



Domestic Abuse Matters

A cultural, attitudinal and practice transformation programme for police

Getting started

Domestic Abuse Matters: a change programme for police

Why?

DA Matters exists because the College of Policing was asked by the HMIC to review the domestic abuse training it provided to frontline responders following the 2014 inspection known to most as “Everyone’s business”. The College asked SafeLives to provide an external view and we found the College was providing helpful learning objectives to the 43 police forces nationally, but there was inconsistency around training of first responders in terms of duration, content and quality. This was creating the potential for national inconsistency of service to families experiencing domestic abuse.

The DA Matters Change Programme was written with the College of Policing by SafeLives to provide police forces with a sustainable programme of change which offers the opportunity for the country to provide consistency of service to families experiencing domestic abuse. The programme recognises the difficult role police responders play in dealing with domestic abuse given demand is often outstripping resource, takes account of the helper conditions responders develop, and responds to domestic abuse experienced by serving officers and staff.

What?

- Force health check - a critical friend approach to ensure that the force can support and maintain the cultural, attitudinal and behavioural change achieved by the training. The process is defined by a multiple point review to assess and support the forces' ability to adopt DA Matters training elements, along with a “fresh eyes” examination of three areas pertinent to domestic abuse chosen locally by the force area. Health checks include reality testing where desired.
- A DA Matters train the trainer course to establish a local cadre of trainers to future proof ongoing force delivery. These trainers are approved by SafeLives and once they have passed the quality assurance (QA) process may deliver DA Matters in other areas for SafeLives. All trainers receive a programme of support from the DA Matters QA lead when delivering DA Matters in force and for SafeLives nationally.
- Training for first responders, designed to increase empathy and decrease negativity around domestic abuse. This is delivered with the local trainers and a team of national DA Matters trainers.

- Create a system of on the job “DA Matters Champions” given extra skills via training with a mandate to sustain the change in skills, behaviour and attitudes by challenging inappropriate language and behaviour, checking service delivery, giving feedback and congratulating great practice. DA Matters Champions also identify and act on compassion fatigue, burnout and vicarious trauma and respond to abuse within colleagues’ personal lives.
- Presentation of findings from the health check and learning from the responders and DA Matters Champions as to what it is like to be a domestic abuse responder in their police force. This is combined with an evaluation post the training to assess change in practice and knowledge immediately after the training and six months later.
- Sustaining the Change senior leader workshop - An opportunity to give the strategic command team some taster training sessions from the responders and DA Matters Champions programmes to raise awareness in the senior ranks. The workshop is bespoke to the force and is designed to consider how they will sustain the change achieved by the training. Additionally, this workshop starts to look at how a force can safely use the lived experience within their workforce to enhance service delivery both internally and externally.
- Ongoing support is provided by way of a secure community platform group which DA Matters force leads, trainers and champions can obtain further training opportunities, access to national best practice and the chance to network with each other. SafeLives was awarded monies from the Home Office in 2019 to update the programme around economic abuse and has delivered face to face champions training to adopter forces on the subject area, including provision of an on-line tool to adopter forces which is hosted on the Community Platform. Adopter forces can also access top up training for their trainers to ensure local delivery can continue unaffected by the onwards movement of staff. In September 2020 SafeLives launched a number of Workshops for Cops as part of our responding well programme. These are for police specialists and responders covering topics identified during training needs analysis by the adopter forces themselves. These will only be available to SafeLives DA Matters adopter forces.

The subject areas of the responding well Workshops for Cops are:

1. Responding to economic abuse
2. Investigating the links between coercive and controlling behaviour and suicide
3. Enhanced understanding of domestic abuse perpetrators
4. Responding to digital and cyber enabled domestic abuse
5. Assessing the risk of domestic abuse
6. Responding to male victims of domestic abuse
7. Responding to domestic abuse involving older people
8. Responding to officer involved domestic abuse
9. Responding to rural domestic abuse

How?

- Critical mass theory - 75% of all first responders to domestic abuse (including response officers, neighbourhood policing officers, PCSOs, Specials, Call handlers, prisoner interview teams, and front counter staff) trained to effect mass behavioural change.
- DA Matters Champions maintain the change and support their colleagues combatting compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.
- Force health check is essential to the programme to support and maintain the change achieved by the training.
- Training is delivered by jointly trained and approved police trainers and domestic abuse experts from an evaluated trainer guide.
- An internal communication strategy within the force area prior to delivery is supported by the SafeLives communications team.
- Each learning session contains no more than 25 police responders who do not wear uniform for the training, and a Safe Operating Protocol runs alongside the programme to ensure those with lived experience within the force are fully supported to take part safely.
- The delivery phase for the responders is concluded within four months with only the DA Matters Champions training being outside that period but in any case, within six months from the start of the responder delivery. This can be extended for large forces areas.

