

Project CARA: a Workshop Programme for Low Severity Domestic Abuse Offenders

University of Leicester Conference on
Policing Domestic Violence: New Evidence for
Practice

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First a bit of history..

- 2010-11 - Despite higher levels of arrest following requirement for 'positive action', but victims remaining dissatisfied as evidenced by
- High volume of low severity incidents resulting in NFA or simple cautions; low victim support for prosecution.
- Recently-introduced 'conditional caution' (CC) disposal as a potential option as an OOC, though banned for domestic cases.
- Hampshire CC Alex Marshall sought permission for testing it in DA cases.
- Objective was to learn whether simple cautions were as effective as charging for low-harm/low risk DA offenders.
- DPP said NO, and also simple cautions should be stopped.

More history..

- Decision then made to seek approval to compare two kinds of CC in DA – CC alone vs CC with a ‘Workshop’ provision.
- Hants Local CJ Board negotiated with Hampton Trust as service provider.
- Extensive discussions with stakeholders including Women’s Aid, CAADA and Respect re design of the test – all included in LCJB Steering Group on CARA (which was the name of the test, not of the intervention)
- Final agreement with MOJ, DPP and all stakeholders on design of the test; randomised design comparing two kinds of CC (not simple cautions compared with charging of low risk/low harm low harm offenders).
- Collaboration between Hants Police and Cambridge University to conduct the test which commenced in August 2012.

Random Assignment on Medical Model: Two Types of Conditional Caution

Conditional Caution: Good Behaviour Only

- 4 months
- No more Domestic Abuse
- Then no prosecution

Conditional Caution: Good Behaviour + Workshops

- Group of 4-8 admitted offenders met in a hotel on two Saturdays
- Two 5-hour facilitated sessions, 4 weeks apart
- Discuss domestic abuse issues
- 'Motivational Interviewing' techniques
- Not directive
- Encourage understanding of DA

What to Test?

- Control Group – no offence for 4 months.
- Treatment Group – no offence for 4 months + 2 Hampton Trust Workshops.
- Primary ‘pipeline’ of cases to be those previously dealt with by simple caution in Western Hampshire.
- In 2010 there were **303 ostensibly eligible cases** for inclusion in the test.
- 83% of them ‘violent’ i.e common assault, battery, threats of violence, harassment; remainder minor property.
- Agreement that the test would be viable.

Who to Test? Eligibility Criteria

1. Is the offender male and the victim female? **Yes**
2. Is the offender is over 18? **Yes**
3. Does the offence involve abuse against a past/present partner or spouse? **Yes**
4. Does the offender have previous convictions or cautions for *any* violence in preceding two years? **No**
5. Does the DASH risk assessment classify the offender as high risk? **No**
6. Has the offender admitted the offence, or is there overwhelming evidence of the offender's guilt? **Yes**
7. Is the offender presently subject to a community-based court order? **No**
8. Is the offender on court or police bail for other offences? **No**
9. Is the offence classified as one of the following: Common Assault/Battery, Criminal Damage, Harassment, Threatening Behaviour, Domestic Theft? **Yes**
10. Has the victim indicated that the conditional caution would place them at significant risk? **No**
11. Does the offender have a sufficient level of English comprehension to take part in CARA workshops if assigned to do so?
- 12. Have the CPS been consulted and authorised a conditional caution? Yes**

