

# Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum

# MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE

# (MARAC)

# Partnership Operating Protocol

## Version Approved March 2018

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# 1. Introduction

The purpose of this Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Operating Protocol is to:

* establish accountability
* determine reporting structures for MARAC
* outline the MARAC process
* clarify referral pathways

Wolverhampton MARAC operates in accordance with the Safe Lives ‘Principles to Practice Guide’

## Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Outline and Aims

MARAC is a multi-agency meeting focusing on the safety of victims of domestic violence assessed as at high risk of serious harm or homicide.

The aims of MARAC are to:

* share information to increase the safety, health and well-being of the domestic violence victims at high risk of serious harm or homicide, and their children
* determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general community
* jointly construct and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support to all those at risk that reduces the risk of serious harm
* review previous actions
* reduce repeat victimisation
* improve agency accountability, and
* improve support for staff involved in high risk domestic violence cases by sharing the burden of risk

The role of MARAC is to facilitate, monitor, and evaluate effective information sharing that enables appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety. The responsibility to take appropriate action rests with individual agencies; the responsibility is not transferred to MARAC. For further information on MARAC, please visit [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk).

## The MARAC Chair

MARAC is chaired by a Midlands Police Public Protection Detective Inspector. 4 deputy MARAC Chairs has been appointed and trained to ensure MARAC resilience. These currently are:a Service Manager for Recovery Near You, a Housing Support Manager for Wolverhampton Homes, a Housing Options & Prevention Service Manager based at Wolverhampton Homes and the Head of Adult Safeguarding for Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

The role of the MARAC Chair is to:

• structure the MARAC meetings.

• highlight outstanding actions.

• provide a platform to ensure all agencies share proportionate and relevant information

• facilitate the development of a multi-agency support plan by a follow up support plan

• ensure that all agency representatives understand their agreed actions.

## Coordination of MARAC

The MARAC Coordinator is employed by Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum, line managed by the Strategy Coordinator & Manager and based within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The MARAC Coordinator:

* Co-ordinates the exchange of relevant personal information between and at the MARAC meetings
* Organises and ensures consistency in referral of cases from the full range of potential referring agencies, and ensuring these meet the referral threshold
* Distributes the Action Tracking Form and Minutes within 48 hours of the MARAC meeting.
* Tracks agreed actions in order to ensure completion in allocated time scale, following up on incomplete actions with the responsible person identified within each agency and senior representatives if necessary.
* Refers all identified high risk cases to an IDVA
* Monitors repeat referrals and instances.
* Coordinates escalation process
* Monitors MARAC outcomes
* Provides analysis of most frequent repeat offender to public protection unit for consideration of the deployment of offender managers
* Challenges and address poor practice through appropriate channels
* Organises induction and refresher training for MARAC representatives and partner agencies

## MARAC Representative’s Role and Responsibilities

All relevant agencies are expected to consistently attend MARAC, and all staff representing their agency at MARAC will be required to undertake an induction prior to attending.

The MARAC representative is the key link between the MARAC and their agency, acting as a Single Point of Contact for relevant advice to that agency about MARAC. All participating agencies should have a named MARAC representative who should be of an appropriate level of seniority to commit to actions on behalf of their agency. If a MARAC representative is unable to attend then the representative should inform the MARAC Coordinator in advance of the meeting and provide a written submission of relevant information. Alternatively, a substitute representative should attend on behalf of the agency.

It is the MARAC representative’s role to;

* Make links with front line colleagues to enable domestic abuse to be identified and provide support and information if required
* Support front line professionals to establish level of risk and to refer appropriately
* Ensure operational professionals are completing and submitting the MARAC referral form to the MARAC co-ordinator
* Gather all relevant information before the meeting on each case where appropriate
* Share proportionate information at the MARAC meeting
* Present identified MARAC cases from own organisation at the meeting
* Offer SMART actions on behalf of their agency for all vulnerable parties and the offender

Ensure that actions are implemented and to liaise with colleagues to keep them updated about the actions agreed and any information that has been shared

# 2. Wolverhampton MARAC Process

Any agency or organisation can refer a case to MARAC.

