

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) voluntary and community organisations – Toolkit for MARAC

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What is a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)?

The main aim of the MARAC is to reduce the risk of serious harm or homicide for a victim and to increase the safety, health and wellbeing of victims – adults and any children. In a MARAC local agencies will meet to discuss the highest risk victims of domestic abuse in their area. Information about the risks faced by those victims, the actions needed to ensure safety, and the resources available locally are shared and used to create a risk management plan involving all agencies.

MARACs and LGBT Services

There are relatively few LGBT domestic abuse organisations in the UK and most local areas do not have services working specifically with LGBT people experiencing domestic abuse. The MARAC will seek to protect those who disclose domestic abuse to you and are at high risk from further abuse, through a coordinated response from all agencies. Representation of an LGBT voluntary or community organisation at MARAC will ensure this coordinated effort can be fully informed of the unique needs of LGBT people in terms of risk and appropriate interventions to increase their safety, health and well-being.

“Being able to refer to the MARAC was really important – it meant the support of other agencies in developing a safety plan. It was also a powerful message for my client; they realised other agencies would take their experiences seriously.” *Service manager, GBT domestic abuse organisation, Cardiff*

1. Frequently Asked Questions

Why does a representative from my agency attend?

While provision for LGBT people experiencing domestic abuse is improving, there remain a number of specific challenges and barriers to supporting LGBT survivors. Having a representative from an LGBT organisation will allow the high risk cases that you identify to get the same level of support as other victims, and will permit you to give expert input in relation to LGBT cases referred by generic agencies. You would only need to attend for cases involving LGBT individuals.

What cases are discussed?

The highest risk cases of domestic abuse are discussed in your MARAC. These will have been identified by a practitioner from any agency using an evaluated risk assessment tool (see attached for CAADA recommended risk indicator checklist). It is recommended that the MARAC should initially see the top 10% of cases in your area in terms of risk profile. This may include cases of extended family violence including so-called ‘honour’ based violence. Since LGBT victims are typically more reluctant to disclose domestic abuse, it may be that a greater percentage of your referrals meet the MARAC risk threshold.¹

What information should my agency bring?

As a representative from an LGBT voluntary or community service your knowledge of a victim and any children is invaluable to the MARAC; particularly where an individual is reluctant to disclose their experience to a generic organisation because they are concerned about homo/bi/transphobia. You can also bring information relating to a unique need they may face that is associated with their sexual orientation or gender identify, (e.g. if their partner is telling them that no one will help because they are LGBT).

¹ For example, an evaluation of gay men referred to the Dyn Project in Cardiff reported that 31% of referrals were classified as High or Very High Risk – to download this report visit the library of resources at www.caada.org.uk

What actions can we offer?

Any actions volunteered by the LGBT representative should focus on safety for the survivor. Your organisation could offer to have a joint appointment with another organisation, for both clients that are already engaging with you and those which are not known to your organisation. With the appropriate training, you might also offer advice to those involved to resolve cases where there are counter-allegations (i.e. where both parties in an incident are reported to the Police) or where another organisation has labelled a case as involving 'mutual abuse'.

What are the legal grounds for sharing information where consent is not given?

Disclosures to MARAC are made under the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act. Information can be shared when it is necessary to prevent a crime, protect the health and/or safety of the victim and/or the rights and freedoms of those who are victims of violence and/or their children. It must be proportionate to the level of risk of harm to a named individual or known household. For further information see the FAQs on disclosure of information at MARAC available at www.caada.org.uk

Does the victim need to know they are being discussed at MARAC?

Whether you discuss the MARAC with your client will depend on whether you referred the case to MARAC.

IF YOU ARE THE REFERRING AGENCY: It is good practice to discuss the referral with the victim if it is safe to do so. You will need to use your professional judgement to decide whether it is safe.

IF YOU ARE NOT THE REFERRING AGENCY: You should check with the referring agency before contacting your client to gather relevant information to ensure it is safe to do so.

2. Contact details for your MARAC

| | |
|---|--|
| MARAC Coordinator contact details | |
| MARAC LGBT Services Rep contact details | |

