

What Early Years and Childcare Providers Need to Know About... Domestic Violence and the Role of MARAC

The Home Office defines domestic violence as '*Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality*'

The county's top 10% high-risk domestic abuse cases are discussed at Cambridgeshire's **Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)**. MARAC meets regularly to decide what support can / could be offered to families involved in this situation.

The MARAC includes representatives from many different agencies including a local authority officer from the early years and childcare sector. Individual early years and childcare providers will not be required to attend a MARAC.

The role of the early years and childcare sector representative is to:

- Identify if any children affected by high-risk domestic abuse are currently accessing childcare in the county.
- Liaise with early years and childcare providers where children are being cared for, to establish if childcare providers have additional information about a child, and/or raise childcare providers' awareness of families' particular needs or special circumstances (such as bail conditions, for example).
- Identify where a childcare place may be part of a support package for a family and provide a signposting service to appropriate quality provision.
- Identify if a childcare provider can offer additional support eg, extra places.
- If necessary, support a social inclusion funding application.

All disclosures to MARAC are made under the Data Protection Act, 1998 Crime and Disorder Act and Human Rights Act. Information can be shared when it is necessary to prevent a crime, protect the health and/or safety of the victim and for the rights and freedoms of those who are victims of violence and/or their children.

Staff in early years and childcare settings need to be aware of the extremely high vulnerability of the children/young people in their care.

If providers are contacted by an Early Years and Childcare officer concerning MARAC they will be advised that:

Staff should record concerns on a daily basis, if appropriate/necessary, according to Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) guidance. Details recorded could relate to:

- Changes in the behaviour of the child/young person
- Deterioration in the child's general well-being

- Unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse/neglect
- Factual observation, but not personal feelings or judgements about the child unless these are relevant to the context, and are clearly indicated as opinion, eg, 'Becky ran out of the playroom and hid in the toilets when x arrived. In my opinion she appeared frightened.'

Staff should record pre-existing injuries in the normal way

As a childcare provider you could also be contacted directly by another member of MARAC concerning an individual child and/or family. It is important to respond to their requests. If this happens and you have any concerns about what you are being asked to do please contact your local authority adviser for advice (Early Years Foundation Stage Adviser / Childminding Support and Development Officer / Childcare and Playwork Adviser).

If a child or parent discloses that they are the victim of domestic abuse you should:

- Advise them to contact the police. Seek consent to refer them to your Locality Team for support.
- If the victim is under 18 years old follow LSCB safeguarding procedures and contact Social Care.

For further information about this guidance, please contact:

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gemma.hope@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01954 273356

or

Annette Brooker – Quality Manager

annette.brooker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01954 273367

For more information about MARAC –

www.caada.org.uk

Each of the five district councils in Cambridgeshire has a domestic violence directory. You can find a copy on each council's website or ring to request one:

Cambridge City Council: www.cambridge.gov.uk Tel: 01223 457000

South Cambridgeshire District Council: www.scambs.gov.uk Tel: 08450 450500

East Cambridgeshire District Council: www.eastcambs.gov.uk Tel: 01353 665555

Huntingdonshire District Council: www.huntsdc.gov.uk 01480 388388

Fenland District Council: www.fenland.gov.uk 01354 654321