION, RACE RELATIONS ACT LEGISLATION AND THE RACE EQUALITY SCHEME. PUBLIC DISCLOSURE IS APPROVED UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED AND JUSTIFIED.

<u>POLICY TITLE:</u>	MARAC Standard Operating Procedures
<u>REGISTRY REFERENCE NO:</u>	

<u>DEPARTMENT/AREA RESPONSIBLE:</u>	Safeguarding Police HQ
<u>POLICY OWNER:</u>	Durham Constabulary
<u>AUTHOR OF POLICY:</u>	Rachel Green, Force Strategic Coordinator Domestic Abuse
<u>CORPORATE PLAN THEME(S):</u>	

<u>POLICY IMPLEMENTATION DATE:</u>	November 2008
<u>POLICY REVIEW DATE:</u>	April 2010
Mid Review	July 2011
<u>2<sup>nd</sup> REVIEW DATE:</u>	May 2012
<u>3<sup>rd</sup> REVIEW DATE:</u>	June 2014

## **2.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this policy and standard operating procedures is to describe the multi-agency position in relation to implementing the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process across County Durham and Darlington. MARAC provides a consistent approach to risk assessment which identifies those victims who are at most risk of serious harm. Once a victim has been assessed at this level of risk a multi agency meeting is held and agencies will work together to find a way of reducing that risk using available interventions.

The aim of MARAC is:

- To share information to increase the safety, health and well being of victims – adults and their children
- To determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general public
- To construct jointly and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support to all those at risk and which reduces the risk of harm
- To reduce repeat victimisation
- To improve agency coordination and accountability
- To improve support for staff involved in high risk domestic abuse cases.

The responsibility to take appropriate actions rests with individual agencies; it is not transferred to the MARAC, which is a conferencing and coordination medium.

The role of the MARAC is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety.

## **2.1 Purpose and Scope**

The procedures set out below are intended to offer guidance to all staff operating across agencies within County Durham and Darlington who are dealing with domestic abuse by outlining the MARAC assessment process, the interventions required and the individual roles and responsibilities throughout the process.

The procedures will remain the property of Durham Constabulary and any amendments or comments from partner agencies should be fed back to the author of these procedures as outlined in the initial pages.

## **2.2 Motivation or Driving Forces**

Nationally domestic abuse has been the focus of much police, public and media attention in recent years, with the Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) driving this area of business. The past few years have seen significant national developments including the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, the publication of the Together we can End Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy November 2009, the Cross Government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse April 2007, the rollout of the Specialist Domestic Violence Courts programme 2005 which ultimately promoted MARAC and the current Governments “Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls” November 2010.

Historically across County Durham and Darlington there have been a number of domestic abuse related murders which made not only the Constabulary but also partner agencies re focus on domestic abuse in the hope of being able to try and prevent further homicides from occurring.

Due to this Durham Constabulary decided to approach partners in order to establish Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews a process which the Government at that time had started to introduce but had not been made a statutory obligation for agencies.

The Constabulary and partners however decided that even without the statutory requirement these reviews were needed and in 2007 Domestic Violence Homicide Reviews commenced in County Durham and Darlington.

These reviews clearly highlighted the need for MARAC; with links to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), the need for effective risk assessments and the sharing of information between all partner agencies both statutory and voluntary.

### **2.3 The Legal Basis and Legitimate Aims**

The legal basis for this policy is the Human Rights Act 1984 and the common law duty to protect life.

The legitimate aim of this policy is to identify when a serious risk to life exists, but taking into account Article 2 'The right to a private life and Article 8 the right to respect for private and family life'.

### **2.4 Brief Description of the Attached Appendix**

*Appendix A Useful Contact Details/Telephone Numbers*  
*Appendix B IDVA Role*

### **2.5 Protective Marking**

This policy has been reviewed under the protective marking scheme and is to be classed as unrestricted and suitable for public view.

## **3.0 POLICY STATEMENT**

The preservation of life and the protection of the vulnerable will always be a priority within County Durham and Darlington and will be at the forefront of operational decision making. In consideration of the risk to the victim(s) all agencies will be proactive to minimise that risk.