## Identification of MARAC cases

The Safe Lives DASHH Risk Indicator Checklist model (appendix 3) will be used by agencies to assess the level of risk to the victim and any children following disclosure or identification of domestic violence. Those cases that are assessed as at high risk of serious harm or homicide should then be referred to MARAC.

## MARAC Qualifying Criteria

Any agency should refer cases to MARAC where any of the following apply:

* 14 or more risks are identified on the Safe Lives DASHH Risk Indicator Checklist
* escalation of incidents (increasing level of control and/or abuse)
* where professional judgment warrants a MARAC referral (if the Safe Lives DASHH RIC score is below 14 but the referring professional feel this is high risk and warrants the referral)
* repeats, further incidents in a 12-month rolling period
* MARAC to MARAC referral

The risk factors and concerns must be documented clearly on the referral form.

The qualifying criteria will be reviewed at least annually by WDVF Executive Board.

## Rejected Referrals

**In cases where the referral threshold has not been met, using secure email, the MARAC Coordinator will forward all relevant information to the MARAC Chair or their deputy, who will make the final decision if the case will be discussed at MARAC.**

Incomplete forms, forms that do not evidence that the MARAC threshold has been met or handwritten forms may be **returned to the referrer to amend for resubmission, with guidance where necessary from the MARAC Coordinator.**

## Repeat Victims

The definition of a MARAC repeat is where a new domestic violence incident is reported to a MARAC agency for a case that has already been presented at MARAC within the preceding 12 months. This is with the caveat of the safeguarding Sergeants professional judgement based on information and intelligence available, based on the National Decision making model.

The second incident will involve:

* violence or threats of violence to the victim and/or their property, AND/OR
* where there is a pattern of stalking or harassment, AND/OR
* where rape or sexual violence or abuse is disclosed

Although the following cases will be discussed at MARAC, for data recording purposes they will not be counted as MARAC repeat cases:

* Where the case has involves the same victim, but a different perpetrator(s)
* Where the case involves the same perpetrator, but a different victim(s)
* Where the previous discussion takes place at a different MARAC. It is accepted that this is a repeat incident, but will not be recorded as such for the originating MARAC.
* cases discussed over 12 months ago

## MARAC Criteria for 16 – 17 year old victims

Child protection processes/procedures will always take precedence for safeguarding concerns relating to 16-17 year old domestic violence victims. A discussion will take place between children and young people’s services and adult services to agree the most appropriate actions, and these will be delivered in partnership. Referral to MARAC of a 16-17 year old can be made if the case meets the MARAC threshold.

There is a Young Persons DASHH Risk Indicator Checklist is available to assess the level of risk for those aged 16-17 at Appendix 4. This Risk Indicator checklist is the same, but with the wording of questions being age appropriate.

## MARAC Referral Process

The MARAC referral form is attached at Appendix 5 and will be used by all agencies referring cases to MARAC. The form should include as much information as possible, but the following information is mandatory:

* Names of victim, offender and children
* Date of Birth for victim, offender and children
* Addresses for Victim, offender and children
* Reason for referral (as per qualifying criteria) – risk factors must be clearly documented whether the victim has been informed that their information is being shared under The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and Articles 6 & 9 of The General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 for the purposes of prevention and detection of crime, for serious harm or matter of life or death
* If case is a repeat (as per repeat definitions)
* If the referral is based on professional judgment, all concerns should be documented clearly on the referral form.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | |
| The form should be completed electronically and sent via secure email to the MARAC Coordinator at: [marac@wolverhampton.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:marac@wolverhampton.gcsx.gov.uk).  Should the referring agency not have access to a secure email address, the referral form should be sent to [marac@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:marac@wolverhampton.gov.uk) using encrypted mail.  MARAC operates on a rolling referral system and cases are listed for the next available weekly meeting.  All referring agencies should discuss consent and explain the MARAC process to the victim and where possible a copy of the victim’s MARAC leaflet is to be given, as appendix 6 (MARAC Professionals Leaflet is at Appendix 7) | |  |
|  |  | |

## MARAC List and Agenda

The MARAC agenda will be circulated 7 days (including weekends) prior to the MARAC meeting. There is a section on the MARAC agenda for agencies to document their research prior to the meeting.

