

# Domestic Abuse Matters 2.0

*or*

## Policing coercive control: What should success look like?

*Iain Brennan*

*@iainbrennan*

# Domestic abuse matters – first responder training

## Domestic abuse matters – first responder training

Training package developed by College of Policing with Safelives

**Goal:** Improve responsiveness to domestic abuse cases, particularly coercive and controlling behaviour

### **Training rationale:**

HMIC report (2014): Patterns of controlling behaviour are more difficult to identify than physical abuse – particularly when they occur in the absence of physical abuse

Current risk assessments are focused on the response to physical abuse and risk of repeated physical abuse

Increased opportunities for discretion (Myhill and Johnson, 2016)

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## Training aims

### **Objectives:**

- Understand the dynamics of domestic abuse
- Understand the reality of domestic abuse
- Respond effectively to reports of domestic abuse

Strong emphasis on identification and understanding of coercive and controlling behaviours and understanding of victim behaviour

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## Delivery

One-day, mandatory classroom-based training

Discussion driven with opportunities for reflection and critical thought

Up to 25 first responders per classroom

Sought to reach a critical mass to drive attitude change across the Force

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## Evaluation design

Previous evaluation of DA Matters v1 (Myhill and Wire, 2016)

- RCT evaluation (n=400)
  - No change in general attitudes towards domestic abuse
  - No change in understanding of victim (non)engagement with the police
  - Small positive change in understanding of practical reasons for not leaving
  - Improved knowledge of coercive control
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## Evaluation design for DA Matters 2.0

Focused on attitude change across three domains:

1. General attitudes towards domestic abuse (myths, discounting severity, 'rationalising' victim behaviour)
  2. Relevance of physical and non-physical risk factors
  3. Understanding victim behaviour
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## Evaluation design for DA Matters 2.0

Generated 35 items and asked trainers to indicate expected direction of change for trainees following training (increase, not sure, decrease)

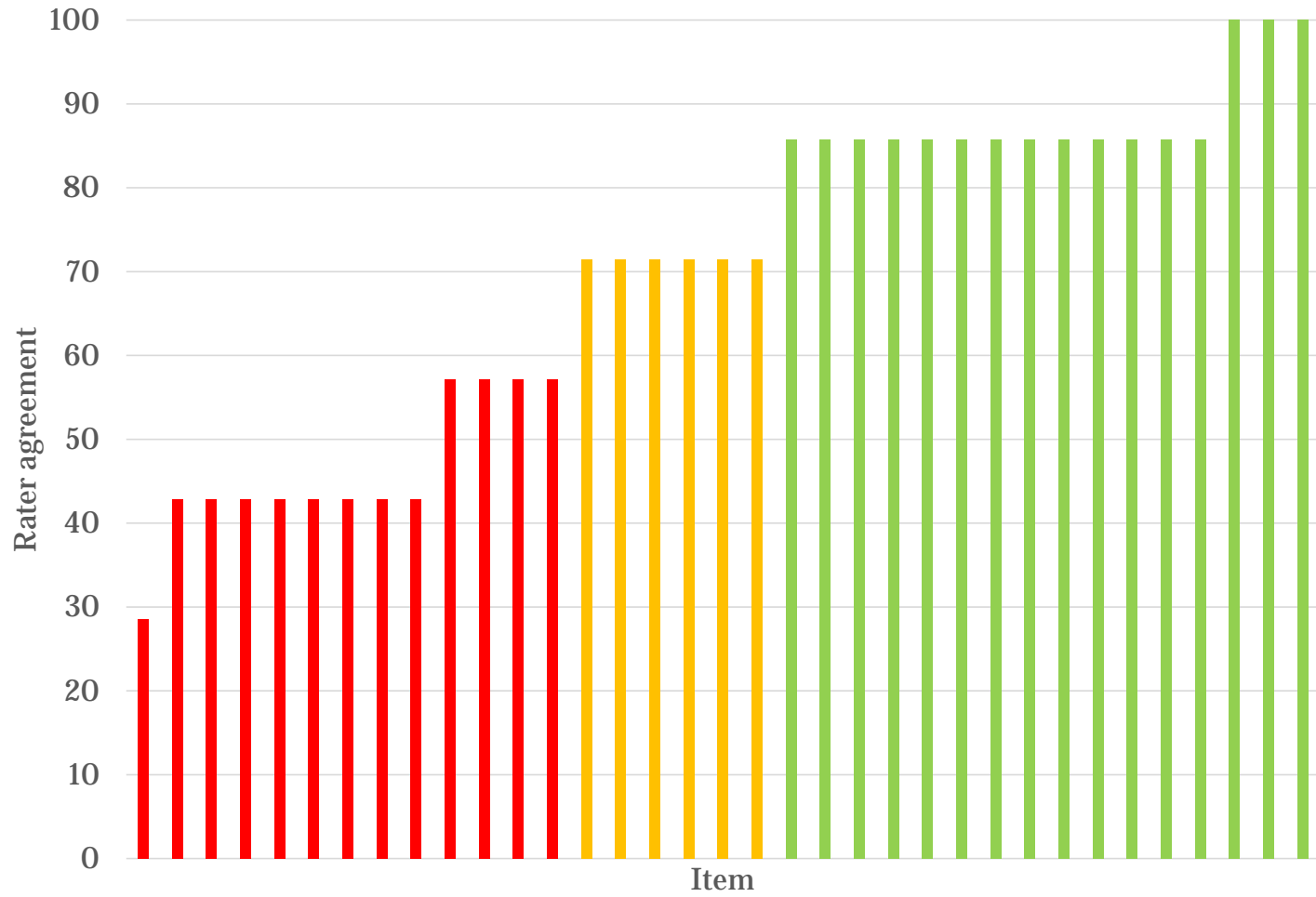
Originally set threshold for inclusion at 90% agreement

