

A RISK-LED APPROACH TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: THE MARAC MODEL IN THE UK

Dr Amanda Robinson
Cardiff University

International Conference on "Violence in close social relationships and stalking - Police officers dealing with high-risk cases "

Rhineland-Palatinate Police Academy, Germany
5 November 2013

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD

Overview: *4 elements to my talk*

1. *What* is the British approach to high-risk domestic violence cases?
2. *How* do MARACs function?
3. *Who* has a central role to play in MARACs?
4. *What* impacts can be attributed to MARACs?



1. What is the British approach to high-risk domestic violence cases?

The background features a complex geometric pattern of overlapping, semi-transparent grey and black shapes that radiate from a central point on the right side. Thin red lines also intersect at this central point, creating a starburst or web-like effect.

Background: UK developments

- **Specialist, independent support for victims**
 - Shelters/Refuges
 - Community-based advocacy
 - Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)
- **Multi-agency initiatives**
 - Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs)
 - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)
- **Policy context**
 - UK: *Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls*
 - *Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse (Wales) Bill*
 - EU: *Convention for Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*

Risk and domestic violence in the UK

- **Risk identification**
 - Frontline officers
- **Risk assessment**
 - Specialist DV officers
 - Other specialists (IDVAs)
- **Risk management**
 - MARACs
 - Information-sharing when risk is deemed to be a 'public protection issue'




2. How do MARACs function?





Which cases go to MARAC?

- 1) Actuarial Risk Assessment
 - 2) Professional Judgment
 - 3) MARAC threshold
- 


MARACs: In brief

- A *regular* meeting of all key statutory and voluntary agencies
- To *share information* about the highest risk cases in an area
- Takes *referrals* from all agencies
- First MARAC held in Cardiff in April 2003, attended by members of 16 agencies
 - 250+ areas now running MARACs in the UK

A typical MARAC meeting

- Lasts half a day
- Deals with 15-20 high-risk cases
 - Most are police referrals
 - Most are women victims of male violence
- Provides an opportunity for a brief and focussed information-sharing process

'In a single meeting, a domestic violence MARAC combines up to date risk information with a comprehensive assessment of a victim's needs and links those directly to the provision of appropriate services for all those involved in a domestic violence case: victim, children and perpetrator.'
(MARAC Implementation Guide, CAADA)



