

ASK MARC IMPACT REPORT

BACKGROUND TO ASK MARC

In 2019, Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) were involved in a commissioned male abuse research report. This research was integral in aiding BCWA to create Ask MARC. We took the time to develop an understanding of what good practice would look like. We did this by consulting victims and see what services delivered across the country.

Ask Marc (Marc stands for "male abuse referral centre") is a new service offering help and support for men affected by:

- Sexual violence: recent or historic rape, sexual assault or abuse, including childhood sexual abuse
- Domestic abuse: including all dynamics including family abuse, economic abuse etc
- Forced marriage and so-called "honour"-based violence
- Stalking (offering pathways into BCWA stalking services where appropriate)

BCWA has developed Ask Marc as a male service to enable us to respond to the gender-based dynamics of interpersonal violence. Ask Marc will operate in parallel to BCWA's services for women, enabling us to tailor support, spaces, training, communications, and promotion specifically for each gender.

Since the launch of the service in November 2021, Ask Marc aims to proactively support victims and survivors, to enable them to live a healthy, fear free and safe life as a basic human right.

SETTING UP THE SERVICE

FUNDING

Information about our funding can be found on the Charity Commission for England and Wales website: <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1032298&subid=0>. The information you will need is:

Company number: 2791788

Registered charity number (England & Wales): 1032298

However, this is an overview of BCWA funding. Thus, it may be useful to know about specific funding that has been given to ensure that there is continued investment into the Ask Marc service.

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for West Midlands granted funds in 2021 to establish male service. Funding originates from Ministry of Justice, for increased IDVA capacity and specialist roles for under-represented groups

- A grant was given to sustain the service from November 2021 – March 2023 for male specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) salaries, as well as training and communication resources

You can see our news item on receipt of funding here: [BCWA awarded specialist funding for to support young, disabled and male victims - Black Country Womens Aid](#)

Ministry of Justice Male Rape Support Fund

- Grant was given in June 2021 to provide counselling and therapeutic services to male victims
- News item here [New funding for male survivors of rape and sexual abuse - Black Country Womens Aid](#)

BRANDING

Knowing how to engage and reach out to victims is essential to ensure that they can access support. There are many barriers a male may face when trying to seek support from a specialist advocate service. Thus, we researched into how to establish our brand.

On 11th May 2021, a consultation was held via Microsoft Teams with three male clients who had been supported by BCWA's domestic abuse and sexual violence services, and three members of BCWA staff from communications, domestic abuse and sexual violence teams. From this consultation we began to have an idea of what we wanted to create.

We worked with a design agency to create a male-friendly brand. We wanted to create a distinct brand identity for BCWA's male abuse support services which increases referrals to our services of diverse male victims:

- Appeal to male victims of domestic abuse, stalking, rape and sexual violence
- Offer a reassuring message to male victims who may be reluctant to come forwards that it is ok to talk and our service can meet their needs
- Raise awareness of the particular dynamics of abuse against men
- Respond to identified barriers that stop men from getting help
- The campaign should also be clear and appealing to professionals (police, social care, CAB, victim support etc) to develop agency referral routes.

We are always looking to improve, so please do get in touch if you wish to provide any suggestions.

SPREADING THE WORD

LAUNCH

On International Men's Day, Friday 19th November 2021, we were proud to launch Ask Marc, our new support service for men in the Black Country affected by interpersonal violence.

Over 200 professionals attended our online launch events, hearing from speakers including male abuse expert Luke Martin, BCWA's CEO Sara Ward and Therapeutic Lead Jennifer Lumsden-Gordon.

Andy, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse who was supported by Black Country Women's Aid's rape and sexual violence services, talked at the launch about the importance of positive messages for men seeking support:

"I was at rock bottom when I plucked up the courage to contact Black Country Women's Aid. When I called them, everything changed. Getting support was the best thing I ever did. I would encourage any man who is struggling to pick up the phone and talk to someone."

Press coverage around launch

12/10/2021	"Helping domestic abuse victims": Go Purple and Ask Marc promotion	Black Country Blokes podcast	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNbXyHkpSlw&t=192s
18/11/2021	New Ask Marc service launches to help male	Express and Star	https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/wolverhampton/2021/11/17/new-ask-marx-

	victims of sexual violence		service-launches-to-help-male-victims-of-sexual-violence/
19/11/2021	Interview with Sara Ward and Andy, male survivor supported by our ISVA service	Heart, Capital and Smooth Radio	https://twitter.com/HeartMidsNews/status/1463794760712441867
26/11/2021	Interview with Raj Thind, Head of DA Services	Black Country Radio	Season 2 #50 Ask Marc - The Friday Night Clive Podcast - Black Country Radio
07/12/2021	Interview with Raj Thind, Head of DA Services and Andy, male survivor supported by our ISVA service	BBC WM	No online link
17/12/2021	Ask Marc is the new abuse support service for men	The Pioneer Magazine: Great Barr Gazette	https://www.pioneermagazines.co.uk/ask-marc-is-the-new-abuse-support-service-for-men/

TRAINING AND BRIEFINGS

As one of our key aims is to develop awareness of the service and referral pathways, we delivered 42 professional and community briefings across the Black Country.

