

Kensington and Chelsea Council Housing and Social Investment Domestic Abuse Policy

2022 – 2025



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1. Introduction

- 1.1** This Domestic Abuse Policy outlines how the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's (RBKC) Housing & Social Investment Department will support and assist any tenant and/or service user threatened with or experiencing any forms of domestic abuse (DA), and its approach to any tenant found to be perpetrating domestic abuse. This policy encompasses RBKC Housing Management, RBKC Housing Needs and Sanctuary.
- 1.2** For the 12-month period to year ending March 2020, there was an estimated 2.3 million adult victims of domestic abuse aged 16 to 74, and more than two-thirds of whom are women (Office for National Statistics, 2020). More than one in ten of all offences recorded by the police are domestic abuse related (Home Office, 2021).
- 1.3** The issue, however, is much bigger than shown in official statistics, as many survivors and children don't tell anyone about the abuse, and they are not recorded as crimes.
- 1.4** Additionally, 52 per cent of survivors of domestic abuse require housing support to stay in their accommodation or to move, and 32 per cent of homeless women say domestic abuse contributed to their homelessness. At least 22 per cent of those who enter a DA service have a secure tenancy on arrival while only 13 per cent of service users had a secure tenancy after leaving emergency accommodation. Lack of access to safe and long-term housing remains one of the biggest barriers for survivors in leaving an abusive situation.
- 1.5** As a provider of housing, the RBKC Housing service is well placed to identify the signs of domestic abuse through the regular contact we have with our tenants. The existing

relationship and contact routes between residents and Housing Services, as well as the intrinsic relationship between domestic abuse and housing issues, mean RBKC Housing has a key role to play and can make a difference for those experiencing domestic abuse and their outcomes. Currently, only 2.7 per cent of MARAC referrals nationally come from housing providers.

- 1.6** As a provider of advice and assistance to those who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or otherwise in housing need, we recognise the importance of access to safe and suitable housing for those affected by domestic abuse. This policy outlines how we will respond to victims/survivors who need our assistance.
- 1.7** We recognise our staff may be experiencing domestic abuse and will support them in accordance with RBKC's Employee Domestic Abuse and Gender Based Violence Policy.

2. Aims

- 2.1** The purpose of this policy is to outline RBKC Housing & Social Investment's aims with regard to its response to DA. These are:
- Raise awareness of domestic abuse.
 - Ensure Housing & Social Investment staff know the role they can play in tackling domestic abuse.
 - Create a safe environment where survivors of domestic abuse can talk.
 - Ensure staff are trained, are able to recognise signs of domestic abuse and equipped with the knowledge necessary to respond to these.
 - Make safeguarding referrals where needed.
 - Support victims to make decisions around their housing needs.
 - Signpost perpetrators to agencies who can offer them support.

- Work towards the prevention of domestic abuse in the medium to long term.
- Adopt a partnership approach and drive forward the active engagement of RBKC Housing & Social Investment with providers and partners, both internal and external.
- Promote awareness amongst other agencies of the role that Housing & Social Investment can play in assisting individuals experiencing abuse and raising awareness of DA.
- Create a holistic, embedded response structure to domestic abuse where the survivor and their safety are put first, and where domestic abuse is recognised as a crime and a stand-alone issue separate from anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- Ensure equality and diversity is considered at all points of the DA response and that the service we provide is inclusive and accessible to all.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1** This policy outlines the approach RBKC Housing & Social Investment take to cases of domestic abuse affecting residents in RBKC's housing estates and individuals who approach us for assistance and the commitment to support those affected by DA.
- 3.2** This policy will be considered alongside the Council's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) corporate strategy but will be specific to RBKC Housing & Social Investment.
- 3.3** Housing & Social Investment in RBKC is adopting a survivor-centred approach to domestic abuse. This means that any person reporting domestic abuse to the Council's Housing services will be treated in a sensitive, supportive and non-judgemental manner. The voice of the

survivor will be listened to and prioritised in case management.

- 3.4** RBKC is committed to making its services inclusive and accessible to all. The Housing Service recognise that those affected by domestic abuse are likely to be vulnerable, and that each individual's situation is unique and affected by a multitude of factors. RBKC, therefore considers equality, diversity and accessibility at all points in its approach to domestic abuse and is survivor-centred in its response.
- 3.5** RBKC Housing & Social Investment are working towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for housing providers and working to align with the DAHA principles of non-judgement, being person-centred, amplifying survivor voices, intersectionality, safety, and working towards a coordinated community response.