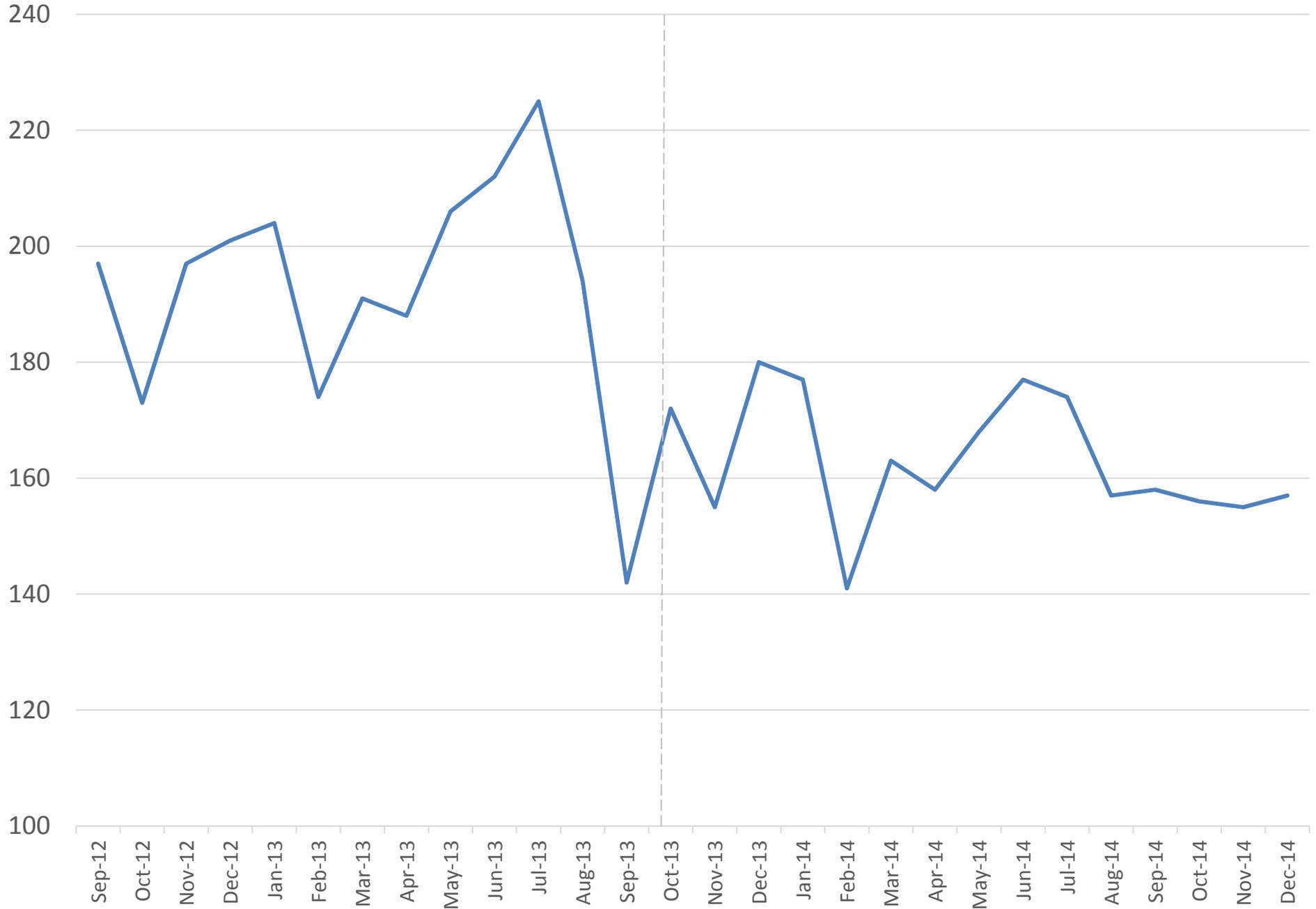
Caseflow issues

- Limiting effect of eligibility criteria (to meet requirements of all stakeholders)
- CCs have higher standard than simple cautions re CPS 'evidential test', so getting CPS approval for cases has been continuing issue.
- Operational issues in referral process.