- Local trainers are used alongside SafeLives trainers making it locally relevant. The force area is future proofed by allowing remaining and future training to be carried out internally under licence from the College of Policing. Use of a force local training team reduces cost of training by 25%.
- A local survivor is sourced and supported to provide an input into the training elements of the programme, offering strength-based messages to the officers and staff.
- A full three-month mobilisation phase (four months for large forces of over 100 delivery sessions) is carried out by SafeLives to support the force to be ready to achieve best value for money. Both the mobilisation and delivery are projected managed by SafeLives working with the force.
- The delivery of the training elements of DA Matters are localised to the needs of the force thus allowing a force to address areas of need in terms of development in the frontline response to domestic abuse.

Where?

SafeLives has delivered DA Matters to over two thirds of all forces in England since 2016, alongside all of Wales and Scotland. Current adopter forces include Hampshire, South Yorkshire, Gwent, Police Scotland, West Midlands, Thames Valley, Surrey, and the Metropolitan Police Service. Our aim is for all 43 forces in England and Wales to have adopted the programme by 2024.

Making it local and needs based

Each delivery phase is localised to the needs of the force area. This is achieved by using a template developed by SafeLives which allows forces to indicate the areas of concern, focus and key messaging required. The document also gives information to trainers on arrest, risk assessment, prosecutions, recent DHR's and SCR's, local procedures and other relevant information to allow the training element of DA Matters to meet local need. Where requested, additional sessions can be created to meet need. For instance, legislative differences in the Military Police or Channel Islands, Ireland and Scotland. A conversion process is used to ensure the training is fit for purpose.

"I was initially resistant and didn't want to go on DAMS (Domestic abuse Matters Scotland responders training) but it has been the most valuable training I've been on in my 29 years service. I have since told the other sergeants in the station to keep an open mind and that they'll enjoy it too."

Scotland Uniform Sgt

Testimonials

"I'm getting the most amazing feedback, from the team and the trainers too. Even officers who were sceptical about the training, at the end of the day say this is the best training they have had. I can see the impact it's having immediately –a coercive control appeared on our daily management log which was a first and a direct result of an officer attending the training. One of our call handlers had an hour-long call with a victim. She had stayed on the phone longer than normal because she thought she could detect more going on than the victim was initially confident to say. By the end of that hour the victim had disclosed multiple sexual assaults. The call handler feels she was able to make that connection with the victim because of the DA Matters training."

ACC, Bedfordshire

"If we had had this training a few years earlier we undoubtedly would have saved lives and prevented DA homicides."

Inspector, Surrey

"I have had 4 completely unsolicited emails from officers who attended the training, saying how good it was. I have never known that before!!"

DCI, Leicestershire

"It was really impactful and I would expect that everyone (myself included) will have taken something positive away from the day. Interestingly, coming back to Division I can really see how this training has been taken on board by colleagues, especially those on response. I had a job flagged to me just yesterday where they were looking in broader terms at the controlling behaviour and being more tenacious and innovative with their initial investigative response. I suppose what I am saying, is that you can be confident that what you and your colleagues are doing really is making a difference."

DCI, Sussex

"I don't normally take the time to give feedback on courses but on this occasion felt this was appropriate. The course was one of the best I have ever done in my career, I attended hoping to pick up new skills up for my current role within Major Crime and a particular investigation I'm involved in, I didn't anticipate how good this would be. The course was graphic and to a certain degree, a little brutal. But so is domestic abuse, I have long thought that Police courses only teach the law and not reality, the impactful results of crime, or give officers a proper insight of what they are really walking into when dealing with such crime. This course left no one in any doubt of what they would be dealing with, the consequences suffered by the victim, some very useful tools to investigate and prove the various elements from reluctant victims, and the consequences of getting this wrong. It's reassuring that officers are now being trained and prepared for reality."

Major Crime Investigator, Hampshire

Evaluation

The evaluation examines before and after knowledge, understanding and perceived ability. Six months later the learners are asked to consider how the knowledge and skills gained have improved practice. The outcomes are overwhelmingly positive.

In 2020, independent research by the University of Hull found a 41% increase in arrests for coercive and controlling behaviour in those forces which had adopted the programme when compared with those who had not.

Costs

DA Matters delivery costs vary according to size of the police force, which elements of the programme are chosen and if a force uses its own staff and partners to assist in the delivery. The sliding scale used is very similar across the three licenced providers, so a force can choose based on fit and quality delivery rather than cost. SafeLives are happy to provide a quote for delivery on request.

Contact

If you would like to discuss the delivery of DA Matters in your force, please contact the programme lead Pete Williams;

[**Pete.Williams@safelives.org.uk**](mailto:Pete.Williams@safelives.org.uk)

07792169239

It would be helpful to have the following information to hand during the contact:

1. The total number of responders to domestic abuse including uniform responders, neighbourhood policing, investigation officers, safeguarding officers, PSD investigators, call takers and front counter staff members.
2. Taking into account a set mobilisation period of three or four months, what is your desired delivery start date?
3. Does your force operate on a set training day basis and if so when are these set training days?

SafeLives Office 5.04,
Floor 5, HubHub,
20 Farringdon Street,
London,
EC4A 4EN

Suite 2a,
Whitefriars
Lewins Mead Bristol,
BS1 2NT

0117 403 3220
info@safelives.org.uk
safelives.org.uk

Charity no: 1106864
Company: no: 5203237
Scottish Charity reference number SCO48291