## Actions prior to MARAC

Any safeguarding needs MUST be dealt with immediately and should not wait for the next MARAC meeting.

Referring agencies are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding concerns are alerted to appropriate services in line with their agency’s Safeguarding policies and procedures.

All agencies are expected to systematically ‘flag and tag’ MARAC family subject files, and to remove flags after a 12-month period if there are no repeat incidents. Police will not remove the flag from their database.

The MARAC Coordinator will refer all cases to an appropriate Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) prior to MARAC (see below table of IDVAs in Wolverhampton). IDVAs provide specialist crisis intervention and safety planning to high risk domestic violence victims and their families prior to MARAC.

Where there is reciprocal violence, the MARAC Coordinator will refer the parties to separate IDVAs

## Wolverhampton Independent Domestic Violence Advisors

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Annie Murphy | Wolverhampton Homes IDVA | 01902 552951 / 07771836078 |
| Asha Jhali | BME IDVA, The Haven | 01902 904677 / 07720669065 |
| Bhupinder Sandhu | IDVA, The Haven | 01902 904677 / 07720669069 |
| Bridget Hickman | Sexual Violence IDVA, The Haven | 01902 904677 / 07720669063 |
| Gail Riggs | WDVF IDVA at Recovery Near You | 07758519436 |
| Grace Corbett | Criminal Justice IDVA, WDVF | 01902 555276 / 07921700180 |
| Samantha Gurdin | WDVF IDVA | 01902 555619/07773190968 |

## Victim contact prior to MARAC

The IDVA will contact the victim prior to the MARAC meeting where possible and safe to do so, in order to:

* Inform the victim that their information is being shared at MARAC and on what basis, and offer a MARAC leaflet
* Represent the victim’s up to date view at MARAC.
* If necessary, to complete the Safe Lives DASHH Risk Indicator Checklist (where not already completed)
* Begin safety planning

Although all reasonable attempts will be made to inform the victim that their information will be shared at MARAC, if it is not safe to contact the victim, the case will still be presented, and the reason why the victim has not been informed will be recorded on the MARAC Referral Form and the MARAC Agenda for the purposes laid out in The Crime and Disorder Act, 1998, and Articles 6 & 9 of The General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679.

## Screening of Male Victims/Offenders

Exploring the risk that male victims are experiencing allows professionals to establish who are genuine victims, and the level of risk that is being faced. It also aims to avoid the consequences of mistakenly identifying someone as a victim or offender which can lead to a victim not being taken seriously thereafter and becoming isolated. It will also allow an offender to continue their abuse without fear of consequence, and without being signposted to the correct support.

Where a male domestic violence victim has been listed at MARAC but has previously been reported as a perpetrator, an IDVA will make contact with him and complete the Respect toolkit for working with male victims of domestic violence screening tool (appendix 9). If the IDVA confirms the man as the perpetrator of abuse, the case will be removed from the agenda and will not be discussed at MARAC**.**

We are working towards the screening of all male victims.

## MARAC Meeting

Wolverhampton MARAC meets weekly, normally on a Wednesday. The length of the meeting varies according to the number of cases being discussed, therefore representatives should ensure they have sufficient flexibility on the day to remain at the meeting until all cases have been heard.

All MARAC attendees are required to undertake a MARAC induction session prior to their first meeting that will highlight individuals’ responsibilities, and MARAC governance and processes. All MARAC attendees are required to sign a Confidentiality Statement at each MARAC meeting. It is the responsibility of MARAC attendees to safely store, appropriately share, and safely dispose of MARAC paperwork.

## Observers at MARAC

Due to the highly sensitive information that is shared at MARAC, it is at the discretion of the MARAC Chair and Coordinator for observers to attend MARAC. Requests should be made via email to the MARAC Chair or Coordinator. MARAC training is available from Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum.

