

# Guidance for Maracs

## Effective Chairing

### Why guidance?

---

Chairing a Marac is a specific skill that can be different to chairing any other meeting; Marac is a high volume process that delivers a coordinated response at a single meeting to increase the safety of high risk victims of domestic abuse.

The process outlined in this document has been identified as providing an effective way of chairing a Marac meeting. It can help ensure that the meeting is fully multi-agency with all those in attendance holding equal accountability to make the victim and their children safer.

Standardising chairing of Marac allows representatives to expect the same process and quality of chairing at every Marac, regardless of geographical location, thereby providing a consistent response for victims nationally.

### Suggested process

---

#### Commencing the meeting

Introduce any new representatives; explain briefly how the Marac meeting will proceed before asking all representatives to introduce themselves. Read out the confidentiality statement and remind representatives of the focus on risk. Identify and address incomplete actions and record in the minutes.

#### Presenting cases

Each case commences with the Chair asking the referring agency to present their case. This should be delivered concisely with the reason for referral and risks clear; using the risk identification checklist should assist this.

#### Sharing information

The Chair will then call on the Idva service or domestic abuse specialist to share up to date information, relevant to risk. This will include information directly relating to the perpetrator and the victims fears and views.

Next, the Chair invites each representative in turn to share their information, avoiding repetition and ensuring information remains succinct, risk focused and relevant. At this point confirm with agencies that there is no further relevant information or any other risks to consider.

#### Risk analysis

The Chair will move onto the risk analysis, where they begin by summarising the risks and information shared and outlining the potential harm to persons or property if appropriate action is not taken.

#### Examples of possible harm to persons or property may include:

- Perpetrator continues to harm the victim
- Perpetrator harms the children or unborn child
- Perpetrator harms another person, for example: new partner, victim's new partner, professional. This person would need to be identified
- Children are harmed by witnessing abuse
- Self-harming: by victim, perpetrator or children
- Mental health deteriorates: victim, perpetrator or children
- Property is damaged and / or animals harmed

The expertise of other agencies is critical to effective risk analysis; the Chair is not expected to understand the implications of all information combined and impact of this; for example, the effects of substance use, dynamics of domestic abuse, mental health conditions etc.

In this stage it will be important for the Chair to outline the contributory indicators which may make this harm more likely and the existing safety planning and supporting factors which have already taken place or exist which would make the harm less likely.

#### Examples of possible contributory indicators may include:

- Pregnancy
- Isolation
- Cross-agency intervention
- Financial difficulties
- Alcohol misuse
- Drug misuse
- Child contact
- Triggers

#### Examples of possible existing safety planning and/or supportive factors may include:

- Victim is engaging well with services and Idva
- Fire retardant letter box is in place
- Perpetrator is remanded in custody
- A non-molestation order is in place
- An alarm has been fitted to the home
- A TecSOS, or emergency phone has been provided
- Perpetrator has been engaging in a community programme to address abusive behaviour

#### The risk analysis may sound like:

*“The perpetrator is likely to further injure the victim by setting fire to her home via the letter box. This is made more likely as his mood is low and he is using heroin, and these are known triggers for his violence. In addition, the victim is pregnant and less mobile. However the risk of harm is made less likely because he is the subject of and currently abiding by a restraining order, a fire retardant mailbox has been added to the home.”*

The Chair will ask agencies to outline any further harm to persons or property that might have been missed.

### Requesting timed actions

Once risk analysis is complete, the Chair will ask representatives to offer timed actions in relation to the risk and imminence of harm. The aim is to reduce the likelihood of harm to its lowest possible level. When offering an action the agency will be encouraged by the Chair to state what potential harm the action aims to prevent or reduce. Consider joint agency and sequential actions to improve effectiveness of action plan.

This may sound like:

*“Police will execute the arrest warrant. Whilst in the police station, police will seek to obtain a mental health assessment. This will be completed within 48 hours and will address the ‘perpetrator’s deteriorating mental health’ and reduce the likelihood of ‘further harm to the victim and children’.”*

### Concluding the case

Chair or coordinator summarises actions. Review whether the actions mitigate the risks to the victim, manage the behaviours of perpetrators and have utilised all relevant resources to make the victim and any other vulnerable parties (including children) safe?

## In short: the chairing process

1. Ensuring effective presentation of the case.
2. Facilitating risk focused and relevant sharing of information.
3. Risk analysis:
  - Outlining the harm to people or property.
  - Outlining contributory indicators which may make this harm *more likely*.
  - Outlining existing safety planning and supporting factors which could make the harm *less likely*.
4. Requesting timed actions which will *reduce the likelihood of harm* to its *lowest possible level*.
5. Case conclusion