List of local contacts:

| AGENCY | NAME OF MARAC REP & DEPUTY | CONTACT DETAILS |
|--------|----------------------------|-----------------|
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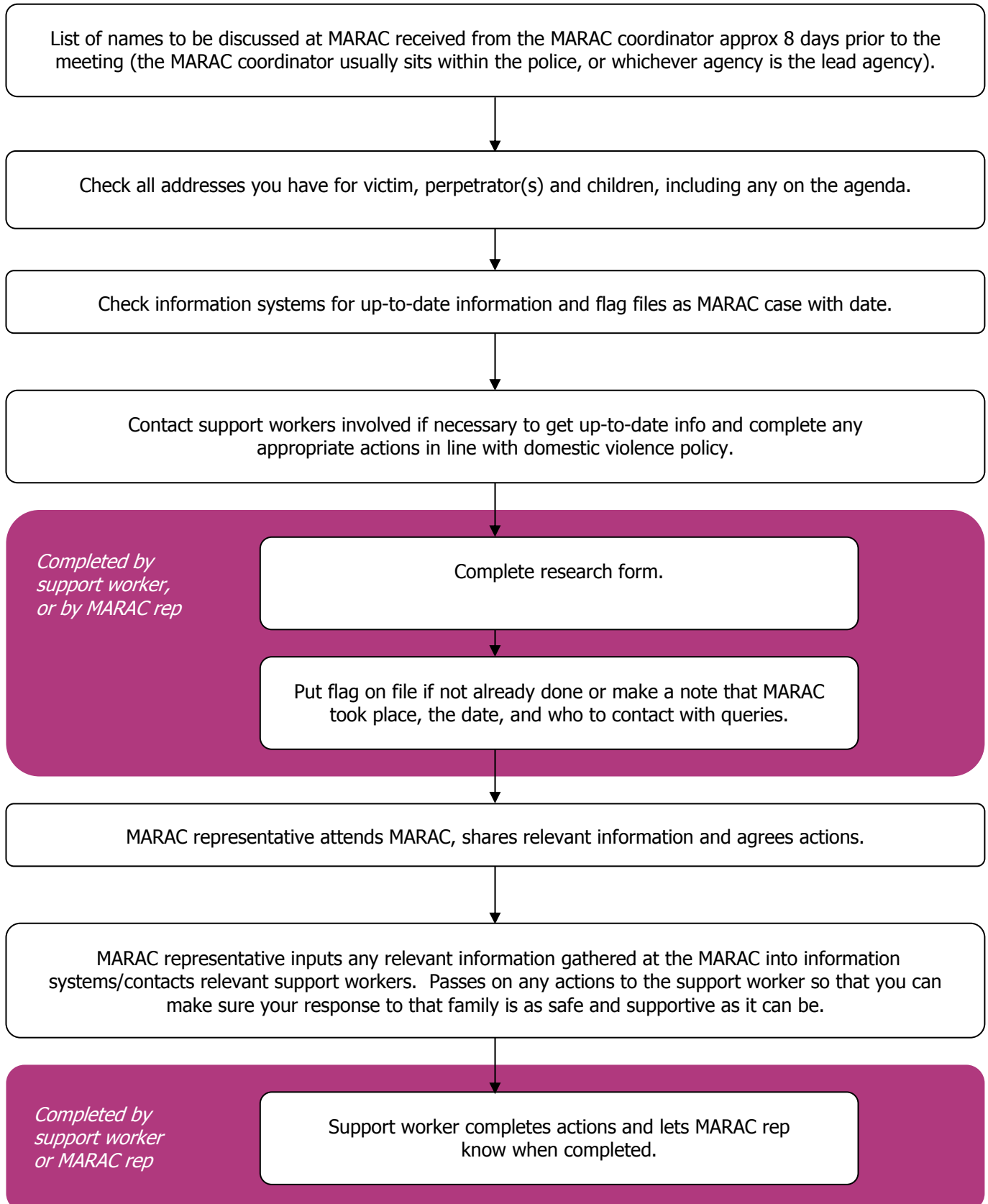
List of Toolkits available from www.caada.org.uk

- | | |
|---|--|
| A&E | Independent Domestic Violence Advisors |
| Adult Services | LGBT Services |
| B&ME Services | MARAC Chair |
| Cafcass | MARAC Coordinator |
| Children and Young People’s Services | Mental Health Services |
| Drug and Alcohol Services | Police Officer |
| Education | Probation |
| Health Visitors, School Nurses and Community Midwives | Sexual Violence Services |
| Housing/Homelessness | Specialist Domestic Violence Services |

