

# When should I refer a victim of domestic abuse to MARAC?



## Definition of High Risk

High risk domestic abuse refers to incidents or patterns of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour between intimate partners or family members. It is characterised by indicators of serious harm, such as separation, pregnancy, escalation of abuse, cultural isolation, stalking, harassment, sexual assault, and suicide risk.

All the above points need to be considered by practitioners when reviewing a case that may be high risk along with the completion of a DASH risk assessment.

DASH **high risk** indicator guide states:

*For a case to be high risk, there are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. The potential even could happen at any time and the impact would be serious.*

*A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery whether physical or psychological can be expected to be difficult or impossible.*

For MARAC, a case must reach the criteria outlined above.

## Risk is dynamic

Risk is dynamic and can change depending on current circumstances a DASH risk assessment of fourteen or above may not necessarily mean the case is high risk right now but will give a good indication of what to consider.

## Risk Assessment considerations

When completing a risk assessment practitioners should be asking for timescales of threats and incidents that have occurred, look at the current situation, and discuss whether the disclosures made on the risk assessment still form part of the current risk. This is not to minimise in any way the victims voice, but the practitioner must be able to assess what is happening or likely to happen now. Victims are often very aware of their own current risk and their voice should always be within answers given on a risk assessment.

An example of risk changing from high to medium or standard could be that the victim has moved out of area and the perpetrator is not aware of their location, there has been no unwanted contact or threats. Whilst there may be a history of high-risk domestic abuse, these are not currently occurring and are unlikely to unless the victim is located.

### **Example of a high risk case to be referred to MARAC**

A case that would be considered high risk would be, the persons are still living in the same household and incidents are ongoing, there is a continued level of high-risk stalking, credible threats to kill which the victim believes which includes the perpetrator being aware of their pattern of work, leisure, and safe addresses. There is an imminent risk of serious harm to the victim and any dependants due to incidents being recent or ongoing. Despite protective orders and bail conditions the perpetrator has no regard and continues to breach.

The demeanour of the victim and their level of fear also forms part of a risk assessment, a victim may not always be ready to fully disclose that they are a victim of domestic abuse, and practitioners need to be able to take this into consideration, thinking about victim's current emotional state and vulnerabilities.

If it is available the history of the perpetrator is useful when considering whether a case is high risk and can include factors such as previous offending, known other victims, emotional wellbeing, and substance use.