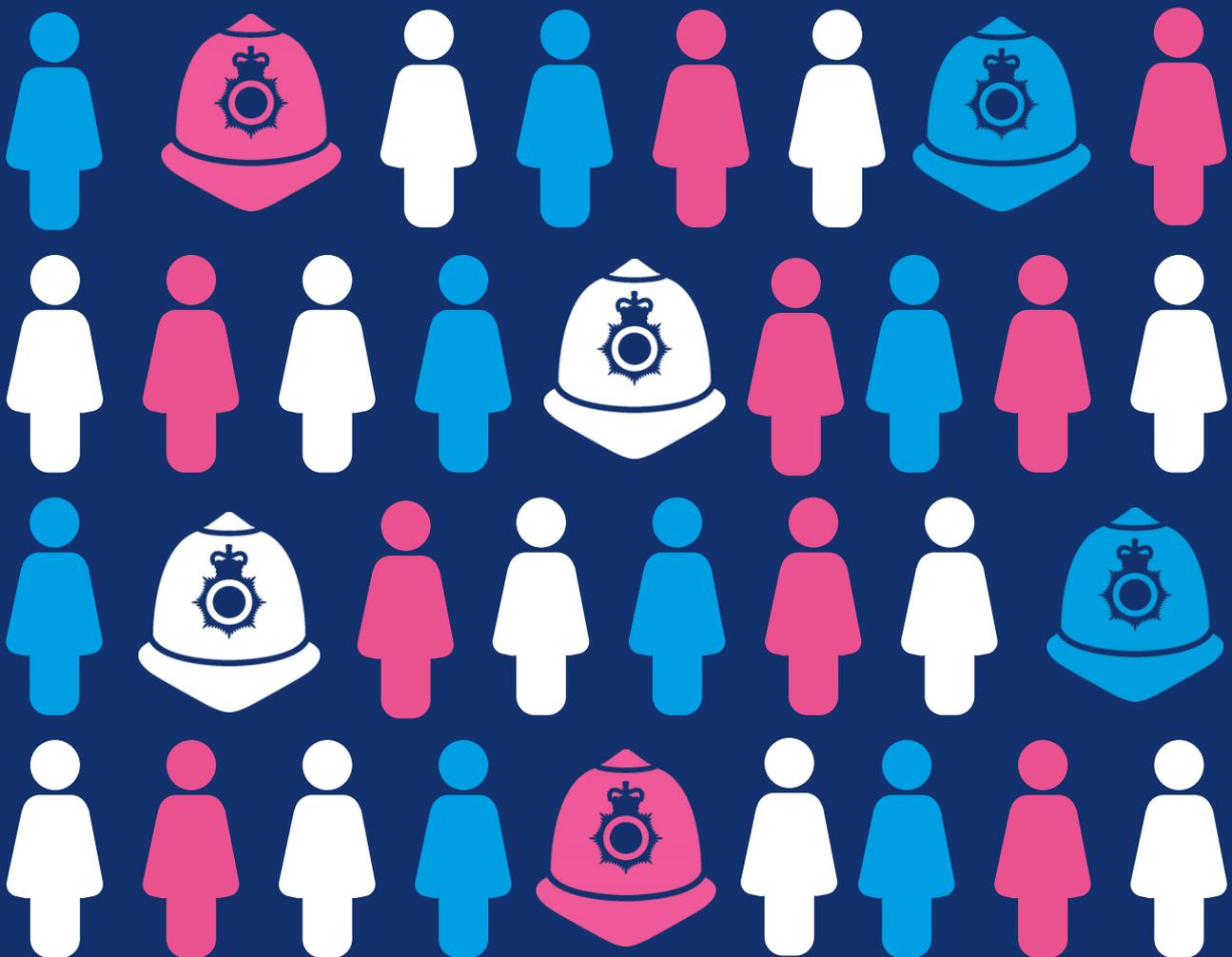


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# Domestic Abuse Matters: Police responders and Champions training Six month follow-up



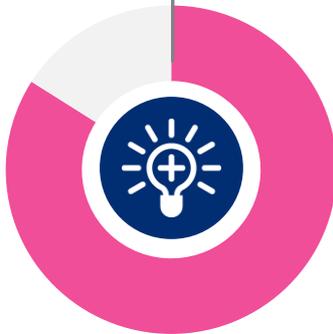
## Domestic Abuse Matters: Six month follow-up



**75%**

of responders report improvements in **putting safeguarding actions in place**

**84%**



of **First Responders** report that the training was **directly applicable to their role**



“Investigations, both initial and protracted are of a higher quality”

- **First Responder**



of **DA Matters Champions** report improvements in their own way of working

“

I enjoyed the training as it gave me more information and understanding of DV & DA as a MARAC Coordinator

