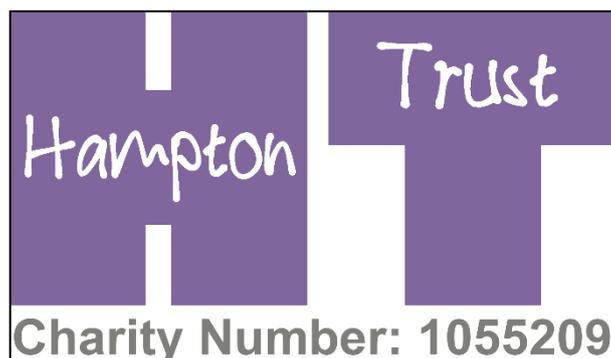


# A DAARC Window Of Opportunity

**Short discussion of feedback from participants attending The Hampton Trust's Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Course as part of CARA Conditional Caution pilot**

**Dr Kerry Lee**

**August 2014**



## **Foreword**

'I need to be at my daughter's birthday party,' I'm missing the match and I have a season ticket', I've had to change the rota at work and they weren't happy'. Are you starting to picture the Saturday morning scene in a discreet conference room tucked away on the fifth floor of one of our national hotel chains? The 2012 petrol strike was particularly useful in terms of 'might not get there, depends on the petrol tank'. We do not provide birthday cake, live football results or reimbursement for missing work, however, I have always felt resolute that participants will complete the course with an increased awareness of how their actions are impacting on themselves and more importantly on those they share their lives with. I am delighted that Dr Kerry Lee has been able to confirm and capture an emerging consciousness amongst participants in this paper.

Responding to domestic abuse is a challenge across all UK police forces. Insufficient evidence to pursue convictions often means individuals being released from custody with no further sanction to deploy. This return to 'normal life' misses a window of opportunity for individuals to reflect on their behaviour and the reasons for their arrest. Domestic abuse is not simply a criminal justice issue. It is a pernicious, complex and destructive blight on our society, often with tragic consequences. Expertise must be pooled and innovation encouraged if we are to stand a chance of increasing safety to those living in fear on a daily basis.

The Hampton Trust is delighted to work in partnership with Hampshire Constabulary and key agencies to deliver the CARA pilot currently being evaluated by Cambridge University. A step into a brave new world, it has relied on a willingness from key stakeholders to take a risk and trial new approaches. We have been able to draw on 18 years' experience of work with domestic abuse perpetrators to design and deliver a course aimed at raising awareness to individuals who otherwise would never discuss domestic abuse, let alone identify as abusive.

Early results are positive and I am optimistic we are on the right track. Feedback from participants such as 'It has opened my eyes to the effects of my behaviour' surely demonstrates that it's worth a missed football match and late arrival at the birthday party.

**Chantal Hughes**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**The Hampton Trust**

## Introduction

This report presents the results of an evaluation of the Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Course (DAARC), designed and delivered by the Hampton Trust. The course is currently used with individuals accepting a conditional caution<sup>1</sup> for a low severity or first domestic abuse related offence.

## Background

DAARC is delivered by the Hampton Trust as part of a project led by Hampshire Constabulary called Caution Against Relationship Abuse (CARA). CARA emerged out of discussions about domestic abuse cases within the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). It was recognised that a significant number of simple caution disposals were being used for low severity domestic abuse related offences, and additionally, that a significant proportion of domestic abuse cases failed to proceed due to victim reluctance to testify. The group worked with the idea that the point at which an individual has been arrested and admitted the offence provided a window of opportunity for early and rapid intervention, and the use of conditional cautions were considered as a potential alternative to simple cautions.

Consultations on the feasibility and desirability of using conditional cautions were held with both local and national stakeholders, and focus groups were conducted with victims of domestic abuse. From this, Hampshire

Constabulary formally requested and received permission from the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) and the Home Office to conduct a pilot. The pilot began in 2012.

It was in this context, that the Hampton Trust designed and delivered the course (DAARC) that comprises the 'diversionary condition' element of the caution.

