



The Royal College of Midwives
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Royal College of Midwives submission to Scottish Government on Improving Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and interventions for victims of domestic abuse

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) is the trade union and professional organisation that represents the vast majority of practising midwives in the UK. It is the only such organisation run by midwives for midwives. The RCM is the voice of midwifery, providing excellence in representation, professional leadership, education and influence for and on behalf of midwives. We actively support and campaign for improvements to maternity services and provide professional leadership for one of the most established clinical disciplines.

How can we ensure training on domestic abuse and appropriate risk assessment tools for public bodies, agencies and service staff?

Approach must be coordinated and consistent throughout Scotland. There must be consistent training for all public bodies in order to embed awareness raising on the signs of domestic abuse, as early intervention is of critical importance. In particular, the RCM believes Local Authorities must have access to the same training and tools as the NHS in order to achieve this. There must be recognition that there are 'many factors at play' in any response to domestic abuse, and that effective information sharing is essential.

In your view, what is the best model of multi-agency working for ensuring effective and early interventions for victims of domestic abuse?

Current MARAC provision with multi-agency collaboration provides the best model for ensuring early intervention. It is appropriate that they are local, offering an efficient model to identify both victims/survivors and perpetrators.

In your view, who are the key partners that should be involved in multi-agency working to support victims of domestic abuse?

Police Scotland, NHS Scotland, Children and Families SW, Criminal Justice SW, IDAAs, SPS, Addiction Services, Education, Fire and Rescue, Specialised VAW partnerships, Adult Protection Services, Local Authority Housing and specialist domestic abuse and children's support services. All of these bodies currently attend MARAC and we think this should remain the case. Everyone must have clear roles within MARAC and be clear about what information can be shared amongst partners.

In your view, what guidance is required to support and embed effective multi-agency working for victims of domestic abuse?

There are several things we would recommend here. Firstly, full transparency is required so the victim/survivor is fully aware of all discussions. IDAAs should be available for all victims/ survivors and their families to ensure effective and transparent communication between MARAC and victims; this will also embed trust, which is essential for any effective relationship. IDAAs must be available in all local authorities throughout Scotland, with the appropriate training. Victims must be

confident that information sharing is appropriate, accurate and safe in order to facilitate ongoing trust. Any confusion may adversely impinge upon effectiveness.

Secondly, from the point of view of maternity services, we are all using routine enquiry which is all about early identification and risk assessment, and importantly, it will link in with GIRFEC requirements.

Of note, not all midwifery services use Safelives DASH risk assessment. Ideally, ALL agencies should use the same risk assessment tools and scoring systems, in order to facilitate both consistency and a coordinated approach.

Lastly, maternity services must be involved in MARAC for any pregnant women.

What protocols need to be put in place in to ensure effective information sharing between agencies?

Robust protocols around details of information that can be shared; relevant, appropriate, safe and necessary. Protocols must be transparent and consistent throughout Scotland to facilitate collaborative working. All agencies in attendance must be aware of their role with regard to the victim/survivor and in the dissemination of all information. Digital communication must be safe with robust IT systems embedded to keep information safe and secure.

Do you think that multi-agency arrangements for protecting victims of domestic abuse should be placed on a statutory footing?

Yes, the RCM agrees with this proposal. MARAC is risk informed. It is safe, effective, robust and has been seen to work collaboratively across Scotland. However, things can still be improved. More work is needed to embed MARAC within all local authorities in order to provide consistency – please see our point about consistent training made earlier. We need statutory guidance that is simple and clear to use, and work is still required to ensure we are all looking at prevention and early identification to reduce the number of people being discussed at MARAC.

Evidence clearly shows that where appropriate agencies work together, sharing information in a safe manner, working consistently and transparently, the lives of those affected by domestic abuse can be improved. MARAC provides a clear agreed model of multi-disciplinary working, and has a commonly agreed approach to identifying risk.

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