## Clare’s Law – Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme was implemented in March 2014 following a tragic domestic murder in 2009. The scheme makes provision for an individual in a relationship with a partner who has a history of abuse the ‘right to know’ and the ‘right to ask’ about the history of violence and abuse of that partner.

Wolverhampton upholds Safe Lives’ principle that MARAC is the appropriate multi-agency forum to make these decisions, in order to prevent serious harm.

The MARAC Coordinator will list on the next meeting agenda any requests for disclosures under this scheme. Relevant agencies will remain until the end of the meeting at which point disclosure requests will be discussed. Minutes will not be recorded by the MARAC Coordinator, but the decision to disclose or not, will be actioned by West Midlands Police, and feedback provided directly to the applicant.

More information can be found in Safe Lives’ “Guidance for MARAC’s – Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme” (Appendix 8)

## Information sharing at MARAC

MARAC is predicated on the need to share only accurate information that is directly relevant to the safety of victims. Information is shared under The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and Articles 6 & 9 of The General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679 for the purposes of prevention and detection of crime, for serious harm or death.

Information shared falls into 4 main categories:

* Demographic information including victims’ and perpetrators’ names, dates of birth, addresses, and any pseudonyms used, and the names and dates of birth of any children.
* Information on key risk indicators, including where appropriate, professional opinion on the risk faced. See appendix 10 for examples of risks and triggers.
* Relevant history of domestic violence or associated issues (child abuse, sexual assault) for the perpetrator or victim.
* The IDVAs will present the victims’ views of the risks faced, and how best to address them.

At the start of each MARAC meeting the Chair will read out the confidentiality statement that partners will sign.

All information will be shared securely via secure or encrypted email, and protectively marked as Protected.

The Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) is attached at Appendix 12.

## Action Planning

A tailored action plan will be developed at MARAC to increase the safety of the victims, children, other vulnerable parties, and any staff.

The following types of actions will be agreed:

- flagging and tagging of files

- Referral to other appropriate multi-agency meetings, and

- prioritising of agencies’ resources, tools and powers

It is the responsibility of all MARAC attending agencies to volunteer appropriate actions using their organisations powers and resources.

It is essential that actions are completed within the case specific time frame. Confirmation of completion and action updates should be submitted to the MARAC Coordinator by secure or encrypted email and within the agreed timescales. Incomplete actions will be circulated weekly, by the MARAC Coordinator. Any actions outstanding will be escalated by the MARAC Chair and reported to WDVF Exec Board.

If actions are incomplete, the responsibility and accountability remains with the named agency and not the MARAC Chair. If an agency is unable to complete an action within the allocated timeframe, they should inform the MARAC co-ordinator.

For further information on the types of actions agreed at MARAC, refer to www.safelives.org.uk

## Emergency MARAC

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to hold an emergency MARAC meeting. If an agency feels this is the case, contact should be made with the MARAC Coordinator as soon as possible. The relevant forms must still be completed by the referring agency. A MARAC meeting is only called if the risk of harm is so imminent that statutory agencies have a duty of care to act at once.

## MARAC Escalation Process

There is a responsibility on all MARAC Attendee’s to escalate intransigent cases to their Line Managers for further review. Following a recommendation from Domestic Homicide Reviews and advice from Safe Lives, an escalation process has been introduced.

There are two pathways for escalation:

### Professional’s Meeting:

### The MARAC Chair and any partner agency can nominate a case to be escalated, and a majority decision by MARAC attendees will initiate the process. There will be no set criteria for a case to be escalated; these will be judged on an individual basis.

A lead practitioner will be identified to arrange a separate meeting within 10 days of MARAC with other named organisations. This will facilitate more time to focus on the case and produce a bespoke plan to reduce risk and increase safety. A copy of the professional’s meeting minutes and action plan will be distributed amongst attending agencies and the MARAC Chair and Coordinator. These minutes will be embedded into the MARAC case minutes. All information will be shared securely via secure or encrypted email, and protectively marked as Protected.