- **First Responder**

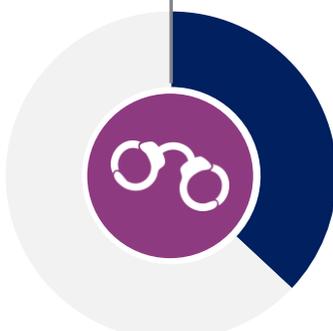


**77%**  
of **First Responders** report positive changes in their **evidence gathering**



**58%**  
of responders report improvements in **how they respond to those perpetrating abuse**

**37%**



have been involved in an **arrest for coercive and controlling behaviour** since training

“

My team are aware I am a DA Champion and I am provided time from the other supervisors to support officers when needed.

- **First Responder**



# Domestic Abuse Matters

## Six month follow-up report – June 2018

### Introduction

This report considers the Domestic Abuse Matters training carried out by SafeLives across three English police force areas throughout 2017. This report contains an overview of the responses gathered to a six month follow-up questionnaire sent to Domestic Abuse Matters First Responders and Champions.

A report looking at the initial feedback can be found [here](#). This initial report considered that Domestic Abuse Matters aims to promote a long-term cultural shift in the approach and attitude of officers to domestic abuse. To achieve this, it is important that the momentum generated by the training is maintained. This is best achieved through the use of the Domestic Abuse Matters Champions, who can offer support and additional ongoing training to responders. For the training to work as envisaged, ensuring that officers are made aware of who champions are, and what support and assistance is available, is essential. Secondly, ensuring that champions are supported in their new role and are given the additional time needed to complete these duties is of great importance.

This report will consider responses from both First Responders and Champions and look at whether the learning and attitudinal changes observed in the initial feedback have caused longer-term change in the response of officers to domestic incidents. It will also look to address the points referenced above, and whether or not the Champions are being used in a way that promotes a long-term culture of ongoing training, support and assistance.

### What the forces said – immediately after training

The vast majority of First Responders (83%) and Champions (78%) were willing to recommend Domestic Abuse Matters training to a colleague.

Amongst First Responders, two-thirds (65%) said it would have a very or extremely large impact on the way they perform their role, and three-quarters (75%) on their ability to respond to victims of domestic abuse in a more informed way.

Respondents highlighted that they would be more open-minded, empathetic and considerate towards victims, and that they would give more time to investigations and to the gathering of a broader range of more in-depth evidence and information. Responders reported feeling more confident in their own abilities and capacity to deal with domestic abuse incidents.

While the overwhelming number of responses were positive, responders did raise some concerns as well. The majority of these related to current police workloads and an overall lack of resources. Responders were concerned that they would not be able to give the required additional time to more in-depth investigations, or to fully realise the course contents and training.

### Respondent Profile – six month follow-up

A majority of First Responders filling in the survey were female (55% compared to 39% of course participants), as were Champions (60% compared to 49% of course participants). Respondents had an average age of 40 and an average length of service of 11 years. Almost all First Responders (95%) and Champions (94%) described themselves as White British.

Respondents covered a wide range of roles within the force, including victim care officers, sergeants, business assistants, force control operators, CID and beat managers.

## What the force is saying – six months after training

### Responses of First Responders

#### Training has been well received, influential and directly applicable to First Responders



87%

report positive changes in their work with victims

The vast majority of First Responders (84%) reported that the training was directly applicable to their role and 80% felt that the training had influenced their response to domestic violence and abuse incidents.

Responders were asked to rate how much impact each area of training had had on their practice. All seven key elements of the training had a positive impact on responders (Appendix 2), with an overall average response of 5.7 / 7 (where 1 indicates a low impact and 7 a high impact). The areas of highest impact were:

- Awareness of why victims may not support police action
- Understanding why victims may not be able to leave a perpetrator
- Understanding how perpetrators manipulate police responders
- Understanding how perpetrators coercively control their victims

The majority of responders (87%) reported a positive change in how they work with victims of domestic violence and abuse. Three out of four (77%) reported that the training had improved their evidence gathering, two-thirds how they work with police colleagues (67%), and over half how they respond to those perpetrating abuse (58%). Whilst responders gave no express reason, the less positive response when considering how they respond to perpetrators of abuse may point towards the additional complexities of working with perpetrators. Ideally, future evaluation activities will see this percentage rising as responders become more confident in this area. This will also benefit from wider systems change highlighted in reports such as the [University of Bristol Feasibility Study on the Drive programme](#). It is only by securing whole systems change in how the police and partner agencies respond to perpetrators that we will see the overall shift that we need.

“ More questions are being asked by attending officers to establish not only the offence reported but any further incidents which have not been reported.