## **4.0 GUIDANCE and PROCEDURE: MARAC**

The definition of domestic abuse is:

Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender and sexuality.

(Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws or step family)

## **5.0 Aims of these Standard Operating Procedures**

- 5.1 To ensure that members of staff within relevant agencies in County Durham and Darlington who come into contact with a victim of domestic abuse have sufficient understanding of what is required of them regarding MARAC to ensure the safety of that person and others who may be at risk.
- 5.2 To ensure that any member of the community who is a victim of domestic abuse has the trust and confidence to seek our help.
- 5.3 To ensure that agencies within County Durham and Darlington provide an effective response to reports of domestic abuse to safeguard victims and children.
- 5.4 That agencies continue to work in partnership with other statutory and non-statutory organisations in appropriately identifying and assessing any victim of domestic abuse to ensure that they are afforded all the available interventions that each agency and ultimately MARAC can provide.

## **6.0 The Role of all Staff**

**All staff must remember that making a disclosure of domestic abuse is a brave step and an inappropriate response could put victims at further risk.**

Victims often have no experience of the statutory agencies and are unsure as to what help, assistance or support is available to them. The simple act of contacting any agency may in fact be a huge undertaking for the victim and the consequences of which the victim may not have considered.

The responsibility for advice and co-ordination of the MARAC policy rests within each agency's own relevant department and it is each agencies responsibility to embed the MARAC process within their procedural files. The responsibility for the identification and the subsequent completion of the MARAC referral form rests with each individual member of staff who due to their position within an agency is engaging with victims or potential victims of domestic abuse. This procedural document should be read in conjunction with the agencies existing policy and procedures surrounding issues such as safeguarding and policies on domestic abuse.

Members of staff have a duty to take all reasonable steps to:

- 6.1 Appropriately respond once a disclosure of domestic abuse has been made.
- 6.2 To complete all relevant documentation to facilitate risk assessments in relation to all victims.
- 6.3 To fully record information as appropriate and in line with agency procedures.
- 6.4 To assess the immediate and obvious safety considerations of the victim. In this regard to ensure provision of support including safety-planning for victims and children and anyone else deemed to be at risk.

It is important that all staff appreciate the difficult and unique position of victims of domestic abuse regarding their relationship with their abusive partner. Many victims do not wish to criminalise their partner or family member and may not have considered what would be expected of them once they have made contact with an agency. Nevertheless victims still face the possibility of violence which often presents a threat to life, and all agencies are under a duty to protect the victim or potential victim, notwithstanding the lack of support from that victim.

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A VICTIM OR POTENTIAL VICTIM EVER BE TURNED AWAY AND TOLD THAT THERE IS NOTHING THAT ANYONE CAN DO.**

## **7.0 Initial Considerations**

When dealing with potential victims it is important to recognise the seriousness/immediacy of the risk.

- 7.1 If it is obvious that domestic abuse is a factor the use of a private room or private space should be considered when speaking to the victim in order to afford them the ability to speak in confidence in a safe environment where they cannot be overheard.
- 7.2 In all circumstances if the abusive partner is present with the victim every opportunity should be taken in order to see the victim on their own otherwise they will not be able to speak freely.
- 7.3 If language is an issue and is affecting understanding then consideration should be given to the use of Language Line or an Interpreter to ensure accuracy of information.

## **8.0 The completion of the MARAC referral form**

The member of staff will;