We offered training to professionals so they had a better understanding of how to support a male victim and we raised awareness within the community about the difficulties men face when in abusive relationships or are abused.

A Video to raise awareness was created: *Don't deal with it alone: support for male victims of domestic and sexual abuse* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUuCyPpANhA>

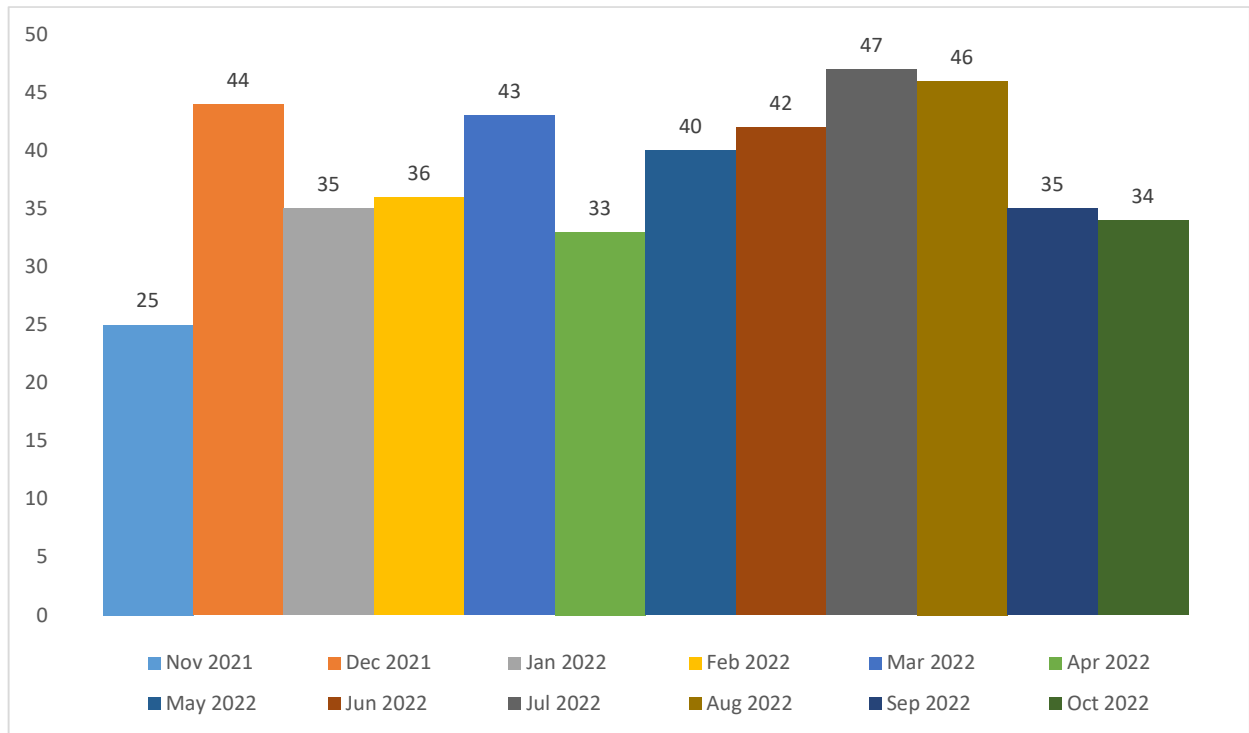
ELEARNING

It became apparent that some professionals and members of the public were not fully aware of some of the challenges men face when they are victims of abuse. From frequent discussions with our clients, raising awareness was essential to help victims to access our service. Therefore we created E learning about male rape and sexual abuse launched on website here: [Ask Marc launches first public training session for its 1-year anniversary | Ask Marc](#)

This gives the chance for those who wanted to learn more about male victims of rape and sexual assault to access training at a time that suits them. This flexibility enables us to engage with a wide variety of people, and there is no cost therefore there should be limited barriers for someone to gain an insight into this.

SUPPORT

REFERRALS



Last year, most of our referrals were from MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference):110, Self-Referrals: 85 and then the police: 82. It is reassuring that victims are either coming to us on their own terms or they are being referred so they can have correct support through the criminal justice process.

According to the Office for National Statistics, from the years March 2017 – March 2020, 47% of 16-59 year old male victims of rape were under the influence of alcohol or drugs that they had chosen to take or that the perpetrator had drugged them. In regards to our referrals the year after this study, there were 9 individuals that were referred from drug and alcohol services. This is something that we hope to address by collaborating with appropriate organisations to ensure we reach out to potential victims.

SUPPORT

After discussions with clients, it came to light that some were interested in the unique adventure therapy sessions that were hosted by WildnWell. These were initially developed for young people who have been victims of sexual violence. However, soon we opened this for men too. It was deemed to be a success and we hope to run it again next summer.