### Desktop Review

Cases that are discussed at MARAC four times or more within a six-month period will trigger a Desktop Review. The MARAC Chair, MARAC Coordinator, allocated IDVA and any other professionals deemed necessary, will meet to review such cases and further necessary actions.

This process allows learning lessons from repeat cases to be identified and embedded as business as usual practice for MARAC and associated professional’s meetings.

## Death of MARAC Subjects

There are likely to be occasions when known MARAC subjects die, sometimes in suspicious circumstances. It is everyone’s responsibility to highlight any known MARAC victim’s death to the MARAC Coordinator for review on the next available agenda. A process has been implemented for these instances (appendix 14)

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR’s) and Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR’s) are processes that look to learn from such deaths. This will enable information to be shared to determine whether existing processes such as those outlined below are relevant.

## Domestic Homicide Review Definition (Home Office definition)

A 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 he was related or with whom he was/had been in an intimate personal relationship, or
* A member of the same household with a view to identifying lessons to be learnt from the death.

### Safeguarding Adult Review Definition

The Care Act 2014 introduces statutory Safeguarding Adults Reviews (previously known as Serious Case Reviews), and mandates when they must be arranged and gives Safeguarding Adult Boards flexibility to choose a proportionate methodology.

An SAB must arrange for there to be a review of a case involving an adult in its area with needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority has been meeting any of those needs) if—

(a) there is reasonable cause for concern about how the SAB, members of it or other persons with relevant functions worked together to safeguard the adult, and

(b) condition 1 or 2 is met.

(2) Condition 1 is met if—  
(a) the adult\* has died, and

(b) the SAB knows or suspects that the death resulted from abuse or neglect (whether or not it knew about or suspected the abuse or neglect before the adult died).

(3) Condition 2 is met if—

(a) the adult\* is still alive, and

(b) the SAB knows or suspects that the adult has experienced serious\*\* abuse or neglect.

(4) An SAB may arrange for there to be a review of any other case involving an adult in its area with needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority has been meeting those needs).

\* the adult must be in the SABs area and has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority has been meeting any of those needs).

\*\* something can be considered serious abuse or neglect where, for example the individual would have been likely to have died but for an intervention, or has suffered permanent harm or has reduced capacity or quality of life (whether because of physical or psychological effects) as a result of the abuse or neglect.

## Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) & One Day One Conversation (ODOC)

Where the victim is subject of MARAC and the offender is managed at a Level 2 or 3 MAPPA meeting, the MAPPA meeting will take priority and the IDVA must be invited to the MAPPA meeting. The MAPPA meeting will ensure that the risk management plan effectively identifies and puts into place actions to protect the victim. The IDVA will provide feedback to MARAC.

Safe Lives also give guidance about the management of domestic abuse perpetrators, see [www.safelives.org.uk](http://www.safelives.org.uk)

## Referrals to and from other MARACs

If a victim has re-located outside of Wolverhampton, agencies should still make the referral to the MARAC Coordinator as normal with all necessary information, and clearly state the re-location address and date of move.

The MARAC Coordinator will make the MARAC to MARAC transfer in a timely manner. Information will be shared securely via secure or encrypted email that is protectively marked as Protected.

Referring agencies are also responsible for ensuring their counterparts in the appropriate re-located area have received the relevant referral.

When a MARAC referral is received from another area, the MARAC Coordinator will refer to an IDVA and West Midlands Police, and the case will be heard at the next MARAC.

# 3. Equality

Agencies will have policies relating to their approach and access to translation and interpretation services. Specific and additional support and advice can be accessed for cases identified as being from diverse communities through the following services:

- The Haven Wolverhampton Referral Helpline on 08000 194 400

- National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 200 0247

- Men’s Advice Line (advice and support for male victims of domestic violence)

0808 801 0327

- Broken Rainbow (advice and support for LGBT victims of domestic violence)

0800 999 5428

- Karma Nirvana (Forced marriage and honour crime) 0800 599 9247

- IKWRO (Forced marriage and honour crime) 0207 920 6460

- Doli Project (Forced marriage and honour crime) 0845 658 1057

- Navjeevan Project (support for South Asian women with mental health problems) 01902 312234

# 4. Evaluation

MARAC data is collected by the MARAC Coordinator and is submitted to WDVF Executive Board regularly.

