

Title of Action Plan being assessed	Reducing risk and harm to the highest risk victims of domestic abuse through the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) process
LAA indicator	NI 17.1
Name of person completing this assessment	Moira A Owers, Inspector, Essex Police
Contact Telephone Number	01245 452960
Date	24 <sup>th</sup> March '10
Which Partners are involved?	Wide range of agencies both statutory and 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector

### 1. What are the aims and objectives of this Action Plan?

The purpose of the MARAC is to:

- Share relevant information to increase the safety, health and well being of 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 professional support to all those at risk and that reduces the risk of harm;
- Reduce repeat victimisation;
- Improve agency accountability; and
- Improve support for staff involved in high risk domestic abuse cases.

### 2. What are the steps used to deliver the Action Plan?

The MARAC process established across Essex (including Southend and Thurrock) is sufficiently resilient to enable partner agencies to risk assess and then refer the highest risk cases of Domestic Abuse to a central coordinator for information sharing, discussion and safety planning of each victim at their relevant locality MARAC. Partners are then in turn, able to offer support and services appropriate to the victim's needs and within the remit of the relevant partner.









In Essex, the MARAC is overseen by a MARAC Steering Group which is a sub group of the Essex Domestic Abuse Strategic Group. The Steering Group is currently chaired by the 'Protecting Vulnerable Persons' Inspector with responsibility for domestic abuse.

The specific steps in place to deliver the Action Plan/MARAC process are:

- the maintenance & development of the 6 MARAC currently in operation across Essex
- the review and updating of the information sharing agreement
- the training of staff and attendees in the purpose of MARAC and the accompanying risk assessment process
- the drive to ensure MARAC works consistently across the county with referrals being made by a range of agencies
- the aim to achieve consistent attendance across the county with relevant agencies attending regularly

- the identification of necessary Actions that are then completed on time
- the sharing of appropriate information by all agencies
- the correct identification of Repeat Victims and their subsequent referral back in to MARAC
- the development of the MARAC coordinating team based at Police HQ and supported by partnership funding over the next 3 years

**3a. Think carefully about each of the equality groups below in turn. Could the Action Plan have a negative or positive effect on people in the group? Tick any group that could be positively affected, and put a cross against any group that could be negatively affected. Some groups can have both a tick and a cross.**

	Race and Culture		Disability
	Age		Gender
	Sexual Orientation		Religion and Belief
	Rural Isolation		Economic Deprivation

**3b. Describe any positive or negative issues that you think are relevant under each equality strand. If you identify an issue that substantially affects a particular group, and might stop them benefiting, state what changes you will make to the Action Plan.**

The MARAC process seeks to provide a service to all victims of domestic abuse irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age and religion/faith. Data is already formally collected on a monthly basis in relation to the number of cases from the minority ethnic community, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender) community, those with a registered disability and male victims which is then forwarded to the regional Government Office (East). Other diversity information is available in relation to cases discussed and Performance with regards to this is still being developed.

**Race & Culture**  
**Issues**

- Those from an ethnic minority may not know where to go for help or may not have access to support services
- Fear of racism – agencies may be predominantly white-led
- Language barriers – lack of access to interpreters
- Interpreters may be male
- Lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity
- Fears of deportation
- Abuser may possess essential documents e.g. passports, certificates
- Pressure from family/community elders/religious elders not to leave abusive relationship
- Fears of loss of community and social network – being ostracized/isolated

- Betrayal of family honour - becoming a burden to family
- Fear of cultural stereo-typing and other's beliefs

**Changes**

The MARAC process already seeks to identify and monitor domestic abuse cases where issues of race/culture may have an impact. This includes those from the Traveller community, Eastern European and Asian cultures. However, awareness raising of 'So-called Honour Based Violence', Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation is crucial across Essex and activity is underway to develop the strategy and services in response to this together with issues of race/culture in general. Work is also needed in relation to victims identified as having 'No Recourse to Public Funds'.

