

West Sussex Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Steering Group Terms of Reference (TOR)

1 Purpose of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference Steering Group

1.1 The purpose of the steering group is to ensure accountability on the part of participating agencies in the MARAC to their representatives, to one another and to victim-survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse (DSVA). It will provide a platform to embed the process in key local partnerships to promote sustainability and ensure the MARAC demonstrates that it is a process which is structured to deliver equity of outcome to all involved in the MARAC process.

2 Overall Aim of the MARAC Steering Group

2.1 To provide strategic governance to the MARAC to reduce repeat victimisation and reduce the risk of harm posed to high-risk victims of DSVA, both adults and their children, and hold perpetrators of abuse to account in West Sussex.

2.2 To provide quality assurance to the MARAC.

3 Overall Objectives of the MARAC Steering Group

The objectives of the MARAC Steering Group are to:

3.1 Support the West Sussex MARACs in achieving SafeLives's Quality Assurance Practice Standard for MARACs.

3.2 Utilise best practice available in developing the West Sussex MARAC.

3.3 Develop a MARAC Operating Protocol for West Sussex.

3.4 Evaluate the data from the West Sussex MARACs.

3.5 Ensure that effective partnerships are maintained with other public protection bodies and other MARAC areas.

3.6 Monitor and regularly assess the overall performance of the MARACs and ensure it operates in line with the 10 Principles of an effective MARAC.

3.7 Ensure operational issues of the MARACs are resolved as required.

3.8 Oversee efforts to raise awareness with local practitioners about the MARAC.

3.9 Implement effective channels of communication both between and within agencies.

3.10 Communicate to the public, to stakeholders and to government about the successes of the MARACs.

3.11 Ensure that the MARACs operates in line with legal responsibilities and keeps up to date with changes to legislation national guidance, including a review of any reported breaches of the agreed MARAC Information Sharing Agreement and Operational Guidance.

3.12 Support the Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR) Process in West Sussex and associated DARDR action plans.

3.13 Review, understand and implement practice change following local and national partnership reviews and associated learning (Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs), Serious Case Reviews (SCRs), Drug and Alcohol Related Deaths (DARDs) and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs).

4 Membership of the MARAC Steering Group

4.1 Membership of the MARAC Steering Group shall consist of managers of an appropriate level of seniority from the following organisations:

4.1.1 West Sussex Police – MARAC Chair

4.1.2 West Sussex County Council – MARAC Chair

4.1.3 West Sussex IDVA Service

4.1.4 West Sussex County Council Children's Services

4.1.5 West Sussex County Council Adult Services

4.1.6 West Sussex NHS Partnership Trust

4.1.7 National Probation Service (NPS)

4.1.8 West Sussex Domestic Violence Support Services – representing the voluntary sector.

4.1.9 West Sussex Borough Council representing the District and Borough Councils

4.1.10 West Sussex County Council Housing

4.1.11 Commissioned Substance Misuse Service (Change Grow Live)

4.1.12 Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust SPFT

4.2 Any individuals or organisations wishing to join the MARAC Steering Group should be invited to contact the Chair for their application to be considered and approved.

4.3 The MARAC Steering Group may invite any other individuals or organisations with compatible aims and objectives to become members of the MARAC Steering Group.

4.4 The MARAC Steering Group shall maintain an up-to-date list of members of the MARAC and of those organisations who are to receive copies of the minutes of the meetings.

5 Officers of the MARAC Steering Group

5.1 The officers of the MARAC Steering Group shall consist of:

5.1.1 Chair of the Domestic Abuse MARAC Steering Group

5.1.2 Vice-Chair of the Domestic Abuse MARAC Steering Group

5.2 Nominations for the position of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Domestic Abuse MARAC Steering Group are to be submitted before the MARAC Steering Group's inaugural meeting.

5.3 The Chairperson will also represent the MARAC Steering Group at West Sussex Safer Communities Strategic Group

6 Administration

6.1 A standing agenda has been agreed for all meetings of the MARAC Steering Group, which should form the main focus for the work at each meeting.

6.2 Any additional items for the agenda of each meeting of the MARAC Steering Group should be submitted to the Chair 14 days before the meeting takes place.

6.3 An agenda should be prepared and circulated with the minutes of the last MARAC Steering Group meeting at least 7 days before the next meeting.

6.4 The meeting will be administered by the MARAC Co-ordinator.

7 Length and Frequency of Meetings

7.1 The MARAC Steering Group should meet at least four times per year for 2 hours.

7.2 The chair is entitled to call an extra-ordinary meeting should the need arise e.g. to resolve an urgent operational issue

8 Attendance at Meetings

8.1 Where an organisations representative is unable to attend, a deputy should attend meetings in their place.

8.2 Failure to attend 75% of meetings will result in the Chair reviewing the appropriateness of that organisations membership of the MARAC Steering Group and escalating the matter to a senior manager in that organisation.

8.3 For a meeting to be quorate, at least the Chair and 3 agencies must be present.

9 Structure and Accountability

9.1 The MARAC Steering Group is accountable to the Pan Sussex Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, which in turn accounts to the Safer West Sussex Partnership Board;

9.2 Confirmed minutes of meetings of the MARAC Steering Group shall be provided to the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board upon request.

9.3 The MARAC Steering Group shall identify members to act as representatives of the MARAC Steering Group to the Safer Communities Strategic Group, attending meetings and presenting reports or plans to develop/improve the MARAC that are congruent with the Aims and Objectives agreed by the MARAC Steering Group annually.

9.4 The Terms of Reference for the MARAC Steering Group and its standing sub-groups shall be available publicly through the Domestic Abuse website for West Sussex.

9.5 Annual updates from the Chair of the MARAC Steering Group shall be available publicly through the Domestic Abuse website for West Sussex.

9.6 Through the Chair and annual updates the MARAC Steering Group shall link with the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board, West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Partnership, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements Steering Group and the Children's Trust.

10 REVIEW

10.1 This document shall be reviewed by the MARAC Steering Group on a bi-annual basis.

10.2 Next date for Review: April 2026

10.3 Reviewed by:

Appendix A:

1 What is a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference?

1.1 A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a multi-agency process which has the safety of high-risk victims of domestic abuse as its focus. The identification of high-risk victims has been made possible by the use of a risk identification tool, most recently agreed between SafeLives and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), for use across a wide range of agencies. This has enabled practitioners, both within the criminal justice system and outside, to identify high risk victims of domestic abuse.

1.2 The MARAC is a high-volume process reflecting, sadly, the prevalence of domestic abuse within society. As such it involves the participation of all the key statutory and voluntary agencies who might be involved in supporting a victim of domestic abuse.

1.3 At a MARAC meeting high risk cases are discussed with a concise and focused information sharing process. This is followed by the creation of a simple multi-agency action plan which is put into place to support all identified victims, adults, and their children. This supports a coordinated approach with other public protection procedures, particularly those that manage perpetrators and safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

1.4 It is important to understand the MARAC meeting as part of a wider process which hinges on the early involvement and support from an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) or Domestic Abuse Support Worker. These roles provide ongoing specialist case management, both before and after the meeting takes place. The MARAC combines specialist support together with the co-ordination of key partner agencies whose resources and involvement are vital in our joint response to keep victims safe in West Sussex and continue to hold perpetrators of domestic abuse to account.