



# College of Policing

## **What works in policing domestic abuse?**

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# Core College Mission

*"Protect the public and support the fight against crime by ensuring professionalism in policing"*

## Objectives

- Protect the public interest
- Set and enhance first-class national standards of professionalism to ensure excellence in operational policing
- Identify evidence of what works in policing and share best practice
- Support the education and professional development of police officers and staff
- Enable and motivate staff and partners to work together to achieve a shared purpose

# College work on DA

- Essex Body Worn Video RCT: results released at College Conference tomorrow
- What Works Centre for Crime Reduction undertaking a systematic review on criminal justice interventions for domestic abuse
- Review of existing evidence on risk factors and risk assessment
- Ongoing work in forces to look at implementation of DASH

# Background: The College

- The College of Policing sets national standards for policing
- As standards are developed and refreshed, evidence of what is known to be effective should be systematically reviewed and incorporated into revised standards
- Over time this process will ensure that all future recommended practice is based on the best available evidence of 'what works'
- Huge amount to cover - standards related to tackling violence and protecting the public deemed 'highest risk' and are therefore among the first to be refreshed

# Background: DA

- DASH form accredited by ACPO in March 2009.
  - Plan always to return to DASH and refresh/ check evidence base
- HMIC review (2014) finds only 28/43 forces use DASH in its entirety – “police forces are adopting a range of different and inconsistent practices when assessing the risk to victims”
  - 4 forces use locally developed alternatives, e.g. MeRIT
- Historic lack of clarity about formal evaluation of DASH
- Opportunity to undertake ‘proof of concept’ work in response to challenges – example of where we need to understand if practice is based on best available evidence



**College of  
Policing**

# **Domestic Abuse: Risk factors and risk assessment**

September 9<sup>th</sup> 2014

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# College DA REA

Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) started in 2013, aims to:

- Identify risk factors associated with domestic abuse
  - i.e. what factors should be included in risk assessment tools
- Identify whether any *empirically tested* tools exist that can be used to identify individuals likely to be at risk of harm from domestic abuse
  - What risk assessment tools exist (and have been evaluated)?
  - Which tools are the most effective?

# Searching

Identifying potentially relevant literature



# Sifting

Identifying truly relevant literature



# Synthesis

Summarising what relevant literature tells us



# Flow of literature...

REA	Abstracts Identified	Included Studies	SRs and MAs
<b>DA risk factors &amp; risk assessment tools</b>	5,138	410	16

- Searches identified over 5,000 potentially relevant studies
- A third of academic literature published on risk factors and risk assessment tools has been published since DASH was accredited
- 410 studies actually relevant to our questions.
- 16 of these were existing reviews/ meta-analyses
- 14 reviews focussed on risk factors
- 2 focussed on risk assessment tools (published 2012 & 2013)

# Risk factors and correlates of domestic abuse

- Most of the identified reviews (12/14) focussed on physical violence
- Other forms of abuse (e.g. psychological and emotional abuse, coercive control) are poorly covered by identified meta-analyses, meaning there are potential gaps in the coverage of this review
- Most studies focussed on male perpetration (16 factors) and female victimisation (10 factors)
- Further review work to examine other types of abuse and ensure wider risks reported by victims are included may be beneficial
- Reviews identified associations or correlations between different factors and violence/ abuse. They did not identify causal links

Strength of association	Male perpetration (of violence)	Female victimisation (violence)
Large	1. Emotional/ verbal abuse 2. Forced sex	
Moderate-to large		1. Violence towards partner 2. Marital satisfaction (-)
Moderate	1. Attitudes condoning violence 2. Traditional sex role ideology 3. Marital satisfaction(-); 4. Drug use	
Small-to-moderate	1. Alcohol use; 2. Anger/ hostility; 3. Career/ life stress; 4. Depression; 5. History of partner abuse	1. Depression 2. Fear
Small	1. Jealousy 2. Age (-); 3. Education (-); 4. Employment (-)	1. Alcohol use
Negligible*	1. Income (-)	1. Age (-); 2. Education (-); 3. Income (-); 4. Number/ presence of children
Non-significant**		1. Employment (-)