**Age  
Issues**

- Fear, shame with regard to privacy
- Admission of vulnerability, humiliation
- Overcoming isolation
- Victims of abuse are frequently unwell
- Desire to remain in own home rather than being put in a home should they disclose
- Negative attitudes to the elderly bring fears and reinforces the idea they are a burden to society
- Ageism in culture and society
- Primary carer may be abuser

**Changes**

The MARAC process already seeks to identify and monitor domestic abuse cases where issues affecting the elderly may have an impact. Activity is well underway in connection with enhancing/developing arrangements to Safeguard Adults but clearly, further work is necessary to identify and support Domestic Abuse victims in their own homes.

**Disability  
Issues**

- Lack of accessible services
- Agencies may be unable to locate accessible accommodation
- Fear of placement by agencies into residential care
- Specialist disability services may not be aware of domestic violence
- Domestic violence agencies may not be aware of disabilities
- Fear of not being believed or treated as credible
- Abuser may have total control over access to the outside world
- Abuser may be the carer
- Existing home may have been specifically adapted to meet needs
- Fear of stereo-typing and other's beliefs

**Changes**

The MARAC process already seeks to identify and monitor domestic abuse cases where issues affecting those with disabilities may have an impact. However, further work is needed in terms of developing accessibility to services and for the purpose of identifying and supporting victims.

**Religion and Belief**

**Issues** See also the issues raised in connection with Race/Culture, some if not all may be equally applicable to those victims with specific religious backgrounds/beliefs

**Changes**

As in the response to Race/Cultural issues, education and accessibility to information by religious /spiritualist groups is the key to the MARAC process safeguarding and supporting all victims of domestic abuse.

**Gender**

**Issues** National data shows that the majority of people experiencing domestic violence and abuse are women. The vast majority of services therefore focus on providing support for women and as a consequence, there are minimal support services for male victims.

**Changes** The MARAC process already identifies the gender of domestic abuse victims and seeks to put in place support for those concerned. Resourcing for male victim services is limited and this is now receiving some attention for the future.

**Sexual Orientation**

**Issues**

- Fear of homophobia – assumptions of heterosexuality
- Not wanting to reinforce prejudice against lesbians
- Fears of losing children
- Threats to ‘out’ partner to family, friends, children and community
- Shared circle of friends means loss of support network
- Fear of being easily found within a small community
- No specialist refuges for lesbians/gays
- Internalised social homophobia that perhaps adds to a sense of shame, guilt and powerlessness
- Fear of stereo-typing and other’s beliefs

**Changes** The MARAC process already identifies same sex relationship cases and seeks to put in place support for those concerned. However, the main support comes from Broken Rainbow which is a national support group. Further work is clearly needed to develop services locally.

**Rural Isolation**

**Issues**

- Geographic location
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of available resources and information
- The history and culture of an area may increase pressure for victims to remain silent
- A close-knit community structure where everyone is known to one another
- Services provided in urban areas cannot be replicated in rural areas
- Communication systems by which rural communities and individuals living in rural areas exchange information differ dramatically from those in urban areas

**Changes** Activity is needed to raise awareness of issues of domestic violence and abuse in rural areas together with the development of services and accessibility to them.

**Economic Deprivation**

**Issues** The current economic climate clearly has the potential to impact upon relationships and in turn, increase the incidence of domestic abuse generally but consideration should also be given to identified geographic areas of deprivation. In addition, the ‘power and control’ exerted over victims by an abusive partner invariably includes control over financial arrangements within a relationship. As a result, the economic deprivation experienced by some victims is often a key issue in terms of remaining with their partner.

**Changes** Work with victims as a result of identification through the MARAC process already includes support in terms of financial advice. However, the monitoring/evaluation of domestic abuse incidents across the county in those areas of highest unemployment and deprivation would no doubt assist in developing services where they are most needed.

**4. What equality statistics or other evidence from public engagement do you need to help you test your initial conclusions in Section 1?**  
**What statistics or reports already exist – nationally or locally?**  
**What else do you need to know – what are the gaps?**  
**How will you collect this evidence? If you feel that particular organisations or community/ voluntary groups will be able to help you please list these too.**

**STATISTICS**

What evidence do you want?	Where is it available?	How will you use the evidence?

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

What do you want to know?	What questions will you ask?	Who are you going to ask?	Name of planned source (if known)	What will you do with the answer?

Please submit this form to [jan.plummer@essex.gov.uk](mailto:jan.plummer@essex.gov.uk)