- 3.6** RBKC recognise domestic abuse as a crime and is never the fault of the person experiencing it. RBKC adopts the Government's definition of domestic abuse and that this encompasses many behaviours beyond physical violence.

4. Domestic Abuse

- 4.1** The Government's definition of domestic violence and abuse is "any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those ages 16 or over who are or have been intimate family members or partners, regardless of gender of sexuality."
- 4.2** Domestic abuse can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or social background. Domestic abuse does not only occur between couples but can also involve wider

family members, and people who have ended their relationship.

- 4.3** The severity and frequency of domestic violence can vary but just one encounter counts as abuse.
- 4.4** This definition can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:
- Physical
 - Psychological
 - Sexual
 - Emotional
 - Financial
 - Controlling behaviour
 - Coercive behaviour
 - Honour based violence
 - Forced marriage
 - Female genital mutilation (FGM)
 - Physical abuse is the use of physical force against someone in a way that injures or endangers that person.
- 4.5** Psychological abuse is a form of abuse in which a person subjects or exposes another person to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder or depression.
- 4.6** Sexual abuse is a form of physical abuse which is abusive sexual behaviour by one person upon another.
- 4.7** Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse such as name-calling, telling, blaming and shaming, isolation, intimidation, and controlling behaviour also fall under emotional abuse.
- 4.8** Financial abuse can include a perpetrator using or misusing money which limits and controls their partner's current and future actions and their freedom of choice.

- 4.9** Controlling behaviour is defined as a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for resistance, independence and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

- 4.10** Coercive behaviour is defined as an act or pattern of acts of threats, humiliation, assault and intimidation or other abuse that is used to punish, harm or frighten their victim.

- 4.11** Controlling or coercive behaviour can cause real harm and is a crime under the Serious Crime Act 2015 (Section 76).

- 4.12** This Governmental definition of domestic abuse includes honour-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that those suffering from these are not confined to one ethnic or gender group.

- 4.13** Honour based violence is an umbrella term used to describe a combination of practices which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived religious or cultural beliefs and/or honour.

- 4.14** Female genital mutilation comprises all procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

- 4.15** A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor.

5. Reporting Domestic Abuse

- 5.1 RBKC recognises that those suffering from domestic abuse will often find it enormously difficult to ask for help. It is of the utmost importance that if a disclosure is made, it is dealt with in an empathetic, supportive and sensitive manner, and taken seriously.
- 5.2 The services of an interpreter will be offered if the survivor does not speak English.
- 5.3 Confidentiality
- 5.4 Confidentiality is crucial so as to not inadvertently put the survivor at further risk.
- 5.5 Information sharing is a crucial component of an effective response to DA.
- 5.6 We will only disclose personal information without the victim's consent in line with our Data Protection and Safeguarding policies and procedures. This may also include MARAC referrals in order to safeguard victims/survivors.
- 5.7 When it is in the victim's vital interest, to prevent a crime, or to seek legal advice, each case will be judged on its own merits.
- 5.8 All relevant staff will be trained on how to provide support, signpost, record the case and take appropriate next steps while upholding customer confidentiality.
- 5.9 Risk management
- 5.10 If the survivor is labelled as in immediate risk, we will:
- 5.11 Advise them to contact the police
- 5.12 Advise them on emergency rehousing

- 5.13 Signpost them to specialist advice and support, at both the national and local level
- 5.14 Agree initial actions and contact arrangements for safe future communications.
- 5.15 Safeguarding responsibilities
- 5.16 All cases of DA should be referred to the Local Authority as a safeguarding referral.
- 5.17 Children within the affected household will be listed separately.
- 5.18 The Council has a statutory responsibility for safeguarding and has a legal basis to override client confidentiality and share proportionate and relevant information that is necessary to improve the safety of the survivor or anyone at risk. In cases where there is a safeguarding concern, Housing Services are therefore able to make support referrals without the consent of the complainant or person at hand.
- 5.19 When dealing with cases of DA, we will adhere to relevant safeguarding protocols. When needed, a Neighbourhood Support Coordinator can make support referrals without consent if there is a safeguarding concern.