3. Who has a central role to play in MARACs?


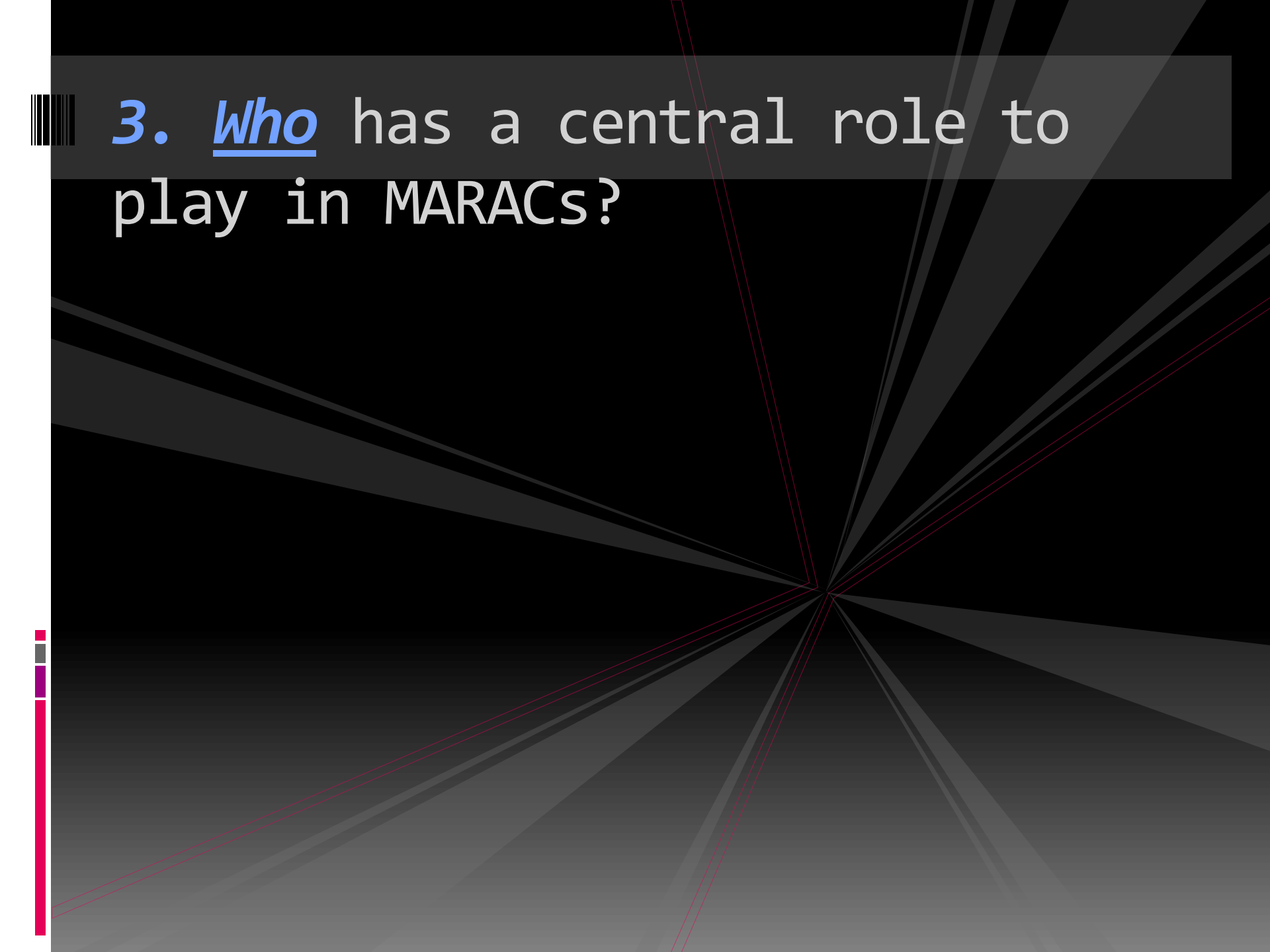
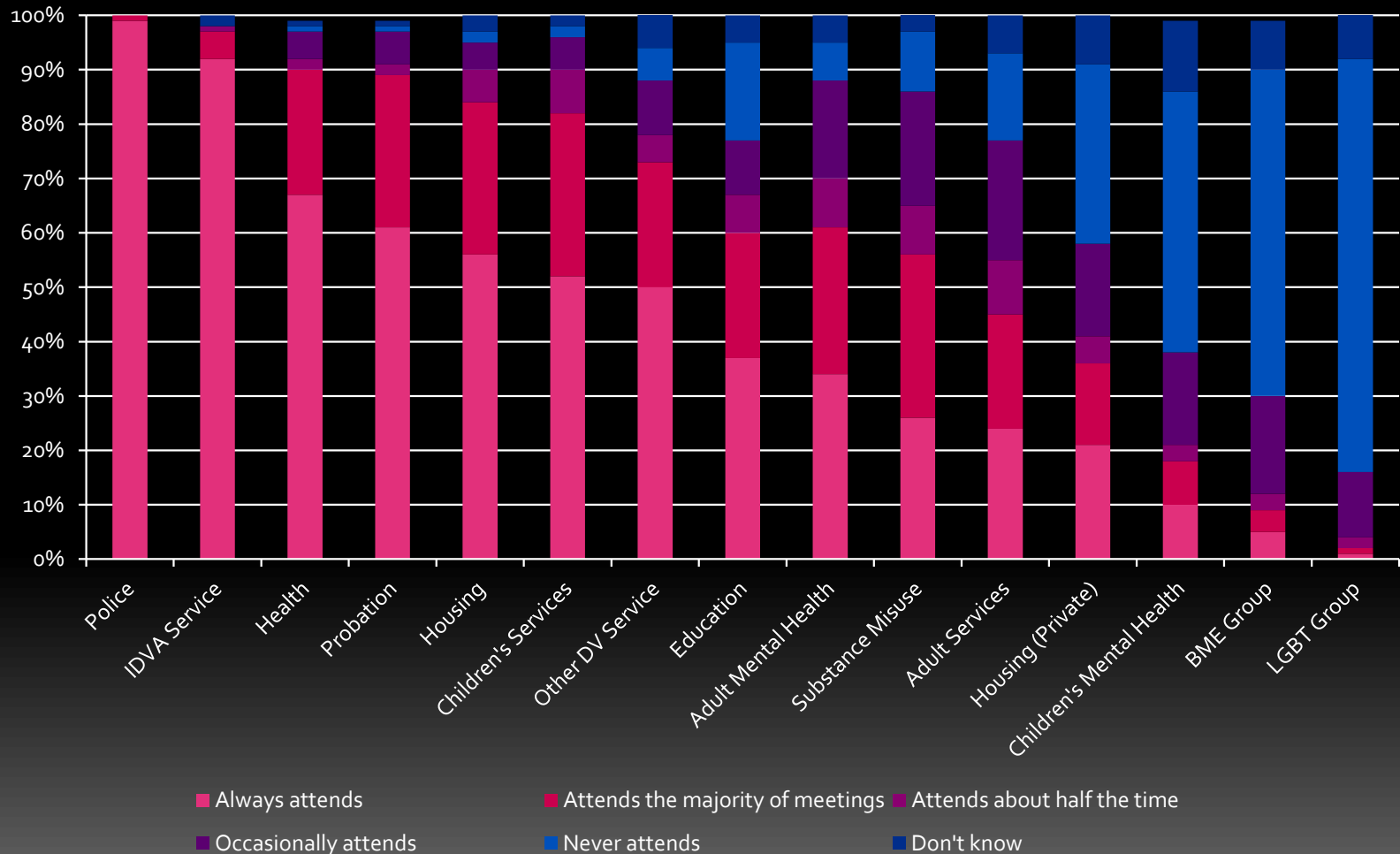