- 8.1 Fully explain to the victim what MARAC is and the reason for completing the MARAC referral form.
- 8.2 Where possible always try and gain the victims consent for their information to be shared. If this is not possible explain the circumstances when due to, for example, “significant harm” (an explanation of which is below) to the victim, that information may be shared without their consent. Again explain why this would be the case and document your reasons for sharing the information.
- 8.3 Gather all available and relevant information as per agency requirements including the completion of the MARAC referral form and the assessment of risk.
- 8.4 When asking questions within the assessment be clear and fully explain what the questions mean and why they are being asked.
- 8.5 Take your time with the victim and remember this may be the first time they have been asked this type of question and it could also be the first time they have disclosed that they are suffering domestic abuse.
- 8.6 Offer support to the victim by way of making sure they know what other support services are available to them by giving them contact details and literature (*see Appendix A*) for them to take away if safe to do so or that they know is available on the premises so they can read them there without taking them home.
- 8.7 If any issues regarding child protection or risk to life/serious harm etc are disclosed members of staff must follow their existing agency procedures. If members of staff have any concerns they should inform their line manager.
- 8.8 If the victim refuses to provide any information on the MARAC referral form and does not give their consent for information to be shared and if there are no concerns that fall within the “significant concern” category, then the referral cannot be passed onto the MARAC coordinator.
- 8.9 If the victim refuses to provide any information on the MARAC referral form and does not give their consent for information to be shared but the member of staff has concerns regarding the victim which lead them to have “significant concern” then the member of staff will inform the victim that information will still be passed onto the MARAC coordinator due to the perceived level of risk and if that level of risk is graded as “high risk” by the MARAC coordinator then a MARAC meeting will be held regarding the victim. Again staff should document their reasons for sharing the information. (Staff can refer to the MARAC Information Sharing Protocol if required)

At this point it is helpful to say that the wishes of the victim can be included within the referral form and then shared with the MARAC Coordinator. Depending on the victim’s situation an IDVA or another agency representative could still be working with the victim and should therefore put forward the victim’s views to their agency SPOC who will then articulate these at any subsequent MARAC meeting. The victim must then be updated with the outcome from the MARAC meeting as soon as possible.

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- 8.10 Under no circumstances if “significant concern” is a factor will no action be taken by a member of staff.
- 8.11 If the member of staff is unsure of what constitutes “significant harm” or is unsure of what action to take they must consult with their line manager or supervisor.
- 8.12 Once the MARAC referral form has been completed whether with consent or as described above, it should be faxed to the MARAC coordinator within 24 hours, who will conduct further relevant information sharing regarding the victim, any children and the perpetrator.
- 8.13 If no details re the children or the perpetrator have been supplied by the victim the form can still go to the MARAC coordinator who can utilise other agency information and in doing so, if recorded, will be able to identify the children and the perpetrator.
- 8.15 The member of staff will not:  
Send the victim away believing that it is not a matter for them to deal with or attempt any form of mediation.

**The MARAC Process does not override pre-existing procedures within organisations for example where issues of child protection are concerned. Staff must still be alert and aware of what actions are required in emergency situations in addition to the MARAC Process.**

**Significant Harm:**

**For the purposes of this procedural document Significant Harm is described as the imminent risk of serious harm which could happen quickly and without warning, and the effect of which could be fatal.**

**An example would be someone attends A&E and has a stab wound on their arm, although this injury is not life threatening the fact that a knife has been used in the first place is significant and it also means that a knife could be used again and the result of which could potentially be fatal. A referral would be made in these circumstances even if consent is not given.**

**9.0 The Role of Line Manager/Supervisor**

The line manager/supervisor will:

- 9.1 Ensure the victim has been spoken to in a safe environment, not in the presence of their abusive partner.
- 9.2 Ensure that a MARAC referral form including risk assessment and consent letter from the victim has been signed and completed.
- 9.3 **Review the risk level to ensure appropriate action has been taken i.e. that a form has still been completed and a referral made to MARAC even where no consent is given but significant concern is raised, also any action that is required to be taken via each agencies relevant existing procedures.**



- 9.4 Ensure that all victims and potential victims are identified and that all immediate reasonable steps that are required to ensure their safety have been taken and are documented on the MARAC referral form. This would include if a child protection referral has been made.
- 9.5 That support information has been given to the victim either for them to take away or view on the premises.