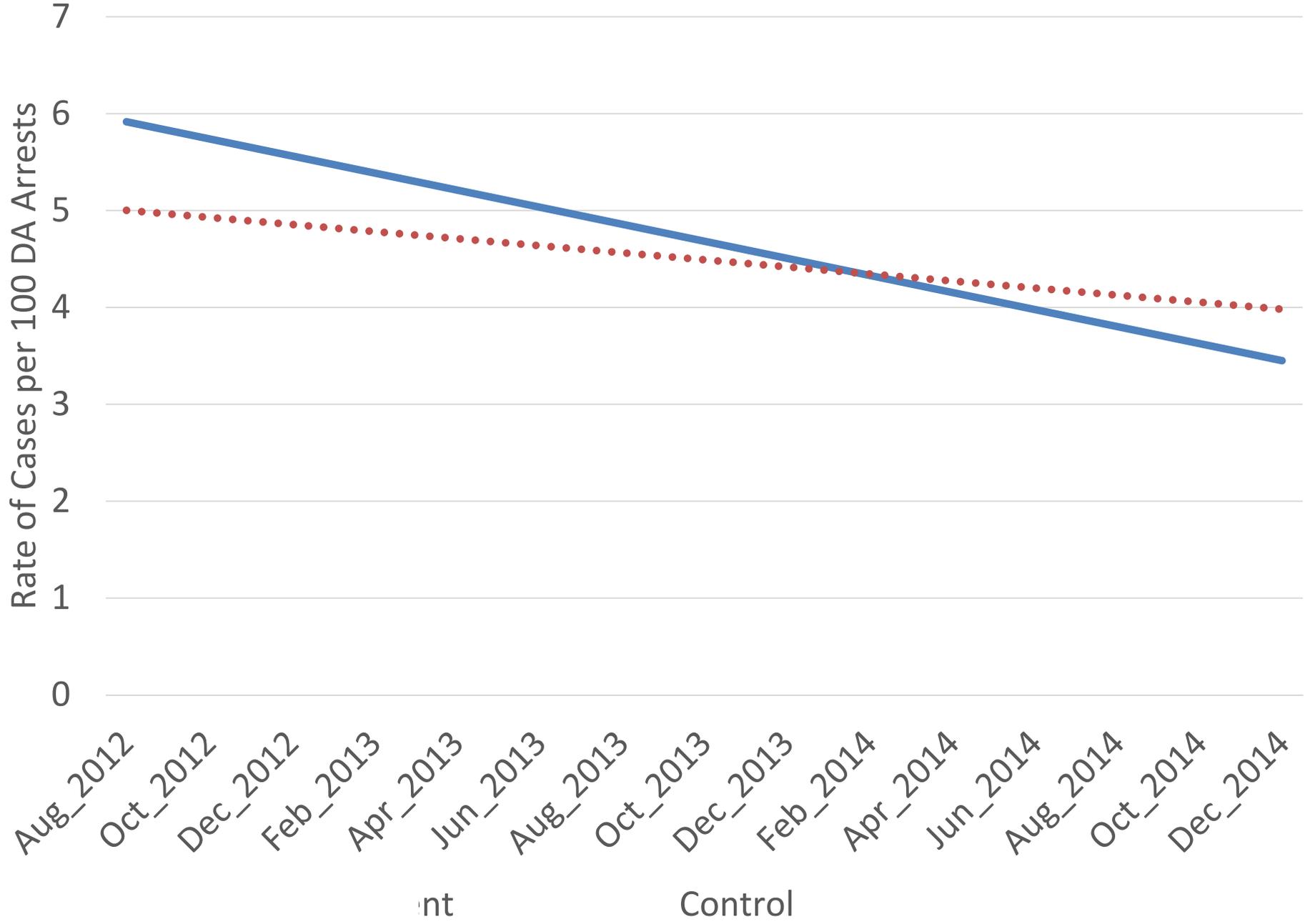
So what happened to caseflow for CARA (the test)?

- N of DA arrests test period Aug 2012 to Dec 2014:
 - varied by month from high of 225 in mid-2013 to low of 141 in early 2014.
- Caseflow into CARA:
 - High of 6 cases per 100 DA arrests (mid-2013)
 - Low of 3.5 cases per 100 DA arrests (late 2014)
- N of cases per quarter:
 - High of 32 cases per quarter (mid-2013)
 - Low of 15 cases per quarter (late 2014)