The pilot aims to assess whether conditional cautions containing a diversionary element are more effective at reducing re-offending in comparison to receipt of a conditional caution with no diversionary element. A research team at the University of Cambridge are currently evaluating CARA, with findings<sup>2</sup> indicating that those receiving the conditional caution and attending the course are 46 per cent less likely to re-offend in comparison to those who do not (the control sample). Additionally, 81 per cent of victims whose (ex)partner attended the course reported an improvement in behaviour post attendance in comparison to 44 per cent in the control sample (Hampshire Constabulary, 2014).

This report focuses exclusively on the Trust's internal evaluation of DAARC; reporting findings from a questionnaire delivered to 131 participants between March 2012 to July 2014. As with partner feedback and comparison of offending rates, participant responses demonstrate that DAARC makes a positive

impact in reducing domestic abuse.

## **Interventions to reduce Domestic Abuse**

Tackling domestic abuse has long been a national priority (HM Government, 2010; 2011) and it is now widely accepted that a multi-agency approach is required to effectively address the issue. It is also accepted that a variety of services or 'a basket of resources' (Sen, 1999) focusing on both those experiencing abuse and individuals engaging in abusive behaviour, are required to reduce domestic abuse and address the harms it causes. Services providing tailored support to those affected by domestic abuse include: Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA); refuge; counselling; advocacy; and children's services. Behavioural change programmes, or Domestic Violence Prevention Programmes (DVPPs) as they are more widely known, are the most common form of intervention focusing on individuals who are abusive towards intimate partners.

DVPPs provide much needed opportunities to tackle abusive behaviour and reduce risk; offering an approach that is aligned with the 'justice goals' of many victims. Discussions regarding perpetrators of domestic abuse tend to focus on bringing abusive individuals to 'justice' and robust criminal sanctions seen as positive outcomes for victims. However, research has repeatedly shown that this focus

runs contrary to the outcomes desired by victims, many of whom do not wish to pursue criminal justice sanctions and simply wish for the abuse to stop (Holder, 2001; Hester, 2006). That a substantial proportion of victims want options that help their abusive partner change their behaviour was also a finding from CARA victim feedback, with 57 per cent stating that they wanted help for their (ex)partner compared to 23 per cent wanting prosecution (Hampshire Constabulary, 2014).

Despite this DVPPs are often poorly understood, with confusion surrounding the aims, design and suitability of different interventions. As a result, clarity about what the intervention is designed to achieve, and whom it is designed to work with is crucial, particularly in the current context of 'What Works' principles and evidence based practice framing commissioning and service provision decision making. With this in mind, it is important to highlight the key differences between DAARC and longer behavioural change courses such as DVPPs.

Whilst DAARC aims to improve the safety of victims of domestic abuse (and as such has a similar overall aim to DVPPs), it is a much shorter intervention, focusing on increasing awareness of domestic abuse and the impacts on partners, children and relationships.

It is intended as a form of early intervention

for those without long term histories of engaging in domestically abusive behaviour, using awareness raising techniques plus exploration of the consequences of abusive behaviour to enable an increased awareness of the need for healthier ways of relating and to identify further sources of support where appropriate. Recognising some participants will have more entrenched patterns of engaging in abusive behaviour towards current or ex partners, the aim is to increase recognition of the benefits of attending a longer behavioural change intervention, increasing motivation to attend a DVPP. For these individuals, it is a DVPP that can offer the more intensive and longer form of intervention (usually lasting 24-30 weeks), using specific techniques to bring about behavioural and attitudinal change.

DAARC, therefore, is neither designed nor intended to be a replacement for a longer DVPP. Rather it is a useful addition to the 'basket of resources' currently available in tackling domestic abuse.

## **Course design**

The Hampton Trust provides a range of domestic abuse interventions across Hampshire and the Channel Islands, including the RESPECT accredited DVPP called Accredited Domestic Abuse Prevention Training (ADAPT). The ADAPT programme includes an integrated victim safety service,

and it is the Trust's expertise in working with both perpetrators and victims in order to reduce risk and increase the safety of victims that informs both the design and facilitation of DAARC. The course consists of two structured workshops, with a months reflection period between workshop A and B. It is designed to be appropriate for both men and women of any sexual orientation and is delivered to single sex groups. Each workshop is delivered by two facilitators with extensive experience of delivering domestic abuse interventions with both victims and perpetrators. Attendance and completion of all course elements is compulsory; non completers are referred back to the Police.