6. Supporting/responding to a victim/survivor

- 6.1 When an incident of DA is reported, we will contact the victim/survivor or referring agency within 1 working day.
- 6.2 Within 2 working days of the report, an agreed action plan containing RBKC's commitments will be shared with the victim/survivor or referring agency.

- 6.3 RBKC will tailor its action plan and response to each case, adopting a person-centred approach and recognising that each individual and their situation is unique.
- 6.4 High-risk cases will be referred to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
- 6.5 We will commit to attending MARAC and to carry out actions identified in conferences.
- 6.6 We will ensure ongoing support is provided to the victim/survivor. Follow-up contact should be made, and communication should be maintained regularly between the victim/survivor and Housing Services.

7. Assessing risk in incidents of domestic abuse

- 7.1 We will assess all reported incidents of DA as a priority.
- 7.2 A risk assessment will be carried out for each reported case. We aim to complete assessments in the form of a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based violence (DASH) assessment by a person trained in the use of the DASH checklist. Completed DASH risk forms are active records.
- 7.3 Where a high risk of serious harm is identified, we will ensure action will be taken immediately to reduce the risk.
- 7.4 Cases assessed as high risk through the DASH assessment will be referred to MARAC.
- 7.5 Cases where there are signs of escalation should also be considered for a MARAC referral, including but not limited to repeat cases where the risk threshold is evaluated as low or medium by a risk assessment.

- 7.6 We will prioritise the voice of the survivor and their own sense of security when assessing risk.
- 7.7 Housing should be represented at MARAC when a tenant's case is being discussed.
- 7.8 RBKC recognises that risk is dynamic and fluid and must therefore be reassessed regularly.

8. Use of tools and powers

- 8.1 Use of tools and powers, including the decision to engage with external partners, will be case specific.
- 8.2 Every DA case will be assessed on its own circumstances and will consider the severity of the abuse, the needs and wishes of the victim and any criminality.
- 8.3 We will make appropriate use of all relevant powers and tools to sanction and support victims of DA including possession proceedings, injunctions and Notice of Seeking Possession.
- 8.4 RBKC will make use of the Sanctuary Schemes for Households at Risk of Domestic Abuse where a referral is made to the Community Safety Team, implementing property-specific security upgrades to the survivor's property, in accordance with RBKC Housing's repairs, replacement and fire safety regulations.
- 8.5 Sanctuary works are considered irrespective of tenure (which also includes RBKC Tenants placed in temporary accommodation in the Private Rented Sector).

9. Housing and Homelessness

9.1 In dealing with cases of domestic abuse, the Housing Department will operate a “survivor” orientated approach at all times. This means the following guiding principles will apply:

- a. Advice and Assistance
- b. The Housing Department’s priority is to offer appropriate advice and assistance to the person facing domestic abuse.
- c. Confidentiality
- d. Officers will respect the confidentiality required in such cases; however, it may be appropriate on occasion to notify agencies of concerns without the survivor’s consent, e.g. Social Services if there is concern for the welfare of a child. Exceptions include where there is concern of serious harm or death to the survivor or to another person. The survivor should be notified of any prospective referral.
- e. Responding Appropriately
- f. The survivor’s word will be accepted. Their report will be treated seriously and in a non-judgemental manner. The survivor should be given the choice of seeing an officer of the same gender and ethnicity as themselves. The assistance of an official interpreter should be offered as required; family and friends should not be used to ensure no safeguarding concerns.

9.2 Incidents of domestic abuse can be reported to any officer in the Housing Department. Reports of domestic abuse from victim/survivors’ will always be treated in a sensitive manner. All reports must be recorded and are to be investigated within 24 hours.