Dropped to 70%

In 20% of items trainers expected changes in different directions

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## Evaluation design

Pre-post design – cheaper but low internal validity

Focus on attitudes and risk (22 items)

Isolate strong effects and try to understand what didn't work in first DA Matters

Training evaluated in Humberside and Suffolk in Spring/Summer 2016

All first responders trained over five weeks (n=802; n=749)

Change assessed using linear regression controlling for Force

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## Results

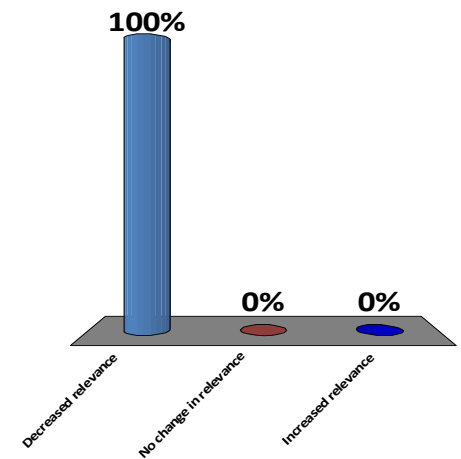
- High baseline scores – particularly for risk-related scores
  - Consistent improvement in attitudes
  - Very small effect sizes for many items
  - Force-level differences in effect on general attitudes towards domestic abuse
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How relevant is the following in predicting future victimisation:

**The victim reports that the abuser tracks their phone**

What should the direction of change be following training?

- A. Decreased relevance
- B. No change in relevance
- C. Increased relevance

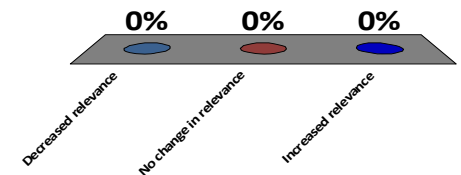


How relevant is the following in predicting future victimisation:

**The victim has no friends to stay with**

What should the direction of change be following training?