Victim contact is an essential element of the intervention. Whilst all victims must consent to the caution at the time of issue, further victim contact ensures that any potential risk, particularly increased risk resulting from course attendance can be effectively monitored and managed where appropriate. As part of CARA, all victims are contacted both between and after the two workshops by a Victim Specialist worker employed by the Police. Victim feedback is then provided to DAARC facilitators to ensure that any potential risk implications from course attendance can be considered.

The content and delivery of DAARC broadly follows the FRAMES approach (Miller & Rollnick, 2013), with six key elements:

- **Feedback** - provision of information and the use of reflective listening by facilitators to work collaboratively with participants;
- **Responsibility** – participants are encouraged to understand they are responsible for their own behaviour;
- **Advice** – on how to change;
- **Menu Options** – provision of a number of strategies through which change may be achieved;
- **Empathy** – participants are treated with respect and understanding; and
- **Self-efficacy** – each participant is strongly encouraged to believe in their own ability to change their behaviour.

In both workshops, participants are guided through a variety of exercises and interactive discussions focusing on the impacts and consequences of domestic abuse. At the end of the second workshop, participants are provided with information about a wide range of local services offering support and advice about issues such as drugs and alcohol, counselling, housing and employment, among others.

### **Participant feedback**

The Hampton Trust regards service user feedback as an essential element of service delivery, providing participants with the opportunity to inform future delivery and design. A short feedback and evaluation form

is given to all participants to complete at the end of the second workshop. The feedback forms were designed as questionnaires with open and closed responses. It includes questions about how useful the participants have found the course, attitudinal change use of techniques covered in the workshops in the time between workshop one and two, and self identified behaviour change goals for the future.

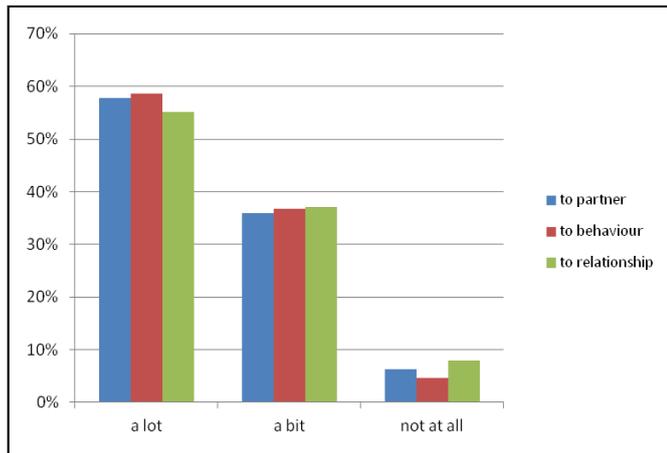
DAARC was delivered to 26 cohorts between March 2012 and July 2014, with 131 participants attending. All participants except four were male. The number of participants on each course ranged between two and ten, with an average of five.

### **Attitudinal change**

The first section of the questionnaire asked participants to indicate how far their attitudes towards their partner; their behaviour; and their relationship had changed between the first and second workshop. Participants were asked to rate how much they thought their attitudes had changed on a three point scale, ranging from 'a lot' to 'not at all'.

The majority of participants reported some degree of attitude change towards their partner (94%); behaviour (95%); and relationship (91%), with over half stating that their attitudes had changed 'a lot' (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Self reported attitude change to partner; behaviour; and relationship**



### **Awareness of the need for change**

Participants were asked if, as a result of attending DAARC, they recognised any aspects of their behaviour that would benefit from change. Overall, 80 per cent of participants identified at least one aspect of their behaviour that they recognised required some degree of change. The most common responses mentioned being more aware of a need to communicate differently with their (ex)partner, and/or to exercise more emotional control.

**“going to try not to bottle up problems and address them when they start”**

**“I have learnt not to cause unnecessary arguments and problems”**

**“not getting angry over things I can't control”**

**“If I controlled my anger more then most of the problems would not arise”**

Some participants highlighted that they recognised a need to change their alcohol

consumption and drinking habits.