When asked to highlight specific areas of improvement or change, respondents highlighted a greater connection with the victim, providing reassurance, empathising more, and working harder to determine if other forms of abuse, or previous incidents, had taken place. Victims were more frequently signposted to

specialist services, and responders ensured victims were kept informed and supported after the initial incident.

When asked about evidence gathering, responders said that they were gaining a wider background to the incident, asking more detailed questions about the current and previous incidents, and reporting the incident in more detail, specifically the demeanour of both the victim and the perpetrator. This extended to attempts by the perpetrator to manipulate first responders, and perpetrator's levels of hostility.

Responders also reported supporting, advising and signposting colleagues. This included both colleagues working on active cases, and colleagues who were experiencing domestic abuse in their personal lives. This increased awareness, openness, and realising that domestic abuse could be affecting any of the people around you every day, is vital to ensuring that the cultural change endures and that all those impacted by domestic abuse receive the response and support that they need.

Considering the responses gathered in the initial evaluation, and what impact responders hoped the programme would have on them, the responses above clearly demonstrate that these desired outcomes have been realised. Responders are conducting more thorough and in-depth investigations, and are asking more expansive questions of victims, while

77%



of First Responders were more knowledgeable when responding to non-violent domestic incidents

demonstrating more empathy and understanding, as well as greater awareness of perpetrator behaviour.

The training has also had a positive impact on participants' knowledge, confidence and awareness when dealing with all types of domestic violence and abuse incidents.

“ A greater understanding of the full picture, rather than the snap shot that may be occurring at the time of the call.

78%



of **First Responders** were more **confident** when responding to **non-violent domestic incidents**

**Respondents report that they have increased in knowledge (80%), confidence (81%), and awareness (81%) when responding to violent domestic incidents, and by 77%, 78% and 82% respectively when responding to non-violent domestic incidents.** This includes those responders who answered 'moderately', 'very' or 'extremely', excluding those who responded 'slightly' or 'not at all'.

Whilst the training was primarily focused on coercive and controlling behaviour, these responses show that it has had a wider impact on response to all domestic incidents.

**Many positives have come from the training but responders highlighted some barriers when it came to fully utilising and integrating training outcomes**

Responders were asked to expand on the answers summarised above, and to provide examples of positive change, as well as any barriers that still exist and that stop responders from making full use of the new training. Immediately after training, concerns were highlighted around time and resources, and responders' capacity to conduct a more in-depth and lengthy investigation. The great majority of responses were positive, with responders highlighting greater awareness, better reporting, and increased evidence gathering at incidents:

“ Officers are making positive outcomes a priority when dealing with DA and we are seeing improvements in the quality of evidence in some cases

Where barriers did still exist, these primarily referred to time and resources:

“ Time constraints and resource numbers. On many occasions there is not enough time to deal with the victim effectively or provide instant support when they are reporting DA.

The training focuses on the need for a more protracted, in depth response, and more time spent questioning victims and perpetrators. It also highlights the need to build rapport and trust with a victim, and for them to feel supported in the investigation:

“ Repeat victims being dealt with by varying numbers of police officers which restricts rapport building and confidence in the police

Overall, the response is very encouraging, and it is clear that officers are approaching domestic incidents in a positive fashion. Where barriers exist is in ensuring that officers have sufficient time and resources available to run a full, in depth investigation.

## Responses of Domestic Abuse Matters Champions

**DA Matters Champions training was considered less impactful and the role less embedded in some forces highlighting a need for continued cultural change and awareness of the new role**

The DA Matters Champions training appears to have had a moderately positive impact on respondents' practice. When asked to rate the impact on their practice of the key course learning objectives (Appendix 3), the average response was 4.2 / 7 (where 1 indicates a low impact and 7 a high impact). The most impactful areas of training were:

- Understanding the role of DA Matters Champion and embedding it within the force
- The personal effects on police responders of dealing with traumatic events such as Domestic Abuse



**65%**

of Champions report that their training **has impacted on the work of others**

While responses around core learning outcomes were only moderately positive, the training on the whole seems to have had a lasting impact on responders, with three-quarters (73%) reporting positive changes in their own way of working, and two-thirds (65%), that the training had helped to impact the working response of others.

Where there has been a positive use of the new Champions role is in offering procedural support for officers. This has included reviewing crime reports, victim statements, DASH forms, and helping officers with safety planning and risk provision for victims. This is hugely beneficial to officers, and gives them an extra point of contact and someone to run questions past and learn from.

The Champion's role is designed to have a broader scope than addressing training and procedural needs. The envisaged goal is that DA Matters Champions can aid and offer support to colleagues who are suffering from vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and who are victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse. One in five (20%) respondents reported having helped colleagues with support in these areas, a much lower percentage than had helped officers in other areas.