- A. Decreased relevance
- B. No change in relevance
- C. Increased relevance

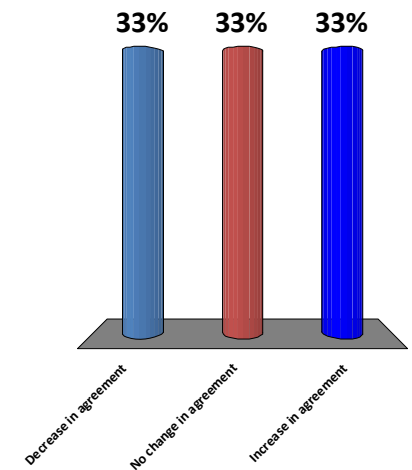


To what extent do you agree with the following statement about why victims do not leave abusive relationships:

**They would fear for their safety**

What should the direction of change be following training?

- A. Decrease in agreement
- B. No change in agreement
- C. Increase in agreement



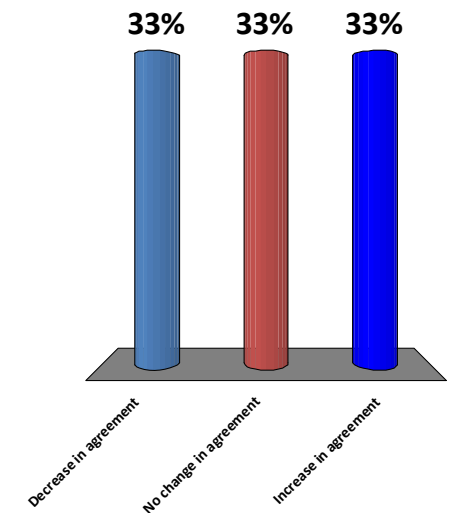


To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

**It's hard to see why victims of domestic abuse don't just leave**

What should the direction of change be following training?

- A. Decrease in agreement
- B. No change in agreement
- C. Increase in agreement



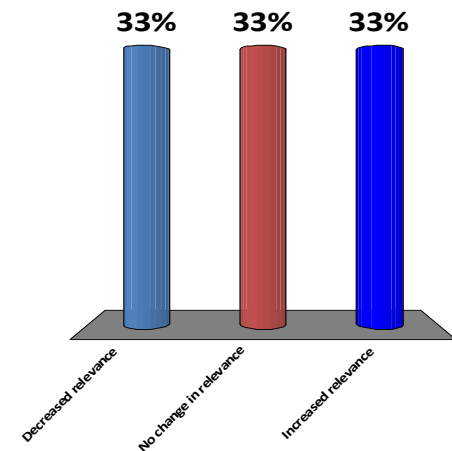


How relevant is the following in predicting future victimisation:

**There has been physical violence**

What should the direction of change be following training?

- A. Decreased relevance
- B. No change in relevance
- C. Increased relevance

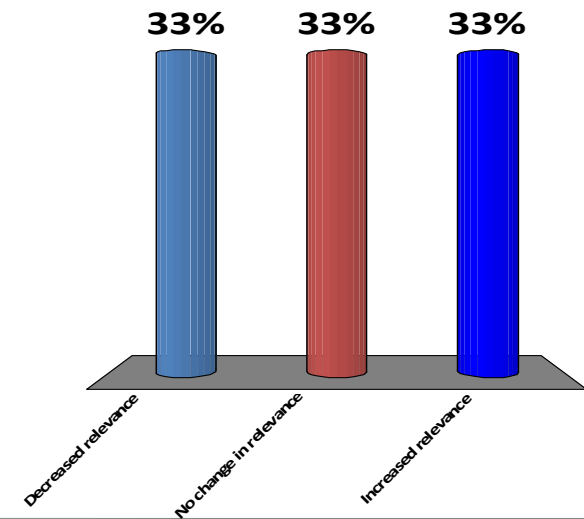


How relevant is the following in predicting future victimisation:

**The house is well-presented**

What should the direction of change be following training?