3. Flowcharts

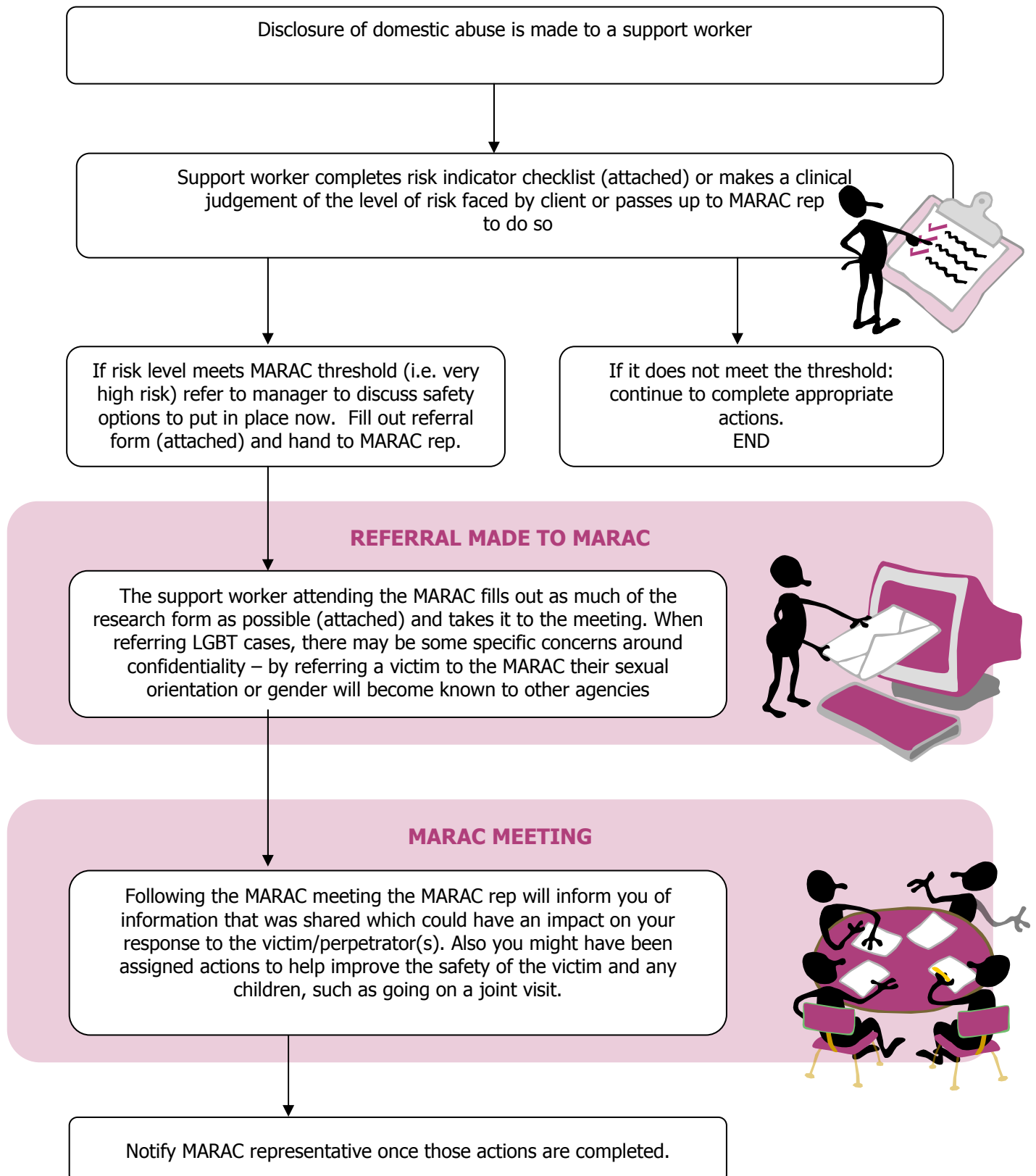
Researching for the MARAC

Practice in your agency will differ according to local policy and organisational structure, but below is an outline of the research process for MARAC. All the cells in white should be completed by your MARAC representative.



Referring a case to the MARAC

Policies on referring to your particular MARAC will be available locally but here is an outline of the process.



4. Forms

CAADA RECOMMENDED RISK INDICATOR CHECKLIST FOR IDVAS AND OTHER AGENCIES

(South Wales Police checklist but using non-police language assuming the IDVA or other professional will be discussing this with their client.)

| Questions (DO NOT FILL IN SHADED BOXES) | Yes (tick) | No/ Don't Know (N/DK) | Significant Concern |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Does partner/ex-partner have a criminal record for violence or drugs? If 'yes', is the record domestic abuse related? | | | |
| 2. Has the current incident resulted injuries? If 'yes', does this cause significant concern? | | | |
| 3. Has the incident involved the use of weapons? If 'yes', does this cause significant concern? | | | |
| 4. Has your partner/ex-partner ever threatened to kill anybody? If 'yes', which of the following? <i>(tick all that apply)</i> Client <input type="checkbox"/> Children <input type="checkbox"/> Other Intimate Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/> If 'yes', does this cause significant concern? | | | |
| 5. Has the partner/ex-partner expressed / behaved in a jealous way or displayed controlling behaviour or obsessive tendencies? If 'yes', describe in summary: | | | |
| If 'yes', does this cause significant concern? Give details: | | | |
| 6. Has there been/going to be a relationship separation between you and your partner/ ex-partner? | | | |
| 7. Is the abuse becoming worse and/or happening more often? | | | |
| 8. Are you very frightened? Give client's perceptions of the situation indicating what they think the partner/ex-partner will do. | | | |
| 9. Is your partner/ex-partner experiencing/recently experienced financial problems? | | | |
| 10. Does your partner/ex-partner have / had problems with the following: Alcohol <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/> Drugs <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 11. Are you pregnant? | | | |