- 9.3** On receiving the report, when a victim/survivor initially approaches for housing assistance where relevant, the following steps should be taken:
- ▶ A housing officer will check the existing records for any access issues, vulnerabilities and potential safety risks.
 - ▶ Collate all of the information relating to the victim/survivor’s cause of homelessness or reason for approach. This includes supporting information provided by the victim/survivor, supporting agencies and enquiries made by the housing officer.
 - ▶ Ascertain if the survivor is known to support services including organisations for DV support, social services or other agencies that are already providing support.
 - ▶ Inform Family / Children Services or Adult Social Care where there is current or previous involvement.
 - ▶ Highlight the case with their line manager.
 - ▶ Refer to support agencies. Referrals can be made to the Housing IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) who is attached to the Housing Solutions Team. The Housing IDVA is provided by domestic abuse advocacy agency known as ADVANCE. A referral to the Housing IDVA requires the consent of the victim/survivor. The Housing IDVA can provide specialist advice to a victim/survivor including legal remedies, safety planning and emotional support and other relevant options.
 - ▶ Homeless assessments are completed using the legislative framework under the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. When victim/survivors approach for a homeless application, an initial assessment will be completed by a Housing Solutions Officer. This will ascertain whether the person or household are threatened with or already considered to be homeless.

Along with ascertaining their eligibility and whether a household is considered to be in priority need.

- ▶ Housing officers will be mindful that often a victim/survivors’ cause of homelessness will likely be as a consequence of domestic abuse. Housing options for victim/survivor’s will be mindful not to move a household to an area of risk(s).
- ▶ Further information regarding the homeless application process can be found: www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/download-this-guidance
- ▶ Check to see if there have been any previous MARAC referrals with Housing Dept MARAC Leads.
- ▶ Check for MARAC referral in area of temporary accommodation (TA).
- ▶ New MARAC referrals can be made where there is need for escalation, visible high risk or due to professional judgement. These can be completed by either housing officers or the Housing IDVA. These referrals will require the consent of the victim/survivor.
- ▶ New MARAC referrals can also be made, based on the score on a completed DASH Risk Identification Checklist.
- ▶ Repeat MARAC referrals can be made based on the score on a completed DASH Risk Identification Checklist or if the survivor has been referred to the MARAC in the last 12 months and there has been at least one further domestic abuse incident by the same perpetrator on the same survivor since the referral.
- ▶ Explore accommodation options with the survivor:
 - Do they wish to remain in their accommodation (settled, TA or private rented sector - PRS) should it be made secure (i.e. through the Sanctuary Scheme)?
 - If they are already in TA, would they like to be transferred to alternative TA?

- If they are in PRS accommodation, would they like assistance in securing new PRS?
- If the survivor does not believe that they can be safely accommodated within the temporary housing stock available to the Council, they can make a new homeless application to another local authority. They may also need to take legal advice to successfully pursue this course of action.

9.4 MARAC (multi-agency-risk-assessment-conference) is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. After sharing all relevant information held about a survivor, the representatives discuss options for increasing the safety of the survivor and turn these into a co-ordinated action plan. The main focus of the MARAC is on managing the risk to the adult survivor but in doing this it will also consider other family members including any children involved and managing the behaviour of the perpetrator.

9.5 At the heart of MARAC is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a survivor, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. The survivor does not attend the meeting but is represented by an IDVA who speaks on their behalf.

9.6 The Housing MARAC Toolkit (including glossary information) is attached at Appendix 1 which contains guidance in relation to MARAC.

9.7 A MARAC referral is not intended to take over the work that officers would be expected to carry out, and not all cases of domestic abuse will be referred to MARAC, but the procedure still needs to be followed.

9.8 The Housing department can inform the survivor of the possible options available. However, it should be emphasised that any specialist legal advice should be sought from an independent source.

9.9 There are two types of order available under Part IV of the Family Law Act 1996:

- A non-molestation order is aimed at preventing the partner or ex-partner from using or threatening violence against the survivor or their children or intimidating, harassing or pestering the survivor in order to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the victim/survivor and their children. A breach of a non-molestation order is a criminal offence.
- An occupation order regulates who can live in the family home and can restrict the perpetrator from entering the surrounding area.

