

Risk assessment and risk management by police

Principle 5. Delivering a coordinated, multiagency response

Expected result: Police officers are capable of making a solid contribution in the context of a multiagency mechanism and in developing targeted interventions, within the police's mandate and competences.

Recommendations for improving coordinated, multiagency risk management

- Engage with and support multiagency bodies and processes.
- Agree protocols with key stakeholders to establish terms of reference and agree information-sharing arrangements.
- Define responsibilities for referring victims back to multiagency bodies.
- Work with various services and stakeholders across public and third sectors to improve risk management.

Multi-agency mechanisms – whether formal (MARACs, for example) or informal – are a prominent strategy adopted by Member States for effectively responding to intimate partner violence. These mechanisms may take the form of informal multiagency cooperation on a case-by-case basis between, for example, police and a local victim services organisation or of formal referral processes for victims that are under-pinned by negotiated working protocols across multiple stakeholders. Multi-agency structures help strengthen coordination between agencies based in different sectors (e.g. the public sector and the third sector) and have been recommended as crucial for the effective implementation of the provisions of the Victims' Rights Directive (117).

Participation by police in multiagency partnerships is crucial and necessary but not enough in and of itself, especially given the dynamic nature of risk. As risk management actions are implemented, risk will change, and ongoing assessment and management by police and other actors require a culture of cooperation among all agencies. No single agency can provide all of the services required to meet the different needs of victims and perpetrators when a robust, individualised approach is taken.

The move towards integrated responses to intimate partner violence recognises the complexity of achieving victim safety and perpetrator accountability. Effective perpetrator management requires interconnected practices among agencies that promote accountability. These practices include active monitoring, appropriate court-ordered services, and swift and firm consequences for reassault or violations of court orders. That is, prevention strategies are likely to be most effective when they are implemented in the context of multiagency frameworks, rather than when they are the responsibility of individual practitioners, stakeholders or agencies (118). Multidisciplinary or multiagency teams should include representatives from the police, emergency shelters and victim outreach services, as well as practitioners involved in intervention programmes for perpetrators (119).

Risk management arrangements must be designed to suit the local context and reflect the level of resources available in a particular community. Involvement by a diverse set of community actors is necessary, although the exact makeup of multiagency mechanisms will be determined locally.

Depending on the individual case, the following participants are likely to be critical: victim services; police; specialist victim services; child protection services; health, social work and education services; prosecutors; employers; family members; probation services; perpetrator programmes. All agencies should work with the same aim, understanding and concepts, and agree a protocol and terms of reference for operation, especially for how to deal with ongoing risk. Although the leadership of any multiagency framework will depend on the local context and resources, police engagement and support are essential.

Coordinated community responses (120) that are informed by risk assessment and management, such as MARACs, have been shown to demonstrably improve victim safety. MARACs, MARAKs and MACCs are some of the ways in which Member States have implemented a coordinated, multiagency approach.

Each agency's responsibility for referring a victim or perpetrator back to the multiagency mechanism should be clearly defined. Multi-agency protocols need to reflect the provisions of the Victims' Rights Directive and the Istanbul Convention, and procedures for timely and appropriate sharing of information must be in place.

MARAC Examples

Police

- Place a marker on the address
- Consider use of available protection orders
- Work with support services to support historic reporting
- Consider the perpetrator for referral to a MATAC
- Provide an alarm
- Provide a home safety visit
- Raise a child protection investigation

Housing

- Ensure that the housing office is aware that issues such as debt/antisocial behaviour complaints are a result of domestic abuse and reframe so that the woman is not penalised
- Speed up home security repairs
- Put a note on perpetrator housing applications indicating that he is not to be housed in same area as the woman

Social work

- Conduct safe and together mapping and protocols to support the non-offending parent and assess harm to children
- If appropriate, call for an initial referral discussion regarding child protection processes
- Advise on a safe contact agreement with the perpetrator if appropriate

Perpetrator services

- Engage with the perpetrator through a recommendation for perpetrator treatment assessment
- Support any safe contact agreement

Specialist
services

- Report back on the MARAC to the woman
- Continue to provide support
- Informally, a specialist agency/referring agency normally takes on the role of advocating for the other agencies to carry out their actions, and to do so in the way that is right for the service user