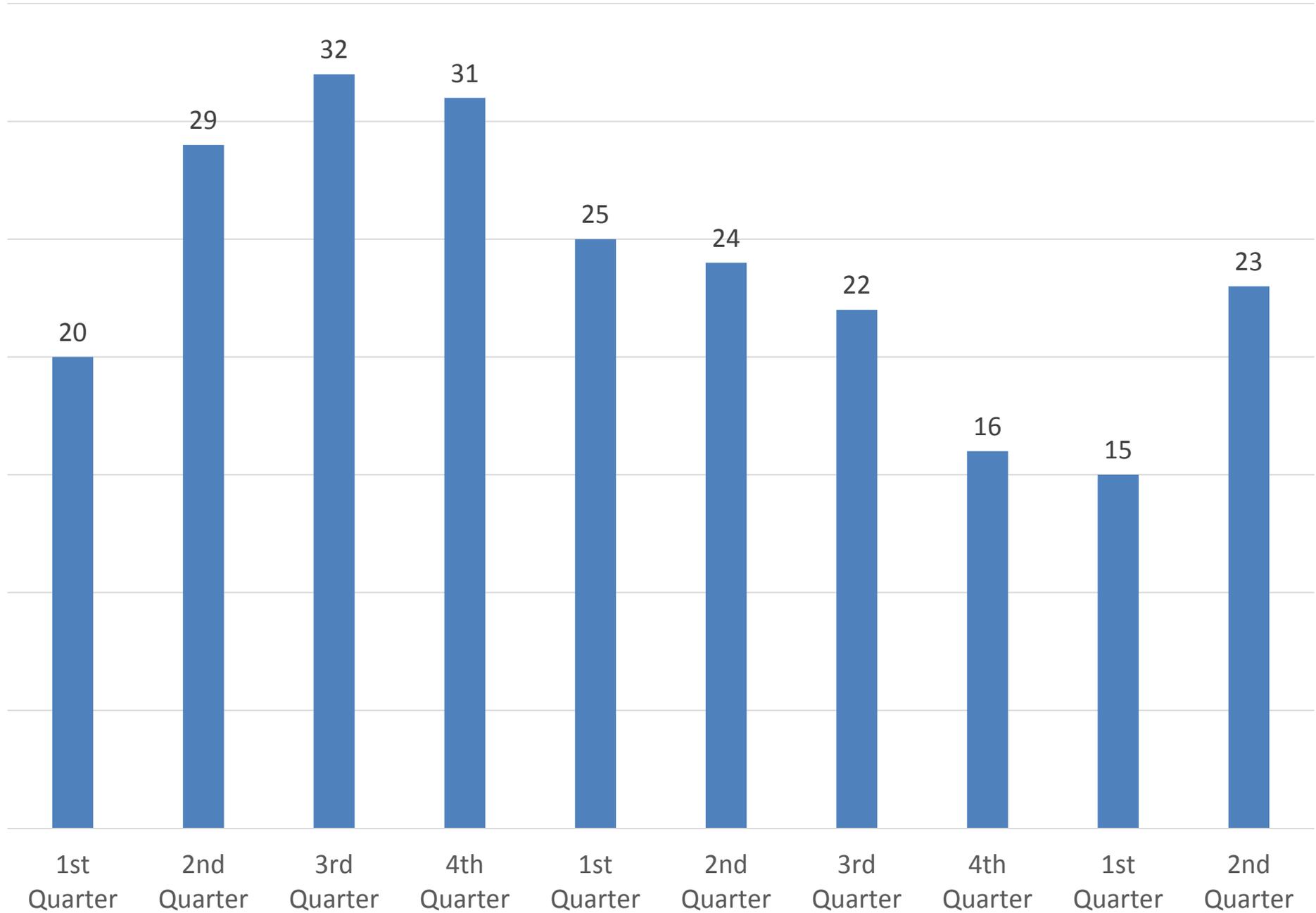
Total Number of DA arrests per month



Case Flow Rates per 100 DA Arrests



N of Cases per Quarter



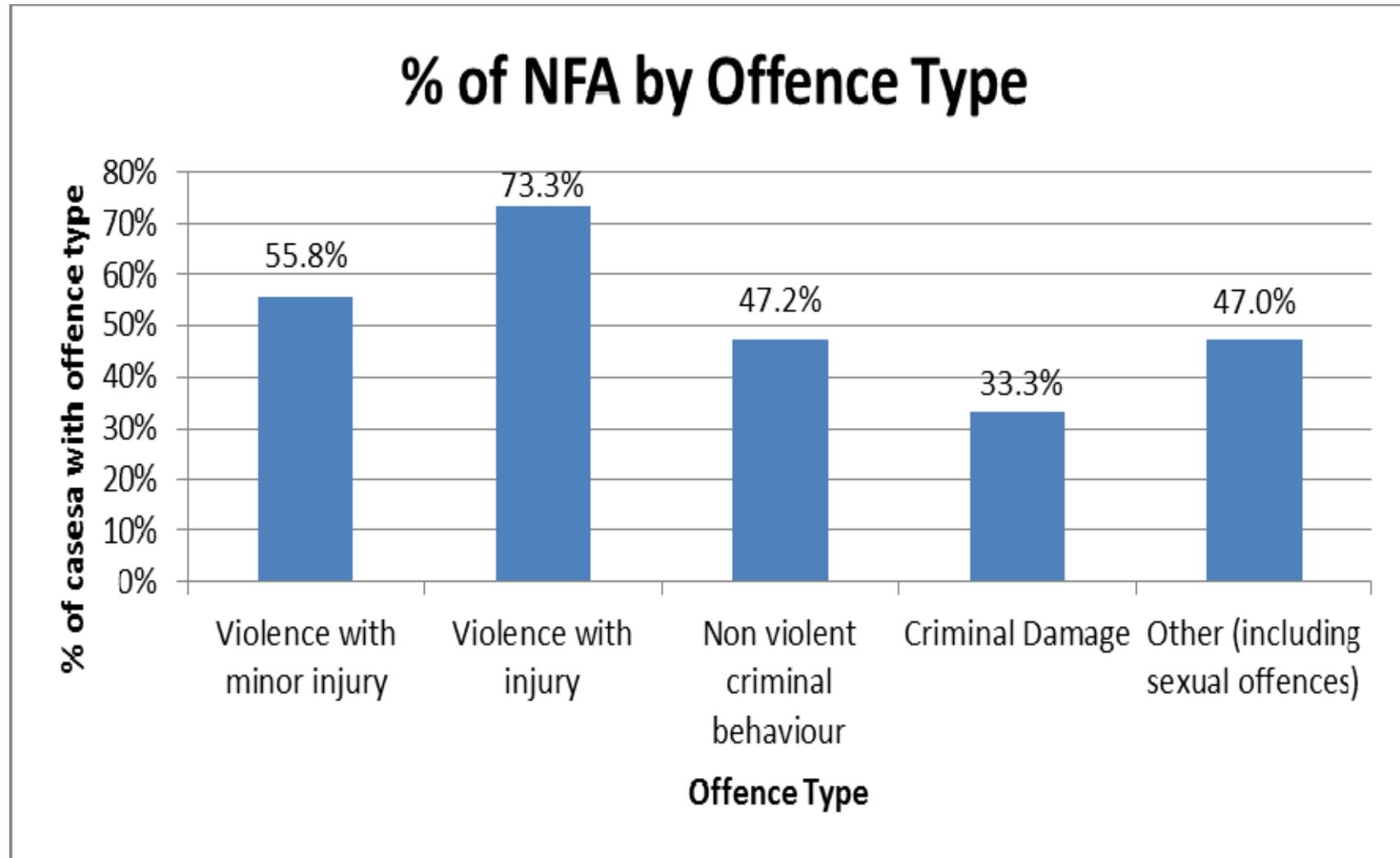
So caseflow?

- Combined effect of
 - CPS evidentiary test
 - Variable arrest numbers
 - Operational difficulties in referral processLed to:
- Reduction in the TARGET for the test from about 50% of DA arrests to fewer than 3.5%.

Consequence of Poor Caseflow?