9.10 Officers may wish to discuss safety planning with the survivor. Safety planning means thinking about what the survivor can do to avoid violence and to develop a plan of action if things get more dangerous and they feel they have to leave their home. Here are some steps the survivor could take:

- Always carry a list of emergency numbers
- Get an extra set of keys cut for the home and car
- Keep the keys and a set of clothes for all family members packed and ready
- Leave them somewhere safe, perhaps with a trusted friend or relative
- Keep documents – birth certificates, benefit books and passports somewhere safe/ready to take

- Try to save a small amount of money for bus, train or taxi fares

If there is more time to plan:

- ▶ Leave when the perpetrator is not around
- ▶ Take all important legal papers and documents
- ▶ Take any personal possessions that have sentimental value
- ▶ Take any medicines the family might need
- ▶ Take clothing to last several days

9.11 Arrange for pets to be cared for – a local animal charity may be able to help.

10. Perpetrators

10.1 RBKC recognises perpetrators of DA as accountable for their actions. Although the response to DA is focused on survivors, tackling perpetrator behaviour in view of reducing it is crucial to long-term reductions in incidences of DA.

10.2 Relevant staff will be trained in dealing and engaging with perpetrators.

10.3 We will consider the use of legal tools and powers afforded to us including evicting or excluding perpetrators where there is evidence to allow the survivor to stay or return home.

10.4 We will provide information about support services to perpetrators who approach us for help or advice to change their behaviour.

10.5 Where a perpetrator of a reported DA case is aged below 16, they should be managed in accordance with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policies and procedures and in conjunction with our partner agencies.

11. Records Management

11.1 DA cases will be logged, managed and reported through our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) and will be kept in line with data retention schedules.

11.2 We will keep accurate and detailed notes on all cases to ensure all information is on record. Contact details for survivors will be recorded to ensure we can maintain contact.

11.3 Past cases can be used as a basis for learning and improving practice going forward.

12. Support for staff

12.1 Support for staff working on cases of DA will be available.

12.2 A person-centred approach should apply to Housing and our partners' staff and their wellbeing needs will be prioritised and addressed in a flexible way.

12.3 Information shared by an employee who disclose their experience of DA will be treated as confidential.

12.4 Staff experiencing or affected by domestic abuse or GBV do not have to keep their experiences to themselves; there is help and support available. Where a perpetrator and victim of the same case of DA work in the same organisation, the survivor should inform their line manager or HR. Disciplinary action will be taken against the perpetrator and action may be taken to ensure that the two individuals do not come into contact within the workplace.

13. Glossary

13.1 Risk assessment: a systematic process of evaluating the potential risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.

13.2 DASH risk checklist: a tool used to assess the immediate threat, risk and danger a survivor is subject to. The tool is used by all agencies to provide a common and consistent language of risk.

13.3 Survivor-centred approach: an approach which applies the human rights based approach to designing and developing programming that ensures that survivors' needs, wishes and rights are first and foremost.

13.4 Person-centred approach: an approach where the person is placed at the centre of the service and treated as a person first. The approach considers each person's life experience, gender, age, culture, language, heritage, identity and beliefs.

13.5 Coordinated community response: The involvement of health, police, judicial and legal services, shelters and protection services, schools and other cultural groups to ensure survivors of violence, their children and other dependents receive the comprehensive support they need in both a sensitive and timely manner.

13.6 Domestic Homicide Review (DHR): a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves. Since 13 April 2011, there has been a statutory requirement for local areas to conduct a DHR following a domestic homicide that meets the criteria.

14. Resident Consultation

14.1 This policy will be reviewed in line with consultation carried out with relevant stakeholders.

It is important that all stakeholders, especially service users, can inform and influence the Council's policy on domestic abuse, especially at a time when the number of housing approaches due to domestic abuse are increasing.

A draft policy has been produced, which has taken into account good practice from elsewhere, the recommended good practice by DAHA, legislation and other corporate policies and strategies, e.g. VAWG strategy. The main aim of this consultation is therefore:

- To inform the development of the policy
- To ensure that all stakeholders are involved in implementing the policy
- To ensure that service users are pivotal in agreeing the policy
- To ensure that the policy sets out the effective pathways for all service users

The information that you provide will enable the Council to understand your views on the proposed policy, as well as help us put effective solutions in place to support our service users.

15. Related Documents

- RBKC Housing Management Safeguarding Policy
- RBKC Housing Management Safeguarding Procedure
- RBKC Allocation Policy
- RBKC Employee Domestic Abuse and Gender Based Violence Policy
- RBKC Council Plan 2019-2023

- Supporting and Safeguarding Vulnerable Residents
- RBKC Housing Management Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- RBKC Housing Management Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure
- RBKC Housing Management Transfer Panel Procedure
- VAWG Strategy
- Sanctuary Flowchart and Referral Form
- RBKC Tenancy Agreement
- Working Together multi-agency guidance
- London Child Protection Procedures 6th Edition 2020 section 28: Safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse.