## **10.0 The Role of the MARAC Coordinator**

On receipt of the referral the coordinator will:

- 10.1 Begin to gather information from various agencies including the Police, and upon receipt of further information assess the level of risk whether Standard, Medium or High.
- 10.2 Review the referral and if graded High a MARAC meeting will be arranged and the referrer will be notified. If the referral is graded lower i.e. Standard or Medium the referring agency will be informed of this and that due to the lower grade the case will not be proceeding to MARAC.
- 10.3 Ensure the MARAC Administrator distributes the minutes from the meeting complete with any actions proposed within 3 working days of the MARAC meeting.
- 10.4 Provide direct line supervision to the MARAC Administrator.
- 10.5 Organise and ensure consistency in the referral of cases from the full range of potential referring agencies and ensure consistency in the roll out and development of the MARAC Process.
- 10.6 Be the single point of contact for all external agencies in relation to the coordination of MARAC and also SPOC for County Durham Probation Service.
- 10.7 If appropriate liaise with the Offender Manager and ensure Probation records are flagged with details from MARAC. In the absence of an Offender Manager, the Coordinator should update Probation records accordingly.
- 10.8 Help prepare the MARAC Agenda to ensure cases are discussed in an effective manner and ensure specialist attendees if appropriate are present.
- 10.9 Work closely and support the work of the Chair, in whatever way may be reasonably required.
- 10.10 Follow up any incomplete actions.
- 10.11 Ensure the relevant data is collected to ensure that the outputs and outcomes from MARAC can be recorded and accountability to victims and partner agencies is underpinned.
- 10.12 In the absence of the IDVA and where necessary, due to the imminent risk of serious harm, the victim will be contacted and informed of the decision to review their case.
- 10.13 Promote and publicise the work of MARAC by working closely with partner agencies to ensure all relevant members of staff are familiar with the MARAC process, and their role and responsibilities within it and receive appropriate training as necessary.

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- 10.14 Liaise with a full range of potential referral agencies, in particular those working with minority or hard to reach groups to ensure that the needs of those victims are met
- 10.15 If appropriate refer to other agencies and processes such as Domestic Abuse Outreach, MAPPA and Potential Dangerous Person (PDP) processes.
- 10.16 Maintain the necessary documentation to ensure the smooth running of the MARAC process and ensure paperwork is up to date and accurate.
- 10.17 Provide MARAC Training within the IDVA Induction Process.
- 10.18 Assist the IDVA's in their day to day operational duties and provide advice, guidance and support in order to help the Coordinator determine the final decision regarding the level of risk and whether the case should be brought to MARAC.
- 10.19 Have oversight of the IDVA's in post and report any issues or concerns to the appropriate Line Manager
- 10.20 Utilise and actively interrogate Police systems in order to facilitate the research and collection of relevant Police information.
- 10.21 Liaise on a regular basis with the Safeguarding Units Detective Sergeants, providing advice, guidance and support and deal with any issues to ensure the smooth running of MARAC and to discuss individual cases in the overall assessment of risk.
- 10.22 Attend if appropriate various multi-agency meetings where the risk dictates and advice, guidance and safety planning interventions are required to help manage the risk of harm.

**Repeat Victim:**

**If a victim who has been through the MARAC Process and then comes back to either the Police or another agencies attention the agency should still complete a further MARAC risk assessment form and send this to the MARAC coordinator however this will not automatically result in a further MARAC meeting taking place. The MARAC coordinator will conduct further information sharing and make an informed decision looking at all the risks to the victim and any children and then decide whether it is appropriate to conduct a further MARAC meeting. A meeting would not be conducted if the risk did not dictate this or that it was felt that even though the risk was still “High” that all possible avenues of intervention had already been taken and another meeting would not achieve anything further. If a further MARAC meeting is held then the MARAC coordinator would record that victim as a “Repeat Victim”.**

**Definition of a Repeat Victim:**

**A victim is still classed as a repeat victim even if they are in a relationship with a different partner who is not the partner that they were originally in a relationship with when they were first referred to the MARAC.**

**A repeat victim is someone who comes to the Police or any other agencies attention and discloses another incidence of domestic abuse within a 12 month rolling period.**

## **11.0 The Role of the Single Point of Contact (SPOC)**

On receipt of the summary which outlines the incident and individuals for the next MARAC the SPOC will:

- 11.1 Research their agency records regarding the individuals involved in the case
- 11.2 Attend the MARAC meeting and share all relevant information
- 11.3 If actions are set for the new cases each SPOC is responsible for the dissemination and completion of those actions within their agency within 3 working days following the MARAC meeting. If these timescales cannot be met an update still needs to be sent to the MARAC Administrator when the actions are completed.
- 11.4 Inform the MARAC Coordinator of any additional or new information that could or does indicate a significant change in circumstances or risk via the telephone as soon as possible
- 11.5 Ensure that all MARAC paperwork received is stored confidentially and is not shared without the prior approval of the MARAC Chair or the MARAC coordinator
- 11.6 Ensure that MARAC information is stored for 12 months in order to assist in the identification and monitoring of repeat victims
- 11.7 Flag each file with a "MARAC" marker
- 11.8 Nominate a deputy to act on behalf of the identified SPOC adhering to the above actions
- 11.9 Ensure that if no deputy is identified the SPOC will provide the research updates to the MARAC coordinator in advance of the MARAC meeting notifying them that a deputy cannot attend on the SPOCs behalf
- 11.10 Raise awareness of the MARAC process within their own organisation which includes regular updates re any changes in procedures or practice
- 11.12 If intending to deliver specific MARAC training sessions/events will ensure that they follow the existing MARAC training package devised by the MARAC coordinator and Gail Murphy the Deputy Services Manager for Derwentside Domestic Abuse Service (DDAS)

## **12.0 Role of MARAC Chair**

The role of the MARAC Chair will be undertaken by an officer at Detective Inspector (DI) level. If the identified DI is not available the role will be undertaken firstly by the Safeguarding HQ DI, secondly by the Safeguarding HQ DCI and thirdly by the Force Strategic Coordinator for Domestic Abuse.

The role of the MARAC Chair is to:

- Ensure that the MARAC meetings are professional, appropriate, confidential and structured.
- Introduce the Confidentiality Declaration to members and lead the members through the new MARAC cases.
- Oversee the information sharing regarding each case and keep control of the meeting in order to ensure that information is shared and received in a logical, appropriate and understandable way.
- Ensure that the MARAC administrator is able to accurately record all information shared and accurately record all actions.
- Ask the administrator to confirm the required agency actions after each new case confirming that the correct actions have been recorded by both the administrator and the agency representatives/SPOCs.
- Ensure that decisions made within the MARAC meetings are the final decisions and are agreed by all members. (No deviation from these decisions should be made outside of the meeting unless new information comes to light which changes the original circumstances discussed)
- Ensure that regarding arrests and in particular where an agency brings to a MARAC meeting a case that is not known to the Police the decision to arrest the perpetrator will be made in that meeting.

### **Point of Note re Arrests:**

Whether the decision is to arrest or not to arrest an agency who believes the decision to be fundamentally flawed in that it puts the victim in serious danger of immediate harm should inform the Chair that they disagree with the meetings decision and the Chair should then offer arbitration which will take place via the Area Superintendent or in their absence the DCI who will attend the meeting and will arbitrate and make the final decision.

### **13.0 Role of MARAC Administrator**

The role of the MARAC administrator is to:

- 13.1 Print out and take to the MARAC meetings the Agenda, Apologies, Updates, AOB, Summary Sheet, Confidentiality Declaration and spare copies of the new cases.
- 13.2 Attend and accurately record the minutes of all the new cases discussed at the MARAC meeting including AOB and cases for review (MARAC meetings are held every Tuesday alternating between the North and the South)
- 13.3 Liaise with the MARAC Coordinator and type the Agenda prior to the MARAC meeting and distribute this at the meeting
- 13.4 Ensure the minutes from the MARAC meetings are accurately typed onto specific MARAC minute templates and ready to be sent out the following Monday morning
- 13.5 Record updates from SPOCs regarding actions which are to be completed and accurately record them on the corresponding minutes for each MARAC case. Any updates which indicate a significant change in circumstances or a potential increase in risk must be communicated to the Coordinator. These changes may then appear as an AOB item at the next MARAC meeting.
- 13.6 Update Cases discussed under any other business and re-distribute the minutes accordingly if appropriate.
- 13.7 Deal with new cases which should be received by the MARAC coordinator by the Thursday before the MARAC meeting, the administrator will then, using the new case template outline the relevant and accurate details of the incident using the statement provided following the 5WH technique for collating information and distribute.
- 13.8 Ensure that when new case information is received within 24 to 48 hours of the next MARAC meeting the administrator will conduct the information sharing instead of the MARAC coordinator and contact all the SPOCs
- 13.9 If the research information is received from the SPOCs by Thursday the new cases will be posted or secure email that day, if received after the details of the information sharing will be taken and distributed at the MARAC Meeting
- 13.10 To keep the database used for recording referrals up to date and accurate.
- 13.11 Provide additional copies of the MARAC Minutes to identified individuals i.e. MAPPA Coordinator, other MARAC Coordinators in different areas and Probation.
- 13.12 To update the NI32 database.
- 13.13 Liaise with the Coordinator and audit any incomplete actions.

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13.14 Prepare relevant MARAC documentation in preparation of any training events.

13.15 To report to their Line Manager

13.16 To carry out any additional tasks as requested by the Coordinator which include PNC checks and updating Sleuth after the MARAC meeting

Other Additional Tasks:

- MARAC Training Materials: All MARAC Training materials to be printed out and stored prior to MARAC Training (24 copies of each) An attendance sheet is also be included
- SPOCs: An accurate and up to date SPOC list to be recorded for all MARAC areas including SPOC labels
- Telephone: Messages to be recorded on behalf of the MARAC Coordinator and general enquires and questions to be dealt with as appropriate by the administrator
- MARAC Database: The database to be kept up to date with details of Review Date and Discharged details
- Referral Form: Update the form with the correct details for the relevant DI for that area.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Useful Contacts and Organisations:**

Wear Valley Woman's Aid	Tel: 01388 600094 24 hrs: 07946 190203
Derwentside Women's Refuge	Tel: 01207 582797 (24hrs)
Durham Woman's Refuge	Tel: 0191 3865951 (office hrs)
Peterlee Woman's Refuge	Tel: 0191 5868890 (24hrs)
Darlington Woman's Refuge	Tel: 01325 364486 (office hours plus)
Karma Nirvana HBV and Forced Marriage (Women & Men)	Tel: 01332 604098 Fax: 01332 369881
Panah Black Women's Refuge	Tel: 0191 2846998 (office hours) Fax: 0191 2847627 Emergency: 07709 455688 E-mail: panahrefuge@hotmail.com
Samaritans	Tel: 08457 909090 (24hrs)
Men's Helpline	Tel: 0845 064 6800
National Domestic Violence Help Line	Tel: 0808 2000 247
Forced Marriage Unit, Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) <a href="mailto:Fmu@fco.co.uk">Fmu@fco.co.uk</a>	Tel: 0207 008 0151
Useful web:	<a href="http://www.womansaid.org.uk">www.womansaid.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.thehideout.org.uk">www.thehideout.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.refuge.org.uk">www.refuge.org.uk</a>

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Role Profile**

This document has been written by the IDVA's Line Manager Rachel Green; Strategic Coordinator for Domestic Abuse, Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence. Its purpose is to illustrate the role and responsibility for all IDVA's who are employed by or who are seconded to Durham Constabulary.

The role profile is applicable to Durham Constabulary only and has been agreed via the MARAC Project Board which has overall governance for MARAC and IDVA. It has also been agreed via the SDVC operational group which is accountable to the LCJB.

This document is the second edition of the original IDVA profile and will be reviewed on a bi annual basis.