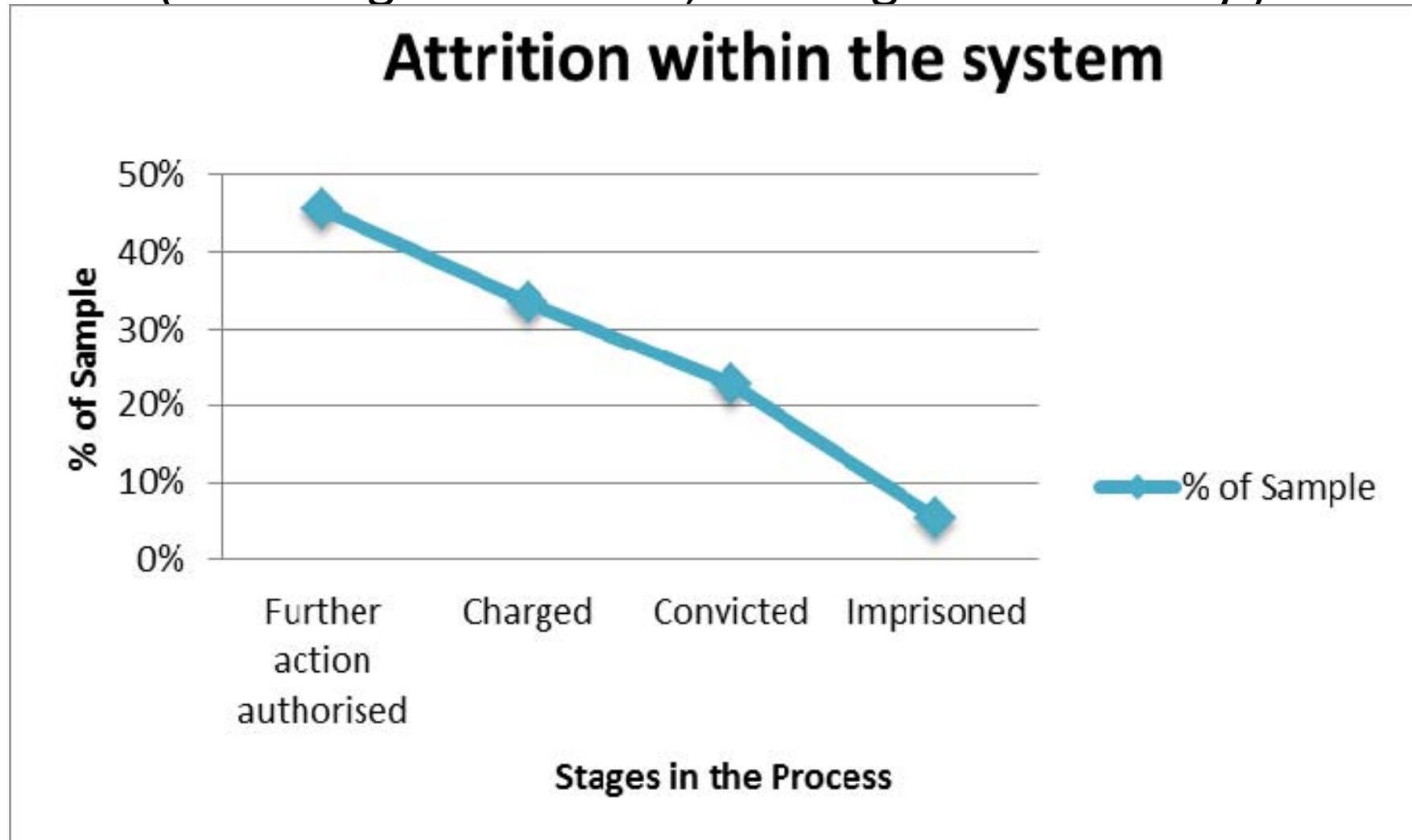
- Over the life of the test very small proportion of DA arrests were included in the test.
- So, limits on generalising the effect of CARA on the total population of low-risk/low harm arrestees.
- The most immediate consequence of requirement for CPS approval via evidentiary test was far fewer simple cautions (even though CPS still sometimes used them!), but not more CCs.
- What increased was the number of NFAs.

What Happened After Arrest for DA in Hampshire (2012 data)? NFA



2,244 DA Arrests in Southampton 2012-13

(Including New Forest, Eastleigh and Romsey.)



Who Decided What in HANTS (2012)?

Police

Decided 40% of DA cases

Most of those NFA
except

4.5% Sanctioned

6% conditional caution

Crown Prosecution Service

Decided 60% of DA cases

Charged 33%

Convicted 22%

Custodial sentence 5%

What Does NFA Mean?

2 to 8 hours after arrest:
Just leave. Full stop.



- No comment—by police
- No discussion—so it won't happen again
- No offer of help
- Just **GO!**

