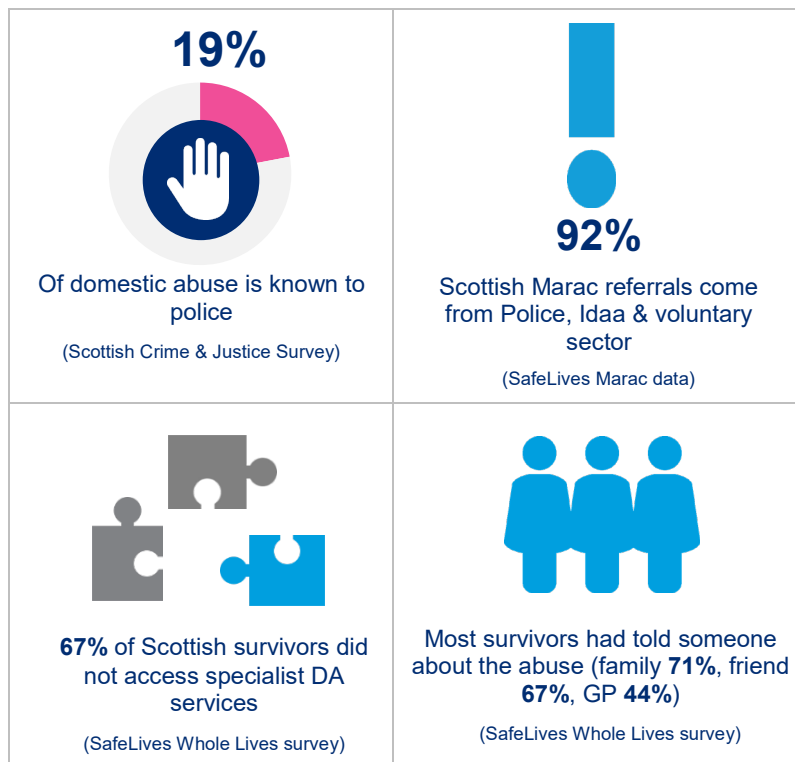


# Marac in Scotland National Update Report 2020

## Executive Summary

There are currently 32 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (Maracs) operating in 29 Local Authorities in Scotland. As part of the Marac Development Programme (MDP), SafeLives carried out 25 Marac observations between July 2019 and March 2020. The **10 Principles of an Effective Marac** underpin effective operation of Marac and support everyone involved to deliver the aims of Marac and inform the Marac observation process. This summary sets out the key themes from those observations and recommendations for next steps for Scottish Marac Development.



Effective Marac operation has been identified through Equally Safe as a key component in addressing violence against women and girls in Scotland. At the heart of Marac is the working assumption that no single agency can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. Across the 25 observations the following themes emerged:

- Over two thirds of Marac referrals came from Police Scotland or Idaa services. Although this varies across Maracs, on average there are few referrals from the statutory agencies that attend Marac
- Currently the average number of Marac referrals in Scotland is about half the recommended number, although this varies widely across individual Maracs<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SafeLives estimates that approximately 9,000 victims annually, including repeat victims, will be at high risk of serious harm or murder as a result of domestic abuse in Scotland. This equates to 40 Marac referrals per 10,000 of the local female population

- On average, across the 25 observed meeting, 6.5 of the 9 core agencies, recommended by SafeLives for an effective Marac, were in attendance. This varied hugely across Maracs, from 3 to 9, and a number of the observed meetings were additionally attended by a range of other local agencies who contributed to a nuanced understanding of risk
- Idaas, as domestic abuse specialists, play a crucial role at Marac, however, this is compromised by a lack of appropriate funding and capacity. At two of the observed Maracs there is no longer dedicated Idaa provision for victims referred to Marac due to cuts in funding
- The premise of Marac is that relevant and proportionate information is shared in a concise and structured manner, with each case lasting 12-15 minutes from start to finish. Across the observed meetings there were several examples of discussions exceeding this, and discussions diverting from risk
- A further theme across meetings was discrepancies in proportionate information sharing and understanding of what is relevant to share, and not all Maracs had up to date Information Sharing Protocols in place in light of the introduction of GDPR
- Across the observed meetings there were examples of truly bespoke and creative action planning, with agencies thinking ‘outside the box’ and going beyond what might be reasonably expected from their day-to-day engagement with victims, children and perpetrators
- At some meetings actions were largely “business as usual” or mainly following up on information not available during the meeting, and did not address all risks identified
- Nationally, referral levels for victims with a disability, BME, LGBT and male victims are still below expected levels, and lower than the UK-wide levels
- The lack of available and consistent funding for Marac coordinators and Idaas has repeatedly been highlighted as a major barrier for Marac development in Scotland. Currently, only 53% of Scottish Maracs have dedicated funding for Marac Coordinators. Moreover in many areas there is a discrepancy between what is funded and what is required, with many Maracs reporting feeling overwhelmed by the resources required for Marac administration
- A number of the Maracs observed did not have appropriate governance structures in place, or struggled to ensure appropriate membership of strategic oversight groups

Domestic abuse must be seen as everybody’s business in order to ensure all victims at high risk of serious harm receive a coordinated response to mitigate risk.

## Next steps

SafeLives are committed to continue working with Scottish Maracs and local and national stakeholders to support joint-up Marac development and resilience in Scotland, and a response that is responsive to the needs of domestic abuse victims. As the responses to the Scottish Government consultation on multi-agency arrangements highlighted access to consistent, sustainable funding and national training that recognises local diversity, are key to ensuring the sustainability of Scottish Maracs.

We suggest prioritising the following activities, both on a national and local level, to address the themes highlighted throughout this report, and strengthen the approach to Marac in Scotland as we navigate a new landscape:

- Coordinated, consistent messages around, and support for, the value of Maracs in responding to domestic abuse from National and Local stakeholders and partners, and consistent funding to back this up
- Resources for National and Local data collection to monitor areas for development and measure impact, including working with survivors to ensure Marac is responding effectively to their needs
- Development of a collaborative review framework, for use by Scottish Maracs to support ongoing development and identify themes and trends across Scotland
- Comprehensive Information Sharing Guidance and support to build confidence and improve consistency and practice across Scotland
- Sustainable and accessible training for Marac professionals, both for agency representatives, Marac Coordinators and Marac Chairs. Given the current landscape and limitations on face to face provision this needs to be flexible and responsive to the changing picture
- Sector-specific guidance on effective Marac engagement specifically, and multi-agency working responding to domestic abuse more generally
- Strengthen the links between Marac and other multi-agency forums, e.g. MATAAC, and develop formal channels to share information between forums where appropriate