Start date of revised procedures: July 2011

### **Background to the IDVA Role**

The IDVA role is a component part of the SDVC which was brought in by government in 2006. The role was created as it was recognised that victims of domestic abuse needed specialised support and advice when they were going through the criminal justice process. It was also well documented that victims of domestic abuse were more likely compared to any other victims of crime to retract their statements and therefore their support for the criminal justice process and that this needed to be addressed. The IDVA role was therefore created with a specific focus of supporting victim's right from the beginning of the criminal justice process and to try and maintain their engagement and cooperation until the conclusion of the process when the case would appear before the court. Ultimately the government wanted to reduce the attrition rate for domestic abuse cases but more importantly to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions and achieve successful outcomes at court.

The IDVA also has a part to play regarding the MARAC process in which the IDVA would provide support to a high risk victim going through the MARAC process but only where a criminal investigation was also being undertaken. The IDVA's role within MARAC is to ensure the victim understands the MARAC process and why they are part of it and that the IDVA would be the voice of the victim at the MARAC meeting and would update the victim re the outcome of the meeting. The continual assessment of risk and any requirements i.e. special measures regarding the court process would be constantly monitored by the IDVA and once the respective court case and MARAC meeting has taken place the IDVA's role would cease. The IDVA would signpost the victim to other relevant agencies throughout their engagement with the victim so that when the IDVA's role ended the victim would still have access to other avenues of support.



## **IDVA Role Profile**

Criteria for referral:

All IDVA's employed or seconded to Durham Constabulary are based within the Police Domestic Abuse (DA) Units and receive their referrals directly from the unit's detective sergeant. There are four DA units across the constabulary area and an IDVA sits within each.

The criterion for a referral to an IDVA is as follows:

***Any domestic abuse victim who is involved in a criminal investigation, the offender for which has either been charged with a domestic abuse related offence or bailed, this includes any offence, and the risk to that victim is High***

***Discretion is afforded to the DA Sergeants if for example they feel that a victim who is involved in the criminal justice process as stated above but is deemed to be at medium risk but for whom they have concerns they can direct the IDVA to contact the victim due to these concerns.***

***The IDVA will be involved with victims going through the MARAC process if they are also involved with the criminal justice process.***

## **Criminal Justice process responsibilities**

Perpetrator bailed:

If a perpetrator is bailed for a domestic abuse related offence and regardless of how long the bail is for the IDVA will carry out the following actions:

- Make contact with the victim, (the IDVA will establish if the victim is able to talk and has time to talk)
- Provide a full explanation of the IDVA role explaining they are not a police officer however are based within a police DA unit
- Explain the bail conditions including what a breach of bail means
- Explain when the perpetrator is answering bail and the judicial process
- Find out what support the victim currently has i.e. family/friends and if they would like a referral to be made to an outreach worker (explaining who an outreach worker is and how they can help the victim)
- Discuss issues surrounding the victim's safety and that of any children this would include security of the home i.e. target hardening, basically asking if there is anything the IDVA or the police can do to make the victim safer
- Find out if neighbours are aware of the situation and if they know to contact the police in an emergency situation
- Explain what other options are available via specific orders i.e. non molestation/occupation and restraining orders. The IDVA will obtain details re restraining orders which can be passed to the DA unit sergeant or directly to Criminal Justice Unit (CJU)
- Will discuss if there are any issues re child contact
- Find out which other agencies are involved with the victim and ascertain if any other agency involvement would be helpful
- Answer any questions that the victim may have and if necessary get in touch with the officer in charge of the investigation

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- Ask the victim if they have thought of anything else that they want to add to the initial risk assessment that was completed with them by the police. The IDVA will record any updates re risk directly onto the Sleuth system but they will not alter the answers to the initial 27 questions. The IDVA will also update the DA sergeant of any additions to the risk assessment.
- Introduce and fully explain the MARAC process to the victim and discuss any issues or concerns that the victim may have re MARAC
- Update Sleuth with brief relevant details regarding any contact made with the victim.