**“Go to AA”**

**“Don't argue when have been drinking”**

**“stop drinking”**

Others mentioned an increased awareness that certain aspects of their behaviour were abusive, and this needed to change.

**“to loosen up and not control my wife and family”**

**“Change all - not violence only, didn't know name calling was abusive before”**

**“shouting at and intimidating her – I've learnt a lot about domestic abuse. These are things everyone should know”**

For some this was linked to an increased understanding of the impact of their behaviour on others.

**“Learning the short and long term affects of domestic violence has made me aware how my partner would have been feeling at the time”.**

**“It has opened my eyes to the affects of my behaviour”**

**“It makes you realise, are the arguments really worth it, or am I jeopardising my relationship for no reason”**

The above responses demonstrate not only an increased awareness of what constitutes domestic abuse, but that on the whole, participants had reflected and connected the course content to their own behaviour and circumstances.

The use of the power and equality wheels proved extremely effective at facilitating these connections. The wheels were cited by participants as the most useful exercise in the course, with 94 per cent stating that they had found them either 'quite' or 'very useful'. Some mentioned that they had made reference to the wheels in between workshops, using the content of the wheels as a 'mental checklist', against which they evaluated their behaviour and actions.

**"I try and keep on the equality wheel"**

**"I try and think about the wheels before opening my mouth".**

### **Starting to make changes**

As stated earlier, DAARC is primarily an awareness raising intervention rather than a behavioural change course, but it does include techniques which aim to equip participants with the ability to recognise when situations are escalating or becoming more dangerous, as well as ways to prevent this from happening. Participants frequently mentioned one or more of these techniques, particularly those aimed at preventing the escalation of arguments, as something they had started to use between workshops.

**"I now take time out to reflect as opposed to reacting in a way that I shouldn't"**

**"Now, if I feel that an argument is getting out of control I go away, calm down and then return**

**to talk calmly"**

**"I have learnt to go out and come back within the hour. We have gone through the time out procedure and talk about things"**

Not all participants mentioned using specific techniques, but the majority stated that they had already made attempts to improve communication with (ex)partners. This entailed making efforts to listen more; being respectful and less self centred; and to think before acting or responding so as to avoid reacting abusively.

**"I try to have a bit more respect, not to be so quick tempered, listen more"**

**"I now listen to my partner and think before I speak to them"**

**"I now spend more time with my family not with my mates, I listen to her opinion more. The relationship is already better with less arguments"**

Changes were not limited to attempts to improve communication however, a range of other practical changes were also mentioned, of which help-seeking was the most common. These included starting to attend support groups; requesting help and support with parenting; intentions to contact a domestic violence prevention programme or attending one to one counselling.

**"I am going to one to one counselling and have stopped drinking"**

**"been to the doctors who have been more than willing to help me on a number of levels"**

**"After recognising the impacts on children have asked for parenting help"**

**"I now attend a support group"**

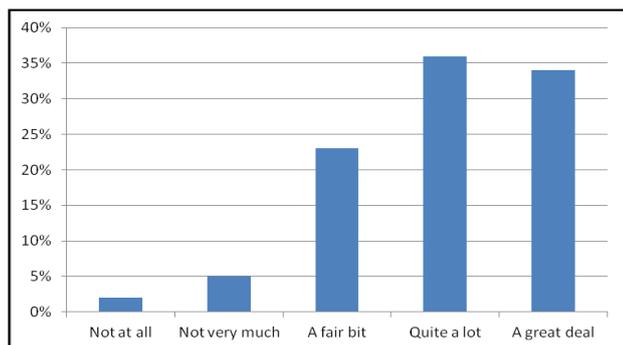
**"Starting ADAPT"**

The ability to recognise what needs to change, coupled with attempts to do so and increased knowledge of where to seek help illustrate the benefits of the course. They represent the first steps to healthier and less risky ways of relating to partners and children. Without a long term follow up of course participants it is not possible to establish how long these changes last, but interviews with partners suggests that the behaviour of course participants remains more constructive and positive for some weeks after course completion.

