

DASH Risk Assessment

What is it?

The purpose of the DASH Risk Assessment Checklist is to give a consistent risk assessment tool for practitioners who work with adult victims of domestic abuse. It's used to help practitioners identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to a MARAC meeting in order to manage their risk. The 'first time, right time' approach underpins the DASH, and it is tried and tested way to understand risk.

Why do we use it?

- To help front line practitioners identify high risk cases of domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence.
- To decide which cases should be referred to MARAC and what other support might be required. A completed form becomes an active record that can be referred to in future for case management.
- A common tool for agencies that is part of the Cleveland MARAC process and provides a shared understanding of risk in relation to domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence.
- To enable agencies to make defensible decisions based on the evidence from extensive research of cases, including domestic homicides and 'near misses', which underpins most recognised models of risk assessment.

Who can use it? Any professional working with victims of domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour based violence. If you have not yet received the mandatory level 3 training you will need to seek

Before you begin: Establish how much time the victim has to talk to you. Is it safe to talk now? What are safe contact details? Establish the whereabouts of the perpetrator and children. Explain why you are asking these questions and how it relates to the MARAC.

While you are asking the questions in the DASH Risk Assessment: Identify early on who the victim is frightened of – ex-partner/partner/family member. Use gender-neutral terms such as partner/ex-partner.

Revealing the results of the DASH Risk Assessment to the victim: Telling someone that they are at high risk of serious harm or homicide may be frightening and overwhelming for them to hear. It is important that you state what your concerns are by using the answers they gave you and your professional judgement.

Professional judgement: Please pay particular attention to a practitioner's professional judgement in all cases. The results from a checklist are not a definitive assessment of risk. They should provide you with a structure to inform your judgement and act as prompts to further questioning, analysis and risk management, whether via a MARAC or in another way.

Risk to children: The DASH Risk Assessment will provide valuable information about the risks that children are living with, but it is not a full risk assessment for children. The presence of children increases the wider risks of domestic violence, and step-children are particularly at risk. If risk towards children is highlighted, you should consider what referral you need to make to obtain a full assessment of the children's situation.

Referral criteria to MARAC

Professional judgement: If a professional has serious concerns about a victim's situation, they should refer the case to MARAC (see MARAC guide). There will be occasions where the particular context of a case gives rise to serious concerns, even if the victim has been unable to disclose the information that might highlight their risk more clearly. This could reflect extreme levels of fear, cultural barriers to disclosure, immigration issues, or language barriers, particularly in cases of 'honour-based' violence. This judgement would be based on the professional's experience and/or the victim's perception of their risk, even if they do not meet criteria 2 and/or 3 below.

'Visible high risk': The number of ticks on this checklist. If you have ticked 14 or more 'yes' boxes, the case would normally meet the MARAC referral criteria.

Potential escalation: The number of police callouts to the victim as a result of domestic violence in the past 12 months. This criterion can be used to identify cases where there is not a positive identification of a majority of the risk factors on the list, but where abuse appears to be escalating, and where it is appropriate to assess the situation more fully by sharing information at MARAC. It is common practice to start with 3 or more police callouts in a 12 month period but this will need to be reviewed depending on your local volume and your level of police reporting.

Key contacts

The DASH Risk Assessment is available on Middlesbrough Council's domestic abuse website (professionals page) in the MARAC section. If DASH indicates a score of 14+, this should be sent as a MARAC referral by secure email or another secure method to marac@cleveland.pnn.police.uk (see also the MARAC one minute guide).

You can use this guide to explain DASH Risk Assessment and the process to people you are working with. There are documents relating to the DASH Risk Assessment, as well as other sources of information and support in relation to domestic abuse, available from Middlesbrough Council's website.

You can Contact Cleveland Police on 101. In an emergency always ring 999. If you would like additional help and support on domestic abuse, then you can contact any of the following:

My Sisters Place: 01642 241864; **Harbour:** 03000 20 25 25; **Halo:** 01642 683045

If you need more information please contact Claire Moore, domestic abuse lead for Middlesbrough Council, on 01642 728691.