**Only 5% of the respondents reported having spoken to a Domestic Abuse Matters Champion in a professional capacity and only one-third (31%) said they had been supported in their new role.**

Whilst it has only been a few months since training across these forces concluded, there seem to have been some issues with integrating the Champion's role into police forces, with raising awareness of what support is available to officers, and with finding the time needed to fit these duties into an already busy work schedule. As considered above, responders raised concerns over time and resources at the initial evaluation stage, and First Responders highlighted that this was still a concern six months later. A similar sentiment was expressed by some Champions:



**Although the training was excellent and I was supported by supervisory to attend this, it is extremely hard to implement this across all colleagues due to the constant demand of various other services and requirements as force control room staff**

Overall, the responses from Champions were mixed, with some having received support and been given additional time to complete their additional duties:



**My team are aware I am a DA Champion and I am provided time from the other supervisors to support officers when needed**

Others reported having received no follow-up or support, and others addressed concerns over resources and capacity:

“ I said at the time of the training that I could not see how the Champion role fitted in with my current job, and still can't. I spend my time at work attached to the phone, so am not in a position to support or give feedback to colleagues

For the outcomes of the training to be fully realised, it is important that there is strong awareness of who DA Matters Champions are and the full range of support available. Additionally, ensuring that senior ranks facilitate Champions' performance of their new roles, by allowing more time and resources for these to be carried out, is essential.

## Conclusions and recommendations

It is apparent that the training was well received and is having a positive impact on responders. Where there appears to be an inconsistency is in the utilisation of DA Matters Champions. It is important that the impact of the training is not lost and that internal training and support continue in the way envisaged by the DA Matters programme. Moving forward SafeLives is keen to engage in further evaluation activities and to support police forces, specifically with consultations with survivors of domestic abuse. Talking to survivors, listening to their views, and officers learning from these experiences is vital to improving the overall response to domestic abuse.

SafeLives has made the following recommendations at the point of six-month follow up, aimed at assisting police forces in ensuring that the training continues to have a positive impact on the police response to domestic violence and abuse:

- Continue to embed Domestic Abuse Matters Champions within the force, ensuring that training is kept up to date, utilised, and that they are supported.
- Elevate the status of Domestic Abuse Matters Champions within the force; ensuring front-line officers know who they are and what support is available.
- Ensure additional time and resources are available for officers responding to domestic incidents.
- Help DA Matters Champions to connect and share knowledge with Champions in other Police Force areas using platforms such as POLKA or the SafeLives Community Platform.
- Continuously evaluate the impact the training is having on the force at large and consider if any additional training or policy changes are required that will increase this impact.

“ I think officers feel they have more support when taking positive action. There can sometimes be a negative attitude towards DV offences; due to the amount of officer time, amount of paperwork, likelihood of arrest/interview, likelihood of having to go to CPS. Since the training it is taken in a more positive manner and I get the impression people are more confident in progressing DV matters

- First Responder

## Appendices

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### Appendix 1: Methodology

An online survey was completed in Survey Monkey by 93 First Responders and 35 Domestic Abuse Matters Champions. Not all respondents answered every question.

Two emails were sent to participants who had consented to further contact three weeks apart. The survey was open for a total of five weeks. The survey asked participants to reflect on their learning from the course, how impactful it had been and if it had changed their practice. Some questions were answered on a 5 or 7-point scale, and others gave options to tick multiple responses. Some questions called for an 'open-ended' response. These considered how well the training has been adopted within the force and whether there are any barriers in this regard.

The data was analysed in Excel. As the sample size is small, there has been no additional breakdown analysis conducted by age, gender etc. and no significance testing has been conducted.

### Appendix 2: First Responder ratings of key learning outcomes (six months)

Area of training	Average of responses (out of 7)
Understanding how perpetrators coercively control their victims	5.7
Awareness of why victims may not support police action	5.9
Understanding why victims may not be able to leave a perpetrator	5.9
Supporting victims to disclose domestic abuse	5.7
Effectively evidencing incidents, ensuring perpetrator accountability	5.3
Offering safeguarding advice to victims	5.7
Understanding how perpetrators manipulate police responders	5.8

### Appendix 3: Domestic Abuse Matters Champions ratings of key learning outcomes (6-months)

Area of training	Average of responses (out of 7)
Understanding the role of the DA Matters Champion and embedding this within the force	4.5
The personal effects on police responders of dealing with traumatic events such as Domestic Abuse	4.3
Techniques used to support responders experiencing compassion fatigue, secondary trauma syndrome and vicarious trauma	4.0
The Grow model of 'hot debrief'	3.8