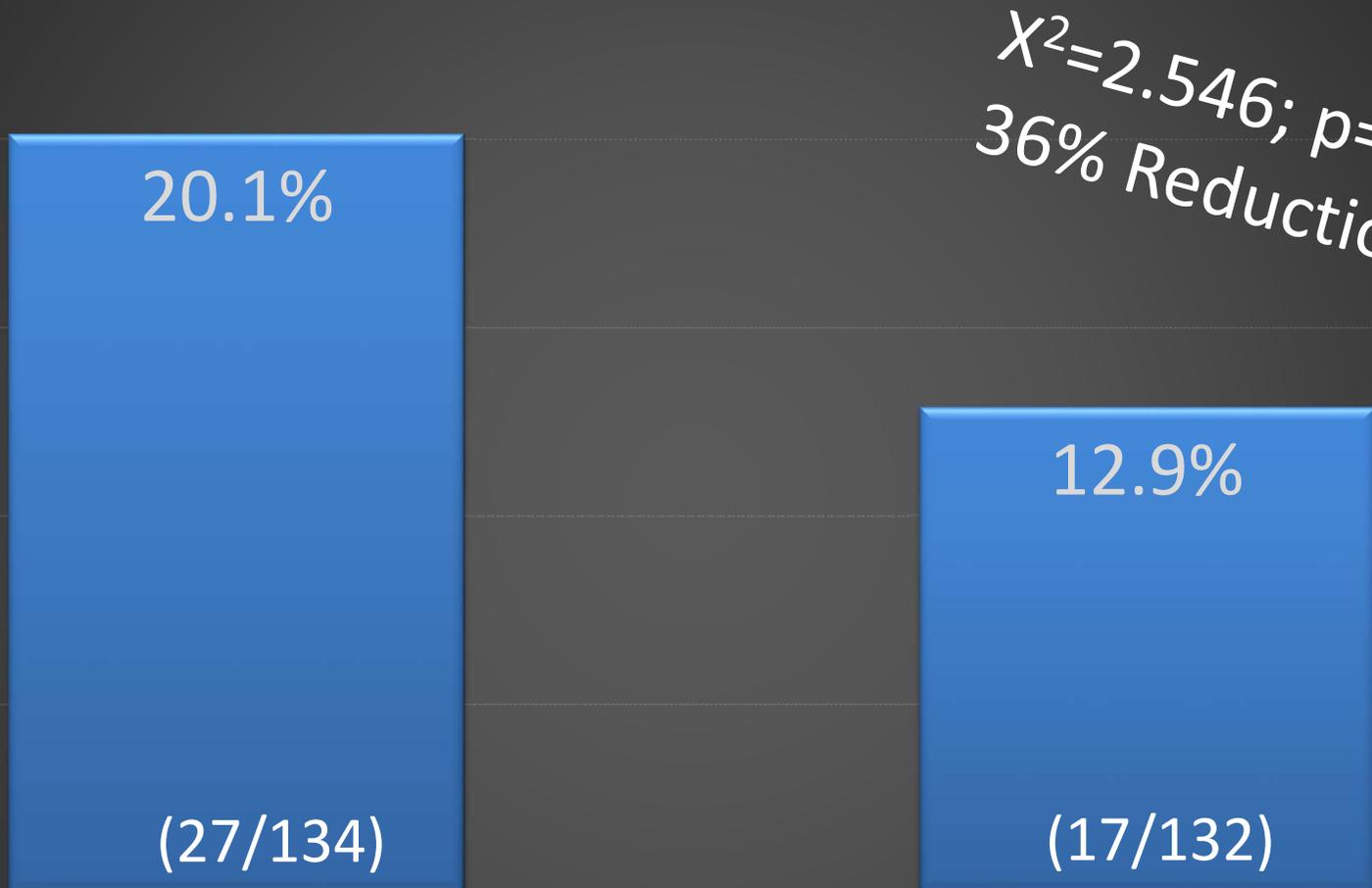
NFAs and CARA?

- When caseload problems emerged in the test, research partners recommended using a 'Nudge' offer to have NFA cases attend CARA workshops voluntarily;
- No agreement on this, even though inclusion of NFA cases had been in the original plan of the test approved by the DPP.

So What Do We Know?

- Reoffending results of a nearly- three-year programme (and ultimately a two-year followup period).
- Every case here had a reoffending_followup period of exactly 365 days.
- Not final – not every case included in the analysis here as not all had reached 365 days.

Post-RA DA Arrests (Prevalence)



$\chi^2=2.546; p=0.111$
36% Reduction

Control

Workshop

Group

Post-RA DA Charges (Prevalence)

$\chi^2=4.233$; $p=0.040$
52% reduction

15.7%

(21/134)

Control

7.6%

(10/132)

Workshop

Group

Post-RA Non-DV Charges (Prevalence)

$\chi^2=0.27$; $p=.603$
24% reduction



Control

Workshop

Group

Post-RA Non-DV Arrests (Prevalence)