16. Legal Context

- Housing Acts 1985, 1988 and 1996
- Family Law Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Police and Justice Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Localism Act 2011
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Anti-Social Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Clare's Law (Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme) 2014
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- General Data Protection Act 2018
- The Caldicott Principles
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

17. Equalities Statement

The Council is committed to promoting fair and equal access to services and equal opportunities in employment, the procurement of goods and as a community leader. The Council's policies, procedures and day to day practices have been established to promote an environment which is free from unlawful and unfair discrimination, while valuing the diversity of all people.

Discrimination on the grounds of age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation is not acceptable: the Council will take action to ensure no person using the council's premises or services receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by requirements or conditions that cannot be justified. The Council will tackle inequality, treat all people with dignity and respect and continue to work to improve services for all service users.

The legal framework for the Council's approach is provided by the Equality Act 2010 and specifically by the Public Sector Equality Duty, under which a public authority must work consciously to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with differing characteristics. Further detail on the Duty, and the Council's approach to fulfilling its requirements, can be found at www.rbkc.gov.uk.

We will consider equalities issues when developing this policy, by carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment.

18. GDPR & Data Protection

As a directorate of RBKC, Housing & Social Investment shares the commitment to ensure that all data is:

- processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner
- collected for a specific and legitimate purpose and not used for anything other than this stated purpose, or as provided for in our privacy and fair processing notices
- relevant and limited to whatever the requirements are for which the data is processed
- accurate, and where necessary, kept up to date. Any identified inaccuracies will be amended or removed without undue delay
- stored for as long as required, as specified within RBKC's Records Retention policy
- secured with appropriate solutions, which protect the data against unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss, destruction or damage.

For further information about the Council's commitment to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), visit the Council's website at www.rbkc.gov.uk.

19. Compliance, Monitoring & Review

- 19.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner to incorporate legislative and/or regularly amendments, best practice developments, or to address any operational issues identified with the process.

20. Version Control

Version	Purpose	Author	Date

21. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Housing MARAC Toolkit (including glossary information)

Appendix 1: Housing MARAC Toolkit (including glossary information)

Toolkit for Marac Housing

Introduction

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

A Marac is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, probation, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. After sharing all relevant information they have about a victim, the representatives discuss options for increasing the safety of the victim and turn these into a co-ordinated action plan.

The primary focus of the Marac is to safeguard the adult victim. The Marac will also make links with other fora to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator. At the heart of a Marac is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. The victim does not attend the meeting but is normally represented by an IDVA who speaks on their behalf.

Maracs and Housing

The Marac seeks to safeguard those who disclose domestic abuse to you, and who are at high risk of serious harm or murder. This is achieved through a coordinated response from a range of statutory and voluntary agencies and organisations. The Marac is part of a multi-agency strategy to tackle domestic violence in partnership with other agencies and, therefore, may help you to meet your targets on domestic violence. It will also help your work by giving you up to date information from other agencies about your client's situation.

Frequently asked questions

Why does a representative from my agency attend?

The Marac will normally achieve more successful outcomes in high risk domestic violence cases than you would have achieved working with limited information on your own. The Marac housing representative, normally someone with managerial responsibilities, will bring information to the meeting about all known parties (victim, perpetrator and any known children) and offer support, advice and actions around housing needs.

At the meeting, they will hear up to date information about the level of domestic violence in the household, risk factors facing residents and staff and, together with the other agencies, help create an enhanced package of support for the victim. This will keep your clients safer in their own homes and help you to identify those who are in priority need.

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 evidence based risk assessment tool. It is recommended that the Marac should initially see the top 10% of cases in your area in terms of risk profile.

What information should my agency bring?

The housing representative should bring any relevant information regarding all known parties that might help address the risk to the victim and children and inform a coordinated safety plan. This could include information on tenancy conditions, the names and dates of birth of those residing in the home, repairs made, rent arrears, housing options available, feedback from neighbours and information on what benefits the adult parties are receiving (as this may identify other children associated with the family). Further, your understanding of what the client wants to do will be an important consideration when the Maracs action plan is created.