Figure 1: National survey response to the question 'how regularly does a representative attend MARAC?' (Percentage (%) of respondents)



Police and MARACs

- Police play an essential role in identifying & referring cases to MARACs
- Police play an essential role in the MARAC process
 - Permanent attendees
 - Taking actions
 - Serving as Chair

Typical actions taken by police at MARAC

AGENCY	INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
Police	<p>Number of previous DV incidents/offences</p> <p>Previous convictions</p>	<p>Provide intelligence package to sector inspector</p> <p>All agencies aware of risks</p>
	<p>Details of incidents, use of weapons, threats to kill, threats to harm children</p>	<p>Arrest offender</p> <p>Referral to Social Services</p>
	<p>Breaches of bail</p>	<p>Arrest offender</p> <p>Intelligence marker for officer in charge</p> <p>Heightened awareness by agencies & likelihood that bail not granted in future</p>
		<p>Install CCTV</p>
		<p>Organise special measures at court</p>
		<p>Inform agencies who visit home of high risk</p>

Specialist, independent support services for victims

- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (*IDVAs*)
- Their work is essential to **MARACs**
 - Coordinate the actions of involved agencies
 - Represent the 'victim's voice', keep the multi-agency focus on her safety
 - Bridge the gap between criminal justice goals and the victim's needs

Typical actions taken by IDVA at MARAC

AGENCY	INFORMATION	IMPACT/ACTION
IDVA Service	Update on whether victim has engaged with IDVA	Crucial for safety
	Update on whether victim has engaged with other agencies who might not be part of MARAC	Gives broader picture of extent of support accessed
	Information about victim's fears	Relevant to intervention by other agencies
	Information about jealous/controlling behaviour	Possibly relevant to charge of harassment
	Details of sexual assault/abuse	Might suggest option of criminal prosecution, referral to specialist sexual violence support service
	Details of impact of abuse on children	Cross reference to information held by other agencies and affect approach taken by these agencies