Data is also submitted to:

- Home Office

- Safe Lives

- Safer Wolverhampton Partnership

One of the MARAC principles is to monitor the effectiveness of MARAC, this measure is conducted quarterly with a sample of MARAC cases being chosen from the preceding 6-12 months. This is to establish the effectiveness of the MARAC interventions. Wolverhampton MARAC is developing good practice in this area and the process will continue to be refined.

# 5. Complaints & Accountability

Complaints about how a professional or agency is working within the MARAC process should be submitted in writing to the MARAC Chair or DV Strategy Coordinator & Manager in the first instance. If not resolved, this will be escalated to WDVF Executive Board.

# 6. Breaches

A breach of this MARAC Operating Protocol may increase the risk of harm to a high risk victim of domestic violence.

Breaches of the protocol should be referred to the MARAC Chair or DV Strategy Coordinator & Manager, and these may be escalated to the WDVF Executive Board.

# 7. Withdrawal from MARAC

The strategic lead for any agency who wishes to withdraw from the MARAC process must inform the MARAC Chair in writing of their intention. The Chair will forward this to WDVF Executive Board for discussion.

Withdrawal from this protocol will result in a withdrawal from MARAC.

All information shared at MARAC that is no longer relevant should be destroyed in accordance with individual agencies’ guidelines in line with requirements of The General Data Protection Regulations 2016/679.

# 8. Governance and performance management

Wolverhampton DV Forum (WDVF) Executive Board will:

* Monitor and evaluate MARAC data
* Ensure that effective partnerships are maintained with other public protection bodies and other MARAC areas
* Monitor and regularly assess the overall performance of MARAC and its adherence to Safe Lives’s ‘Principles to Practice Guide’ dated 2010.
* Address operational issues
* Oversee efforts to raise awareness of MARAC and its outcomes with local practitioners and wider stakeholders
* Respond to changes to legislation and national guidance and best practice

WDVF Executive Board will report to Safer Wolverhampton Partnership Police and Crime Board and/or its structures and Adult and Children Safeguarding boards.

WDVF Executive Board membership is outlined at *Appendix 2.*

WDVF Executive Board will assess the practical and resource implications of MARAC; and develop and maintain internal protocols and procedures in relation to public protection.

WDVF Executive Board meets bi-monthly.

The list of MARAC attendees is attached at *Appendix 1*.

# 9. Review

This protocol will be reviewed annually from the date of signature by WDVF Executive Board. Requests for additions/changes should be made in the first instance to the MARAC Coordinator.

# 10. MARAC Development

WDVF Executive Board will respond appropriately to emerging trends and issues of domestic violence and abuse that impact on MARAC processes.

# 11. **Training and Induction Process**

All new MARAC representatives will undertake a MARAC induction session, receive a MARAC information pack and given the opportunity to observe a MARAC meeting.

Training needs will be assessed as part of a number of processes, and discussed and actioned at WDVF Executive Board.

# 12. Board Endorsements

WDVF Executive Board approval 8 March 2018

# 13. List of Appendices

Appendix 1 MARAC attendees

Appendix 2 WDVF Executive Board Members

Appendix 3 Safe Lives Dash Risk Indicator Checklist

Appendix 4 Safe Lives Young Persons (16-17 year olds) Risk Indicator Checklist

Appendix 5 MARAC Referral Form

Appendix 6 MARAC Victims Leaflet

Appendix 7 MARAC Professionals Leaflet

Appendix 8 Safe Lives Guidance for MARACs – Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme

Appendix 9 Working with Male victims of Domestic abuse Screening Tool

Appendix 10 List of Risks and Triggers

Appendix 11 Information Sharing Protocol

Appendix 12 MARAC Death Process

Appendix 13 Domestic Violence Care Pathway

Appendix 14 List of local services