Remember – this shows the size, not the direction of an association

Unsurprising these are strongly associated with violence (males)

Higher marital satisfaction associated with less violence (males/ females)

Small-to-moderate association with drug/ alcohol use (males)

'Demographic' factors have small associations: assumptions about 'types' of people are dangerous

(-) denotes negative association  
 \*r=less than 0.1.  
 \*\*statistically insignificant finding

# Risk assessment tools

- 16 risk assessment tools identified, only five tools have been evaluated more than once
- Most tools developed and validated in Canada/ USA
- DASH/ MeRIT not identified by the review, i.e. have not been evaluated in published studies
- At the present time, we do not know how effective the tools used for risk assessment in England and Wales are

# Identified risk assessment tools

Type		Instrument	Initials	Items
Actuarial	1	Ontario Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment	ODARA	13
	2	Domestic Violence Risk Appraisal Guide	DVRAG	33
	3	Domestic Violence Supplementary Report	DVSR	19
	4	Propensity for Abuse Scale	PAS	29
	5	Domestic Violence Screening Inventory	DVSI	12
	6	Domestic Violence Evaluation	DOVE	19
	7	Kingston Screening Instrument for Domestic Violence	KSID	10/11
	8	Partner Abuse Prognostic Scale	PAPS	17
Structured Professional Judgement	9	Spousal Assault Risk Assessment	SARA	20
	10	Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk	B-SAFER	10
Victim Appraisal	11	Danger Assessment Scale	DA	20*
	12	Unstructured Victim Appraisals	VA	Various
Pilot models	13	Danger Assessment Scale Brief Assessment for the Emergency Department	DA-ED	13
	14	Structuring Clinical Judgement	SCJ	33
	15	Severe Intimate Partner Risk Prediction Scale	SIVIPAS	19
	16	Los Angeles Sherriff's Department Screening Measure	LA-SM	29

Risk assessment models currently used in E&W (DASH/MeRIT) were not identified in included reviews, there is no immediate evidence to suggest that they have been evaluated in published studies.

# Predictive validity

	Instrument	Average Predictive Validity	N of studies	Total sample
1	ODARA	67%	5	1,053
2	SARA	63%	6	2,656
3	DA	62%	4	2,519
4	DVSI	58%	3	2,896
5	KSID	54%	2	1,281
6	Victim Assessment	62%	2	1,281

Adapted from Messing and Thaller, 2012

At the present time, we do not have any similar figures for DASH

We do not know if it performs better or worse than these models.

There is emerging evidence to suggest single-question victim appraisal measures can improve (or sometimes outperform) other instruments

- A meta-analysis of five risk assessment instruments (and victim assessment) found that there are significant differences in the average predictive validity of risk assessment tools.
- ODARA, SARA, DA and victim assessment fare best in terms of average predictive validity of different models.

# Some conclusions

## Risk factors:

- Literature is largely limited to physical violence and male perpetration/ female victimisation
- Further research to improve coverage on other forms of abuse (e.g. emotional, psychological, coercive control) likely to be beneficial in understanding risk factors

## Risk assessment

- Current risk assessment models used in E&W have not been evaluated through peer reviewed studies
- Testing/ evaluation of DASH and other models is needed in a E&W context
- Evidence suggests victim assessment improves/ outperforms some other models
- Adding a clearer/ simpler question for VA as a useful interim measure?



# College of Policing

## **Risk assessment for domestic violence: should we focus on coercive control?**

Presented by: Andy Myhill

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2014



# Background

- Three recognised types of risk model:
  - Unstructured clinical assessment
  - Actuarial/predictive
  - Structured professional judgement/risk management
- 'DASH' risk model introduced in England and Wales in 2009
  - 27 question risk identification interview (supposed to be) conducted by attending officer at every incident
  - DASH completion rates are frequently <80%?
- DASH not been subject to formal evaluation
  - Unclear how the model operates (best) in practice
  - How accurate is the identification of risk?
  - Impact on victim safety?

