

How is Project CARA an ‘improved’ criminal response to domestic abuse?

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Project **CARA**

Conditional Cautioning and Relationship Abuse



CARA is the first domestic abuse policing strategy in UK history to be trialled under experimental conditions. Researchers at Cambridge University's Institute of Criminology worked with Hampshire Constabulary and The Hampton Trust to conduct the study using the CARA (Cautions and Relationship Abuse) programme: small-group discussion workshops for men who received conditional cautions for first arrests for low-harm domestic abuse.

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- 'Soft option'
- Not holding offenders accountable
- Shifts focus from securing victimless prosecutions
- Sometimes mistaken for community resolution

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- ✓ It's not a perpetrator programme
- ✓ It's not 'designed' to be a change programme
- ✓ It's not restorative justice
- ✓ It's not 'designed' to be cognitive behavioural therapy

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- ✓ CARA was a randomised control trial led by Cambridge University designed to test the hypothesis that domestic abuse offenders subject to offending workshops are less likely to commit further DA offences than those who do not receive this intervention
- ✓ Offenders received a conditional caution to attend two workshops (or not if in control group)
- ✓ Eligible individuals were randomly assigned to treatment or control group
- ✓ Strategic group formed July 2011 - commenced August 2012
- ✓ Previously would have received a 'simple caution'

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- ✓ Adult male (for experiment only due to low numbers of females, otherwise eligible)
- ✓ No previous convictions or cautions for violence in the previous two years
- ✓ Relationship between parties: Present or past intimate partners only
- ✓ Eligible offences: minor assaults categorised by law as common assault and battery, criminal damage, harassment, threatening behaviour, domestic theft related offences
- ✓ Admission and Crown Prosecution Service agree overwhelming evidence is present
- ✓ Past minor convictions permitted unless offender is currently serving a community based sentence or order
- ✓ DASH risk assessment assesses risk to victim as standard or medium
- ✓ Victim contacted and agrees for partner to attend workshops - no specific risk for the conditional caution to be issued

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- ✓ Four month conditional caution
- ✓ Two workshops – 4 weeks apart
- ✓ Must attend both
- ✓ Victim must agree and is contacted following first workshop and upon completion of second

Miller & Rollnick Frames Techniques

- ✓ **Feedback** – Reflective listening & feedback
- ✓ **Responsibility** – Encouragement to take responsibility
- ✓ **Advice** – Engagement on steps forward, longer term goals
- ✓ **Menu** – Engagement on strategies for moving forward & change
- ✓ **Empathy** – Participants are treated with respect
- ✓ **Self efficacy** – Participants are encouraged to believe in their ability to change

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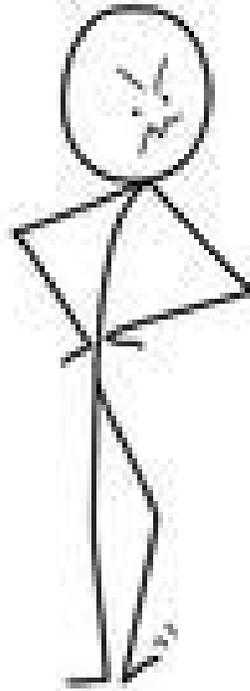


We aim to move participants away from a place of denial and minimisation for their actions to a position of acceptance and responsibility for the harm they have caused

Participant reflections pre CARA workshop

I'm going through the motions of doing what I need to

When I got into the police station I may as well have raped and murdered someone



I haven't done anything wrong but just going with it

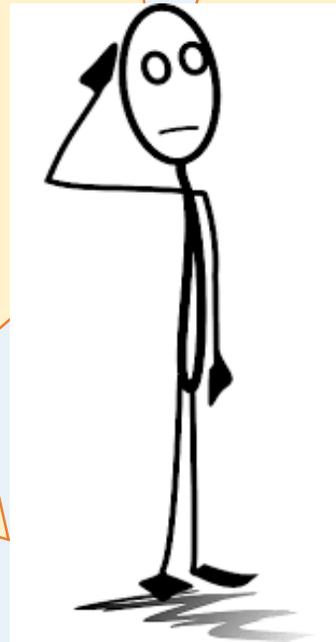
If she hadn't called the Police I wouldn't be here

I'm no wife batterer. She needs to consider her attitude more

Participant reflections post CARA workshop

Learning the short & long term affects of domestic violence has made me aware how my partner would have been feeling at the time

Change all, not violence only, didn't know name calling was abusive before



You know I kept commenting that I shouldn't be here, but I realise now that I need to take positives away

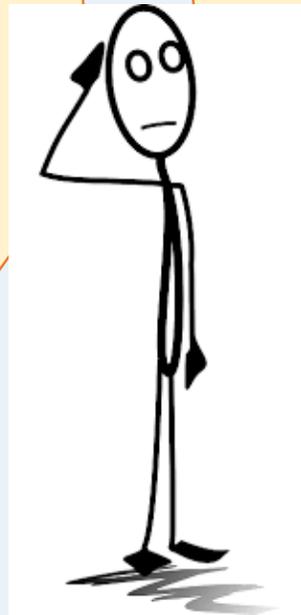
When you are made to do something you reflect

It has opened my eyes to the affects of my behaviour

Participant Actions

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

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



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”

Participant Actions

After recognising the impacts on children have asked for parenting help

I now go to AA

I now attend ADAPT



I now attend a support group

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

Of the 293 offenders who fit the strict criteria between August 2012 and November 2015, around half were randomly assigned to attend CARA workshops, run by experienced facilitators from The Hampton Trust.

- ✓ 35% fewer men reoffended against their partner
- ✓ For full details of the experiment can be found on the following link
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41887-017-0007-x>

So how is CARA an improved criminal justice response for victims of domestic abuse?

- ✓ Victims frequently state they don't want to leave the relationship and they want their partner to get help
- ✓ A simple caution doesn't challenge perpetrators to reflect on the impact of their behaviour on their family
- ✓ Engagement with victims from police and third sector agencies is stepped up as a result of a conditional caution for a longer period of time therefore enhanced risk management
- ✓ Arresting and charging people for domestic abuse is not always the only way to tackle domestic abuse and prevent further offending
- ✓ Cautions can be used as evidence of previous offending in future court proceedings and therefore CARA stands to enhance accountability of the offender in the event of future arrests than a simple caution would

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- ✓ Policing does not have the skill set, capacity or capability required to prevent re-offending of domestic abuse outside of the criminal justice system
- ✓ Domestic abuse re-offending cannot be reduced through a policing response alone for low-risk, first time perpetrators
- ✓ Third sector intervention (which has been reliably tested) with lower risk perpetrators may prevent further offences thus reducing demand and less victims
- ✓ Policing needs to partner with experienced third sector organisations like The Hampton Trust to deliver interventions which have been evaluated 'to work' for domestic abuse perpetrators rather than rely on the criminal justice system intervention to reduce re-offending

Superintendent Tony Rowlinson

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- ✓ CARA has now been rolled out countywide across Hampshire
- ✓ CARA is currently being piloted in Leicestershire in partnership with Leicestershire Police
- ✓ CARA is currently being piloted in West Midlands in partnership with West Midlands Police. This also includes piloting an adapted CARA for the Polish community

“Introducing these programmes requires specialist knowledge and should not be left to the enthusiastic amateur”

(Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2014: 108)

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“The perpetrators we engage are essentially in the lives of the survivors and children we want to protect therefore lets encourage innovation that is backed up by safe practice and quality standards”

(Chantal Hughes CEO The Hampton Trust)