| | Yes | No/ DK | |
|---|--------------|--------|---|
| 12. Is there any conflict with your partner / ex-partner over child contact? Describe in summary: | | | |
| 13. Has partner/ex-partner attempted to strangle/choke you or past partner? | | | |
| 14. Have you or your partner/ex-partner ever threatened/attempted to commit suicide? If 'yes', which of the following? Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner/ex-partner <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 15. Has your partner/ex-partner said or done things of a sexual nature that makes you feel bad or that physically hurts you? Give details: | | | |
| 16. Are you afraid of further injury or violence? | | | |
| 17. Are you afraid that your partner/ex-partner will kill you? (See note on victim's perception of risk in Guidance at end of form.) | | | |
| 18. Are you afraid that your partner/ex-partner will harm her/his children? | | | |
| 19. Do you suspect that you are being stalked? | | | |
| 20. Do you feel isolated from family / friends? Give details: | | | |
| Advocacy Worker's perception (please complete this section with your observations about the client's risk especially where there are lower numbers of 'yes' responses): | Total | | Total Significant concerns from Q1-5 |

The guidance below is based on the experience of the South Wales Police force and the Womens' Safety Unit in Cardiff. You may need to adjust these levels to ensure that the volume of cases referred to your MARAC is in line with the recommended level of the top 10% in risk terms. You will need to analyse whether it would be more appropriate to adjust the number of call outs (say from 3 per annum to 5 per annum) or the number of 'ticks' on the checklist. The importance of clinical judgement remains unchanged whatever the level of actuarial threshold.

Guidance on identifying Cases for MARAC

MARAC Threshold =

10 ticks in the yes box OR
4 significant concerns (Q1-5) OR
If there are 3 police call-outs in 12 months
Maximum number of ticks = 20

(do not include 'significant concern' questions in this total)

In all cases, IDVAs should take the victim's perception of their risk very seriously and should use their professional judgement if a client appears to be at high or very high risk even if they do not meet the criteria outlined above.

This form, originally developed by South Wales Police, has been updated to reflect the research on its use by IDVAs both at the Women's Safety Unit in Cardiff and the ASSIST advocacy service in Glasgow. CAADA has added a 'don't know' option as there is a risk of ticking 'no' when information is not known, which might be incorrect and give a false low risk level. The levels of risk are useful in clarifying the different response that a service will offer to a client depending on the severity of their situation.

MARAC REFERRAL FORM

CASE NUMBER

To Lead Agency:

Tel:

Fax:

Date:

Victim: Name and Date of Birth

Ethnicity:

Address of Victim:

Perpetrator(s): Name(s) and Date(s) of Birth

Address of Perpetrator(s):

Children: Names and Dates of Birth

Address of Children:

Is this a repeat? Y/N/DK

If yes, give date when
last at MARAC:

Reasons for Referral:

Background and Risk Issues:

Is the person referred aware of the MARAC referral? Yes/No

If person is aware of MARAC referral and it is safe to contact them please consider the following questions;

- Who is the victim afraid of? (to include all potential threats, and not just primary perpetrator)
- Who does the victim believe it safe to talk to?
- Who does the victim believe it not safe to talk to?

(Attach Risk Assessment where Completed)

Referring Practitioner and Agency:

Contact Details:

Telephone:

Mobile:

Email:

Address:

RESEARCH FORM FOR MARAC

Name of Agency:

Contact:

Tel:

Mobile:

Email:

Research all information, files and databases using NAME, DOB OR/AND ADDRESSES of ALL individuals concerned. Confirm basic contact information, ages of all concerned and number of children.

Contact relevant officer or support/key worker in your team and request current, accurate information and their professional opinion about the individuals concerned. Record this here.

Note records of last sightings, meetings or phone calls.

Note recent attitude, behaviour and demeanour, including changes.

Highlight any relevant information that relates to any of the risk indicators on the checklist e.g. the pattern of abuse suffered, abuse of immigration status, victim's greatest fear etc

Identify any other concerns your agency may have about the victim. Clarify any areas of potential misunderstanding for the partner agencies at the MARAC or inaccuracies on the agenda (e.g. information missing, more than one individual/alias names, conflicting information, more/less children than on agenda).

Has the victim indicated to you what would help them most to feel safe?