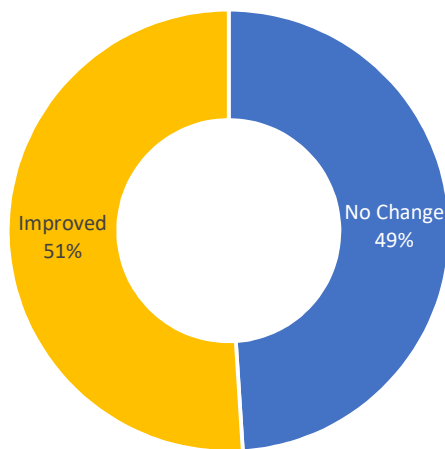
There is more information on our website: [The great outdoors is calling! - Black Country Womens Aid](#)

FEEDBACK

Your feedback and opinions on the service is always very valuable to how we report and reflect on how we deliver our service. Here at Ask MARC we take your thoughts and feelings seriously. You are the most valuable person when it comes to making this services better for everyone else.

Throughout the year, we have been collecting feedback from our clients to help improve the service. We have created charts to help portray our feedback and provided some context around the support too.

Are you happy with the information you have received today?



We usually ask this when we close a client to service who no longer wishes to continue with support. We came to realise that some clients only wanted to call in for advice and guidance and didn't want one to one intervention work. Therefore, obtaining this information is useful.

Sometimes intervention work might not be the best support for a client at a given time. However, we are always open to receiving referrals at a later date when someone is ready to engage and wants that specific trauma informed support.

"I found it really hard to say the words when I first called up"

It was identified by a client during the launch of the service, that sometimes telephone support may be difficult. This then resulted in ensuring that Ask Marc staff were able to deliver trauma informed support. Not only did we want to provide telephone support but understood the importance of having a range of ways of connecting with our clients. For example, this could have been face to face or over video call.

After the Ask Marc staff receiving trauma informed practice training, telephone calls were the most popular method of communication. This was then followed by face to face interventions.

"You go into a dark place and feel like you have nowhere to turn"

Ask Marc aimed to encourage men not to suffer alone in their difficult experiences. We hoped that the outcomes of working with one of our advocates would enable men to flourish and move forward feeling empowered. Listening to some of the concerns men had when they arrived to the service during their initial assessment to how they respond to when they complete their closure with us, presents us with impressive accomplishments. The key outcomes that have been achieved are:





Closing clients

Clients are asked a series of questions for us to capture how they have found the support and to assess the ongoing risk. Here are a few examples:

	Worse	No Change	Improved
How is your safety at home and / work?	1	20	51
How is your confidence and self-esteem?	2	24	46
How frightened do you now feel?	1	20	51

It is interesting to note that the number of people who said that they think their safety at home/work got worse is the same as those who became more frightened. The role of our advocates is to safeguard appropriately. Therefore, we continue to liaise with safeguarding bodies and the police to support in improving the safety for victims.

CASE STUDY

61 year old client whom has experienced childhood sexual assault and rape by two perpetrators his mother and uncle. Client expressed he also experienced child abuse from his father and witnessed domestic abuse on a daily basis. He expressed he struggles with his emotions and not understanding what he is feeling. He struggles with anger and this affects his current relationship with his wife and grown children. He is currently unemployed and feels his focus is to concentrate on himself at present.

Referral into service

61 year old male, whom was referred into the Ask Marc Sexual Violence service via Sandwell Wellbeing Team, for childhood sexual assault and rape. He expressed his preferred method of engagement was via video chat this was completed with client at the time via teams and moving forward client chose to use whatsapp due to his internet speed.

An Initial assessment was carried out with client during first stages of engagement where the following risk factors was found. Client stated he has suicidal thoughts at times but feels these are controlled well with support from his family.

Client attempted to take his life in 2020 he stood on a bridge and considered jumping, client stated he doesn't know what stopped him but it's not something he feels he will go through with, client then stated "I do know actually my girls my wife and my son are the most important things in my life, I couldn't hurt them... My wife from the first day we met has been there through everything her and her mom took me in and gave me life."

Client requested a female advocate stating he did not feel comfortable discussing information with a male.

Intervention

Client has been provided with emotional support throughout the process and given the practical information of reporting the incident if he wishes along with the emotional support that can be provided through the criminal justice process. Multi agency work has been completed with clients GP in support of their mental health.

Outcomes

Client is currently in counselling and engaging well in the service.

Client is excited to look at future work and wishes to engage in group work, Client did wish to engage in outdoor therapy in 2021 but was unable to do so at the time. Client is currently in employment and feels empowered by his journey.

The client continued to engage in the beyond trauma programme which in turn allowed him time to heal and understand some of the emotions surrounding the shame he felt. He felt the most eye opening interventions for himself was around anger and understanding what happened to him as a child was not his fault.

During intervention work client disclosed he wishes to become a drag artist and felt a lot of confusion and hate toward himself over this, advising he had never told anyone this before. His wife and children supported with by getting him drag makeup and clothes. Recently, he has done his first drag act to which he stated was truly liberating. Client aspires to perform a charity drag act in 2023 for international men's day to help raise awareness around men's mental health, to help break the stigma and say a man can be anything our past hurt does not define us it is ok to feel.

"Without the support and understanding of Ask Marc I would not be where I am today."