$\chi^2=0.462$; $p=.496$
26% reduction

Control

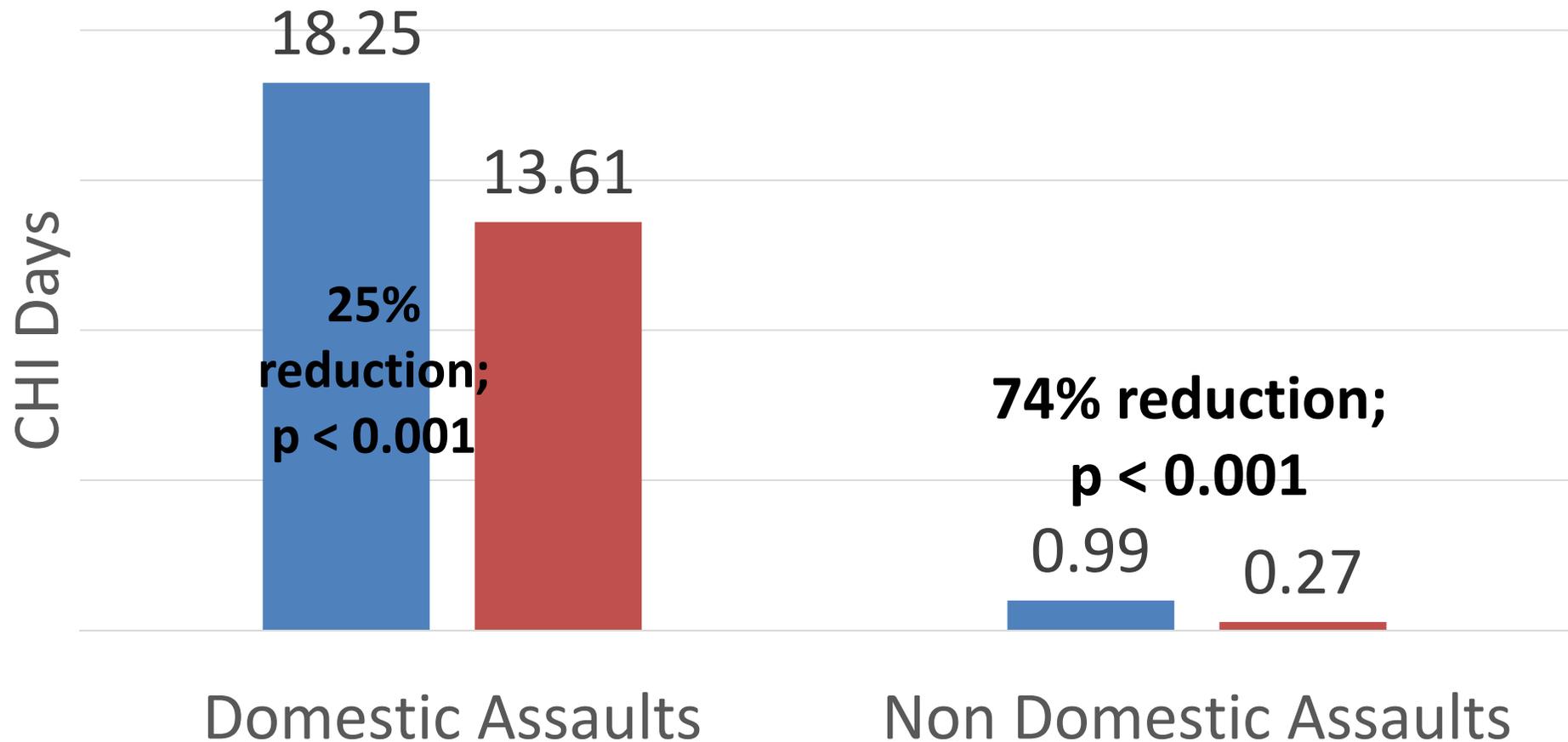
Workshop

Group

Mean Crime Harm Index per Group

($n_{\text{control}} = 134$; $n_{\text{treatment}} = 132$)

■ Control ■ Treatment



What Do We Conclude At Present?

- Overall picture of effectiveness of CARA
Workshops in reducing reoffending in the test is very clear.
- We are still analysing the full sample of cases, looking at changes in outcomes at different time periods of the test, as well as 24-month reoffending results.
- All the more important to recognise the programme can't do very much good until it gets a much larger part of the target.

So What Next?

- Rather than 'rolling it out' for what will still be a fraction of cases (as is happening in Hampshire), we need to test CARA Workshops with a wider population.
- Could be done on the same basis as the Turning Point Programme in West Midlands Police – deferred prosecution 'Sword of Damocles' threat, rather than full admissions requirement which results in NFA and unknown but potentially great harm to the victim.

We All Want to Know What's Best for Victims..

- Strong evidence from the CARA study of victims' views that most victims who remained in the relationship did not want the offender arrested and would not support a prosecution.
- We need more rigorous research to find out what is best for victims, supported by all engaged in DA.
 - Could you, for example, support putting NFA cases into a test of deferred prosecution where they could be overseen by IDVAs?
- And more research on other imaginative interventions targeting more serious DA offenders.
- A huge problem that is not going away – need for all of us to work together collaboratively on trying new strategies.