# DASH as an actuarial tool?



## CAADA Risk Identification Checklist (RIC) & Quick Start Guidance for Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-Based Violence

### Recommended Referral Criteria to MARAC

2. **'Visible High Risk'**: the number of 'ticks' on this checklist. If you have ticked 14 or more 'yes' boxes the case would normally meet the MARAC referral criteria.

## Practice Guidance for Specialist Police Staff

Risk identification and assessment is not a predictive process and there is no existing accurate procedure to calculate or foresee which cases will result in homicide or further assault and harm. Rather risk identification and assessment is based on structured professional judgement. It structures and informs decisions that are already being made by you. It is only a guide/aide-memoir and does not provide an absolute or relative measure of risk using cut off scores. Assessment of risk is complex and not related to the number of risks appearing alone. Rather, the imminent risk posed to the victim or others in a particular situation will be dependent upon what they are and how they apply in that context. The risk process must remain dynamic. Events and circumstances may undergo rapid and frequent change. Where this is the case, the assessment must be kept under review. This model is most effective when undertaken by officers who have been fully trained in its use.



# DASH reliability: 'separation'

**PRACTICE POINT:** Attempts to end a relationship are strongly linked to intimate partner homicide (Websdale, 1999; Regan, Kelly, Morris and Dibb, 2007). Research suggests that women are particularly at risk within the first two months of leaving an abusive relationship (Wilson and Daly, 1993; Richards, 2003). It is therefore important that work is carried out to ensure that the victim can leave as safely as is possible. Explore with victim the different options of leaving whether this is in an emergency or as part of a longer term plan.

You may also want to probe for additional information which is linked to other questions on the checklist, for example:

- ✓ Whether they are currently separating or planning to separate?

<b>6. Have you separated or tried to separate from your abuser within the past year?</b> <b>Will be separating from him now though.</b>	<b>No</b>
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# Structured professional judgement?

- Individuals using structured professional judgement should have (Kropp et al., 1995):
  - Expertise in individual assessment
  - Expertise in the subject area being assessed
- Additionally, assessments based on SPJ should (Douglas and Kropp, 2002):
  - Be conducted according to guidelines that reflect current theoretical, clinical, and empirical knowledge
  - Use multiple sources and multiple methods

# DASH reliability: 'financial' question

**PRACTICE POINT:** Exploring this question will give you an idea about the level of isolation and control the perpetrator has over the victim. Consider these additional questions to give clarity over the financial control and issues:

- ✓ Establish whether there are any issues regarding the victims' access to public funds. Victims who have no recourse to public funds may be entirely reliant on their spouse for financial support.
- ✓ Victims who are on a low income or on no income at all may not be allowed by the perpetrator to claim benefits in their own right. Check whether they jointly claim benefits.
- ✓ Does the perpetrator restrict/withhold/deny access to joint/family finances?
- ✓ Has the victim been forced into taking on loans/re-mortgages and be responsible for the repayments and any defaults? Check whose names these debts are in.

23. Are there any financial issues? For example, are you dependent on them for money / have they recently lost their job / other financial issues?	
Yes, father often gives Paul money which he then spends on alcohol.	