What actions can we offer?

Housing actions will usually focus on ensuring safe accommodation where possible and offering advice to the Marac on local housing options. Your housing representative might be able to offer actions on homelessness prevention for the victim and perpetrator, sanctuary schemes and rent arrears. In addition, using tenancy conditions, housing legislation and/or anti-social behavioural orders to address the perpetrator's offending behaviour may also be options used to further increase the victim's safety.

What are the legal grounds for sharing information?

Disclosures to Marac are made under the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act and Caldicott Guidelines. Relevant 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: http://www.safelives.org.uk/marac/Disclosure_of_Info_at_Marac_FAQs.pdf

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

Whether you discuss the Marac with your patient depends on who 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.

Steps to the Marac process

Identify:

Marac agencies should have systems in place to identify victims of domestic abuse.

Many services now have some form of routine enquiry questions that are agreed for use with all service users.

Risk assess:

Once identified as suffering domestic abuse, the SaveLives Dash risk checklist should be used to establish if the victim is at high risk of harm. Carry out immediate safety measures for victim, child and perpetrator. The police will carry out target hardening; child protection will act to safeguard children.

If high risk refer to IDVA service.

Referral:

- Whichever agency identified the case completes the Referral Form and sends to Marac Coordinator.
- Inform colleagues that a referral has been made.
- IDVA service contacts victim to offer support and identify key risks and fears.

Research:

- All agencies receive Marac meeting agenda from Marac Coordinator.
- All agencies research all cases on the agenda.
- Contact colleagues for information, explain purpose of the meeting.
- IDVA gathers background information from the victims and other agencies not represented at Marac about the abuse.

Meeting and information sharing:

- Marac representative presents information at the meeting on their agency's referrals.
- Present information relating to other cases with an agency involvement.
- Identify risks for the victim, children, perpetrator and agency staff.
- IDVA service presents information on behalf of the victim.

Action planning:

- Volunteer actions on behalf of your own agency and offer what you could do that would increase safety.
- Ensure actions are 'Smart'.
- Identify opportunities to coordinate actions with other partners.
- IDVA service confirms that, in their opinion, the proposed actions are as safe as possible.

Follow up:

- Inform colleagues of actions and complete in time agreed.
- Confirm when actions are completed with Marac Coordinator.
- Keep IDVA informed of relevant information.
- IDVA service keeps victim informed of plan where safe to do so.
- IDVA service liaises with partner agencies to coordinate action plan.

Glossary Of Marac Agency And Commonly Used Acronyms

ADVANCE	ADVANCE Advocacy Project – the Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service
Al-Aman	Domestic Violence Intervention Project’s Arabic Speaking Service
Al-Hasaniya	Al-Hasaniya Moroccan Women’s Support Service
ASC	Adult Social Care
CAFCASS	Children & Families Courts’ Advisory & Support Service
CAIT	Police Child Abuse Investigation Team
CAMHS	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service
Chel/West	Chelsea & Westminster Hospital
CLCH	Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust
CMHT	Community Mental Health Team
CNWL	Central North West London
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CRIS	Police Crime Report Information System
DASH	Domestic Abuse Stalking Harassment
DV/DA	Domestic Violence / Domestic Abuse
DViP	Domestic Violence Intervention Project
EWAS	Education Welfare Advisory Service
FCS	RBKC Children’s Services - Family Children’s Services
GBV	Gender Based Violence
Housing	RBKC Housing Needs
ICHT	Imperial College Health Care Trust
IDAP	Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

K&C / RBKC	Kensington & Chelsea
LBHF	London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC	Multi-Agency-Risk-Assessment-Conference
Merlin	A Police Database for a child coming to notice
MHS	Mental Health Services
NFA	No Further Action
NMO	Non-Molestation Order
OIC	Police Officer in the case
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PNC	Police National Computer
RBKC HM	RBKC Housing Management (Council Housing)
RIC	Risk Indicator Checklist
RiO	Health Database
SA	Safeguarding Adults
SDAC	Specialist Domestic Abuse Court
STADA	Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse
SUT	RBKC Substance Use Team
VSS	Victim Support IDVA
WCC	Westminster City Council
WSO	Woman’s Safety Officer (part of Probation IDAP programme)
YOS	Youth Offending Service