4. What impacts can be attributed to MARACs?

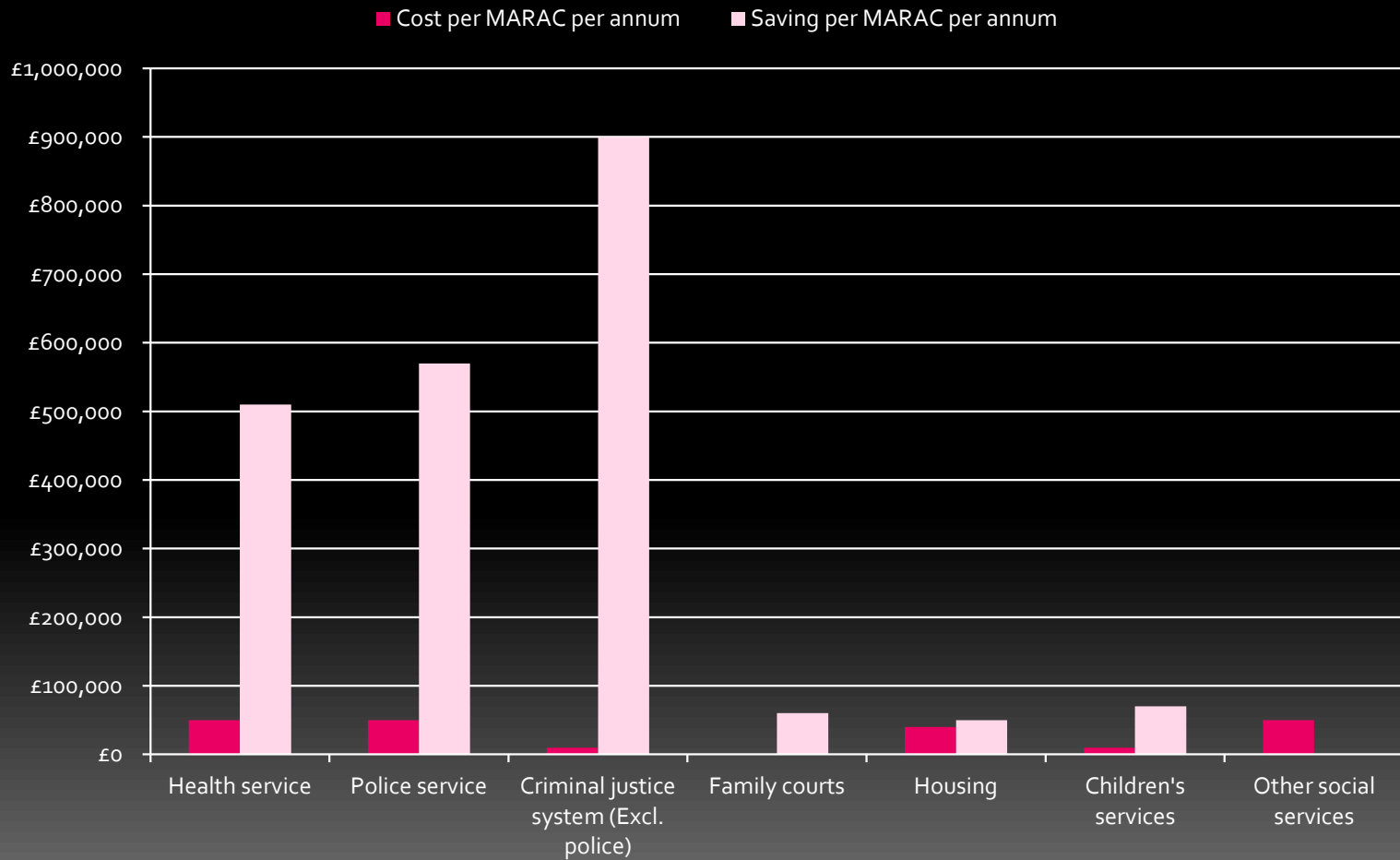


Key findings: outcomes

- **Reductions in repeat victimisation**
- **6-months after MARAC**
 - 6 in 10 had not been re-victimized
 - Participating agencies valued the MARACs – the extra work was “worth it”
- **12-months after MARAC**
 - 4 in 10 had not been re-victimized
 - Victims aware of multi-agency response, but highlighted importance of advocates

Key findings: cost-benefits

"Invest £1 in the MARAC model to get £6 back" CAADA (2010)





Key findings: process

- Factors linked to MARAC effectiveness
 - Strong partnership links
 - Appropriate agency representation
 - The role of the IDVA
 - Strong leadership by the Chair
- 

Practitioners' Perspectives

- *"Some agencies may have snippets of info that on their own don't raise any particular concern, it's only when the jigsaw of info is pieced together that the risk factors begin to be understood."*
- *"Having something like a MARAC in place starts to build relationships between agencies across a much broader range, it develops much stronger relationships between the voluntary and statutory sector."*

Victims' Perspectives

- *"All the services know about the case history... Everyone seems to be working together... I can phone people if I am down whereas before I used to let it all get pent up inside me, and get angry...I was frustrated."*
- *"I am aware of the MARAC process and I think it is a very important thing, very beneficial. It is vital that all the agencies have as much information as possible. Communication is vital."*



Conclusion

- International recognition for the importance of setting up *“an effective multi-agency network of professionals... to protect high-risk victims”*
- Setting up a *risk-led, multi-agency* approach is essential for helping the most vulnerable victims
- *Cooperation* essential to overcome implementation challenges

Further Information

- **Dr Amanda Robinson**
 - RobinsonA@Cardiff.ac.uk (and website)
- **Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA)**
 - DV MARAC Implementation Guide
 - Saving Lives Saving Money
 - www.caada.org
- **Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)**
 - Project PROTECT <http://www.wave-network.org/start.asp?b=202>
- **Home Office**
 - Home Office Research Report 55
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/horr55/>