## **Delivery and facilitation of the Course**

The final section of the questionnaire asked participants about the course as a whole. Feedback here was overwhelmingly positive with the majority (93%) stating that they had found DAARC helpful to some degree (either a fair bit, quite a lot or a great deal).

**Figure 2. 'How useful was the course for you?'**



The organisation and delivery of DAARC was also viewed very positively, with 93 per cent stating the workshops were either 'quite' or 'very well' organised. A slightly higher proportion responded that the workshops were 'quite' or 'very well' presented (96%).

Attending a group workshop can be a daunting experience, and in light of this, an additional question asking participants what their expectations were prior to attending the course was added into the questionnaire from cohort 18 onwards. Whilst some participants simply stated that they did not know what to expect, the majority indicated that they had expected to be humiliated or shamed in some way.

**"was better than I thought it would be there was no finger pointing or poor attitude"**

**"expected us to be looked down at and treated like a thing. This was not the case"**

**"being embarrassed by the crime I committed I thought I would be judged"**

Some also made reference to their expectations of what the other participants might be like.

**"full of thugs and people that beat women all time"**

**"I expected to be in a room with criminals"**

**"Expected loads of woman beaters but actually found it interesting"**

These rather negative expectations highlight the importance of highly experienced and trained staff who are able to provide skilled, sensitive facilitation.

Although participants were not asked directly about the staff facilitating the course, half specifically mentioned the DAARC facilitators and their non-judgemental approach as one of the two things they liked most about the course.

**“the course leaders - very friendly, approachable and had some very wise words”**

**“the course tutors were excellent”**

**“sharing and being able to talk to someone without being judged”**

**“friendly non-judgemental atmosphere”**

## **Conclusion**

The participant responses included throughout demonstrate that DAARC is highly effective at meeting the key aims of increasing awareness of what constitutes domestic abuse and the impacts of abusive behaviour on children and partners. DAARC is also effective at changing attitudes towards partners and relationships, and this, along with the behavioural changes some participants have started to implement increases the possibility of changing abusive behaviour in order to develop safer and healthier ways of relating. These positive changes reported by participants are

supported by the partner feedback and data on re-offending rates collected as part of project CARA (Hampshire Constabulary, 2014).

The participant feedback also underscores the importance of ensuring that staff designing and delivering any intervention for use with individuals engaging in abusive behaviour need to be both highly skilled and experienced. This was recently emphasised in a report by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of the Constabulary:

**“Introducing these programmes requires specialist knowledge and should not be left to the “enthusiastic amateur” otherwise victims may be put at more risk.”** (HMIC, 2014: 108).

Skilled facilitation and delivery is vital to ensure the opportunity to engage individuals in a journey of change will not be lost.

This report has presented a discussion of participant feedback for DAARC. DAARC aims to capitalise on the ‘window of opportunity’ by encouraging participants to recognise abusive behaviours and seek appropriate support. This will achieve long term goals to reduce further offending and support victims desired outcome of the abuse to stop. The feedback from participants in conjunction with other CARA evaluations suggests this new resource in the basket has much to offer as part of a robust response to domestically abusive behaviours.

## Notes

1. A Simple Caution is an out of court disposal for a low severity and/or first time offence. Conditional Cautions were introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and differ from simple cautions in that they contain one or more 'condition(s)'. The condition can be rehabilitative (e.g. attending an intervention to help raise awareness of the impact of the offending behaviour) or reparative (e.g. an intervention to help make good the harm caused to individuals or the community). Non compliance with the 'condition' element of the caution can result in the case proceeding to court.

2. More detailed information for Project CARA is available at: <http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/events/conferences/ebp/2014/slides/112%20-%20TUES%20-%20Project%20CARA%20-%20Hampshire.pdf>

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## About The Hampton Trust

**The Hampton Trust has been in existence for over 18 years providing a broad range of innovative and ground breaking programmes for both adults and children experiencing violence, abuse and isolation.**

**The Hampton Trust delivers services across Hampshire; the Isle of Wight; and the Channel Islands.**

**For more information visit: [www.hamptontrust.org.uk](http://www.hamptontrust.org.uk)**

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