# 'Official' definition



## **Domestic violence and abuse: new definition**

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

### **Controlling behaviour**

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

### **Coercive behaviour**

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

# Risky business?

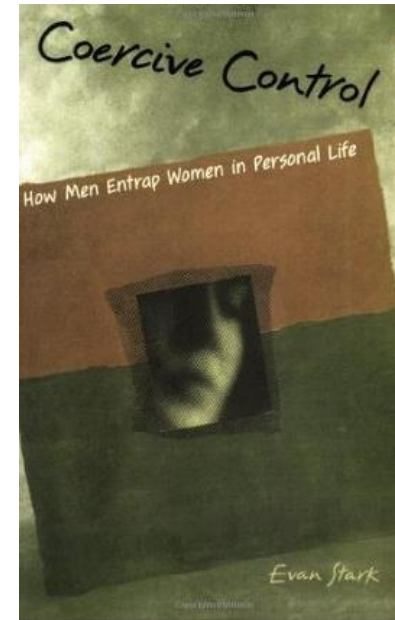
“A major problem with the risk factor prevention paradigm is to determine which risk factors are causes and which are merely markers or correlated with causes” (Farrington, 2000)

“When factors become too numerous ... we are in the hopeless position of arguing that everything matters” (Matza, 1964)

- Are all ‘risk factors’ equal? How do they operate in context?
  - Should we prioritise (combinations of) risk factors?

# Coercive control

- Perpetrators use various means to hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate, and dominate their victims (Stark, 2007)
  - Key tactics: violence, intimidation, isolation, control



## The Dangers of Dangerousness Assessment

by Evan Stark, Ph.D., MSW\*

- Homicide and injurious violence is not the best lens through which to view domestic abuse (Stark, 2012)
  - Some risk factors present in homicide reviews represent the 'end game?' Risk **identification** for prevention should focus on control?



# Data

- Victims' responses to DASH interview collected from a random sample (n=611) of domestic abuse incidents
- Incidents sampled across financial year 2011/2012 in a medium sized English police force
- Data extracted manually; binary yes/no responses
- Some missing values; 550 cases used in the final analysis
  - Excluded forms relating to 'primary perpetrators'

# Method of Analysis

- Regression analysis unsuitable:
  - Assumes availability of a dependent variable that measures accurately the 'level' of risk
  - The independent variables (the DASH items) are highly correlated with one another
- Solution: 2-parameter **Item Response Model**, used widely in educational testing. Translated to the DASH data, it shows:
  - **Item difficulty**: How prevalent or universally present a factor is across the sample of domestic abuse cases
  - **Item discrimination**: How indicative a risk factor is of the overall number of risk factors present

# Key findings: Prevalence of risk factors (item difficulty)

- High prevalence:
  - Perpetrator has been in trouble with the police
  - Perpetrator has alcohol, drug or mental health problems
  - Attempts to separate in the past year
  - Victim feeling very frightened
  - Controlling and excessively jealous behaviour
  - Financial issues
- Low prevalence:
  - Prior **severe** violence
  - Sexual victimisation
  - Violence or threats of violence against children or others
  - Animal abuse/torturing of family pet
  - Victim sustained an injury in the current incident

# Key findings: Indicators of overall risk (item discrimination)

- The important result: Answers the question of which DASH items are indicative of overall number of risk factors
- High discrimination:
  - Controlling and excessively jealous perpetrator
  - Victim feels isolated
  - Victim feels frightened
  - Abuse is escalating in terms of **severity**
  - Credible threats to kill the victim or somebody else
- Low discrimination:
  - Recent separation and/or conflict over child contact
  - Victim sustained an injury in the current incident
  - Financial issues
  - Perpetrator has alcohol, drug or mental health problems
  - Victim currently pregnant or has had child recently

# Implications

- Factors associated with coercive control are the best indicators of risk in cases of domestic abuse
- Risk factors should be considered in combination and in context (causal inferences vs. correlation)
- Some of the DASH risk factors may be more useful in relation to risk **assessment** than risk **identification**
- Should there be a shorter 'screening' tool for use by frontline police officers?

# How can DASH be most effective?

- Write up the incident thoroughly
  - Describe context and behaviours
  - Clarify the risks
- Don't base level of risk just on the number of 'yes' responses
- Prioritise factors associated with coercive control when identifying and assessing risk
- Recognising apparently low-level behaviours as genuine risk factors has a greater promise of preventing serious violence than a narrow focus on violence and criminal offences