#### Perpetrator charged:

If the perpetrator is charged with an offence the IDVA will provide the above, as appropriate, and in addition to this will also provide the following:

- If capacity allows the IDVA will try and arrange a face to face meeting with the victim. The IDVA will use all opportunities available to them to do this i.e. accompany a domestic abuse officer on a visit to see the victim or utilise other agencies approaches to the victim i.e. outreach or housing.
- Explain when the perpetrator is appearing at court and fully explain the judicial process
- Consider the use of special measures – are they needed? And if so has an application been completed by the police?
- Consider if a visit to the court would be useful and helpful for the victim

#### **Other agencies for the IDVA to be in contact with**

In addition to the above responsibilities the IDVA will liaise with other agencies and on occasion act as a 'go between' so that the victim is not contacted unnecessarily by many different agencies. These agencies include:

- The Police DA Unit
- Police Child Protection and Adult Protection Units - liaison with regards to vulnerable adults and child protection
- Police Crime Prevention Unit – discussing target hardening including tunstall alarms
- CJU – i.e. supplying updates with regards to the victim's contact details, answering any questions that the unit may have regarding the victim and supplying for example maps re where victim lives etc which assist with bail conditions for the perpetrator
- CJU/Police – any information which is given to an IDVA which should be kept confidential with regards to the defence but is pertinent to the case and the victim the IDVA should put on an MG6 form
- Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) – i.e. have the perpetrator and victim reunited? What are the victim's thoughts about the prosecution? Liaising with the victim and prosecutors at court including barristers
- The Prison - does the IDVA need to contact the prison re issues to do with the perpetrator sending letters to the victim or to let the prison know that an order is in place
- Children's Services – including child protection concerns and possible child protection conferences

- Post Court Departments/Crown Court Liaison – for results of court appearances
- National Probation Service
- Refuges – supplying and gathering information and making referrals
- Victim Support – re applications for victim’s transport issues, supermarket vouchers etc.
- Housing Agencies
- Liaison with the MARAC Coordinator
- Liaison with other IDVA’s
- The Witness Care Unit (WCU) - the IDVA will update the WCU with details of which victims they are involved with and that they will continue to provide updates to WCU as and when necessary, this will include any change if details, address, telephone number and also if the victim will not be attending court

### **Witness Care Unit/Witness Service (WS) and IDVA**

The WCU will inform the WS of any IDVA involvement via the List of Witnesses Attending Court (LWAC) this is to reduce duplication and number of different agencies contacting the victim. The IDVA will then become the main contact for the victim.

If there is to be a hearing the WCU will still send out an “Introduction Letter” which provides details of the hearing date and also includes a leaflet re “What Happened and What Happens Next”

If a court visit is required the IDVA will liaise with the WCU to facilitate this.

The WS will also still send out their letter of Introduction but will not contact the victim.

The WS will email the IDVA 2 weeks before the hearing to ascertain how the victim is doing and if there are any issues

### **Documentation/Records**

The IDVA will maintain an up to date Caseload Spreadsheet and an up to date Annual Leave/Flexible Hours/Sickness Spreadsheet and this will be stored within the HQ Safeguarding Folder. An email will be sent to the line manager when new leave dates are requested.

(Each IDVA is responsible for ensuring that when annual leave is allocated that no two IDVA’s who cover the same area i.e. North and South are on leave at the same time. On occasions there may be an overlap of single days which may be unavoidable but specific leave will be allocated as above)

The IDVA will maintain up to date and relevant records within the Sleuth system.

The IDVA will maintain victim case files in written form which can be accessed if more in depth information is required which may not have been inputted onto Sleuth.

The IDVA will complete on a quarterly basis a Performance Spreadsheet and this will be forwarded to the line manager.

List of Agencies signed up to MARAC:

- Durham Constabulary
- Darlington Borough Council
- Durham County Council
- NHS County Durham and NHS Darlington
- Durham Tees Valley Probation Trust
- Tees Esk and Wear Valley
- Darlington Refuge
- Durham Refuge – Three Rivers Housing
- Peterlee Refuge – Harbour
- Bishop Auckland Refuge
- Derwentside Domestic Abuse Service (DDAS)
- No 75
- Sanctuary Carr-gomm
- Community Alcohol Services
- East Durham Homes
- Victim Support
- Cestria
- Harbour
- NECA