- A. Decreased relevance
- B. No change in relevance
- C. Increased relevance

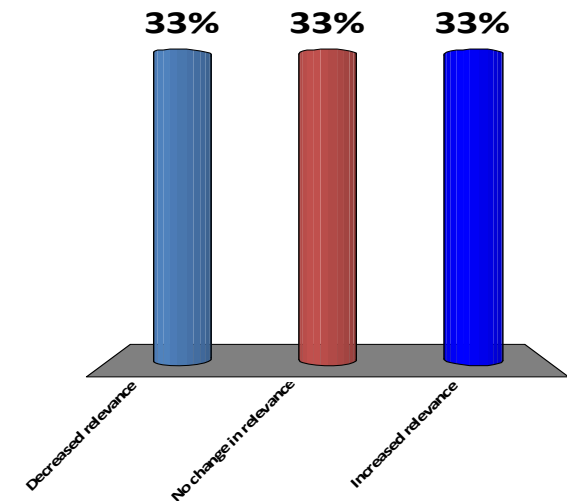


How relevant is the following in predicting future victimisation:

**The victim is willing to make a statement**

What should the direction of change be following training?

- A. Decreased relevance
- B. No change in relevance
- C. Increased relevance



## Measuring attitude change regarding coercive control

Consensus on what needs to change is low

Ambiguity around definitions of coercive control, signals of abuse at incidents, and unpredictable victim behaviour make identification of what needs to change very difficult

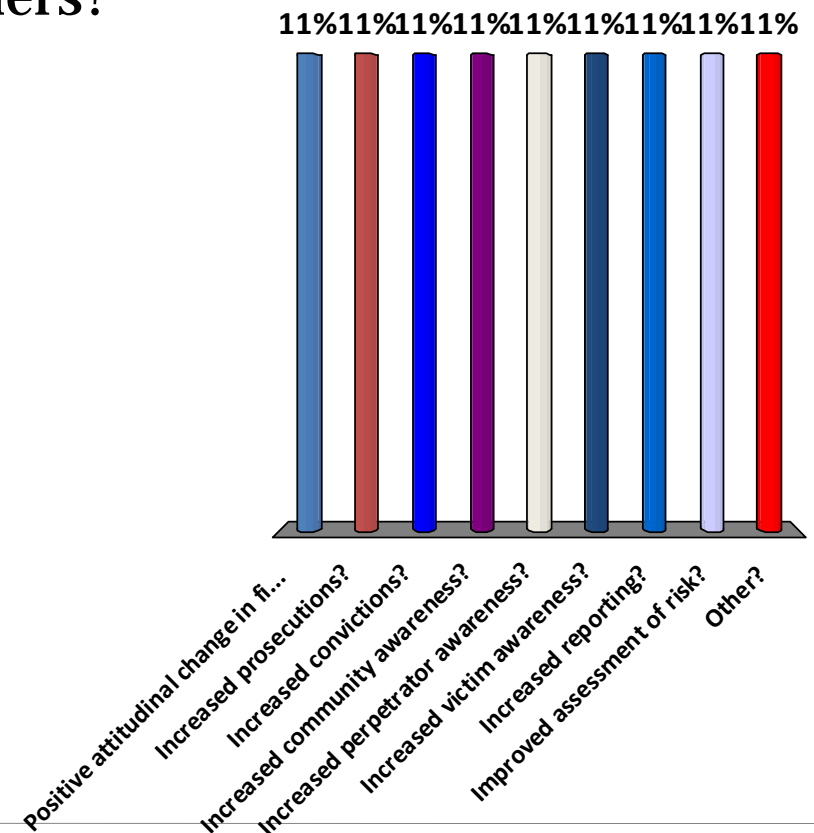
This does not bode well for the predictive validity of incident risk assessment

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What are the principal features of successful policing of coercive control?

# What should the SMART priority be for policing coercive control?

- A. Positive attitudinal change in first responders?
- B. Increased prosecutions?
- C. Increased convictions?
- D. Increased community awareness?
- E. Increased perpetrator awareness?
- F. Increased victim awareness?
- G. Increased reporting?
- H. Improved assessment of risk?
- I. Other?



## Could we develop training to meet these goals?

Most of the things we want are behavioural changes, not attitudinal

We have no benchmark for successful (prevalence, satisfaction...)

Training that aims to reach a 'critical mass' will probably be superficial

Officer attitudes are probably not the greatest impediment to successful policing of domestic abuse

Attitude training is unlikely to have a long half-life if it isn't supported by hard and soft incentives

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Thanks  
i.brennan@hull.ac.uk  
@iainbrennan