

Domestic Abuse and MARAC Audit

This briefing highlights good practice, key learning, and areas for improvement from audits where children have experienced domestic abuse. Steps practitioners can take to access information, training, and resources are included.

Good Practice

Communication and Multi-Agency Working was Good

- Information sharing between core agencies; social workers, health and police was good. There was also evidence of specialist domestic abuse agencies such as Women's Aid and Roshni engaged in the multi-agency work with families. An example was a social worker had worked with Women's Aid, housing and police to support the family to escape the domestic abuse and secure housing outside of Birmingham. Mom's mental health improved, and the family were later closed (after re-referral).

Key Learning

Understanding Intersecting Needs

- Most of the families were impacted by multiple risks and vulnerabilities such as mental health difficulties, substance misuse and neglect. Plans and assessments often failed to acknowledge the impact of these issues on parenting capacity and instead focused resolving individual needs in isolation, rather than recognising that domestic abuse was impacting on other areas of family functioning and wellbeing.

Anger Management and Relationship Counselling Referrals

- These referrals are never appropriate where domestic abuse is involved. Anger management ignores the fact that abusive and/or controlling behaviour is a choice directed towards one person and undermines the victims' experiences of abuse and violence. It can also teach the abusive partner ways to hide the abuse.

Relationship counselling can increase the risk for a victim of domestic abuse if they speak openly about their abuse; but it can also prevent a victim from disclosing domestic abuse due to the fear of consequences after disclosure. It also infers to a victim that the abuse is a mutual problem.

Improving Practice

- A Chronology can identify patterns of abusive and violent behaviour, evidence concerns, and ensure previous attempts at support are not repeated. Genograms tell us who is involved in the child's life and how their family functions.
- Using the [DASH risk assessment](#) to identify risks, inform safety planning and other agencies that need to be involved, can help with better outcomes for families.
- [Refer to MARAC](#) if the DASH risk assessment score is +14 or use professional judgement however this should not substitute your own safeguarding actions. Repeat incidents after a MARAC hearing require an updated DASH risk assessment and MARAC referral. 3 repeat incidents in the 12 months after the initial MARAC would lead to another full MARAC hearing. Remember that risk is dynamic.

Next Steps

- Share the briefing with colleagues and discuss domestic abuse and MARAC at team meetings and practice workshops.
- Ensure robust exit strategies when ending support for a family to ensure ongoing support. Post separation abuse accounts for half of the reports to police for domestic abuse.
- [Access BSCP Domestic Abuse Training](#)

You can access up-to-date multi-agency guidance, BSCP training and learning from Serious Cases on the BSCP website: www.lscpbirmingham.org.uk