

What is Project CARA?

CARA (Cautions and Relationship Abuse) is a proven and recognised model of interventions with perpetrators of domestic abuse who are subject to conditional cautions. CARA is evidenced based, and has been evaluated by Cambridge University.

The recently published draft Domestic Abuse Bill supports extended trials of conditional cautions (CC) for domestic abuse using 'CARA principles'.

CARA is an awareness raising intervention - participants engage and reflect on behaviour that is placing their families at risk. The sessions are carefully constructed to enable participants to identify as being abusive and to explore what constitutes healthy, positive relationships. A pair of workshops provide participants with strategies and skills to build respectful relationships. This includes focusing on different aspects of violence and control, and on skills for better relationships and parenting.

CARA Workshops

CARA utilises a trauma informed approach and motivational interviewing techniques delivered across the pair of workshops. The aims and objectives of the workshops are to enable offenders

- To reflect on the offence including personal triggers
- To gain an understanding of different types of abuse within a family dynamic
- To recognise physical symptoms of anger and the feelings which lead to anger and then violence
- To recognise the damaging effects of behaviour on themselves and others
- To understand personal risk and protective factors
- To reflect on self-esteem and self-regulation designed to increase personal resilience
- To establish personal time out strategies and safe conflict
- To understand communication & conflict resolution skills
- To identify future strategies for sustaining change
- To provide signposts to other relevant agencies/organisations

CARA workshops are run in pairs - each cohort of up to 12 single-sex perpetrators attends two 1-day workshops 4 weeks apart. Separate workshops are run for male and female offenders, and for intimate/ex intimate partner and non-intimate partner familial domestic abuse.

Workshops in West Yorkshire will all be held on Saturdays to maximise opportunities for those referred who are in work or education to attend, and taking note of the time period of 16 weeks for conditional cautions to be completed. Two facilitators deliver each workshop; the pool of facilitators means that several workshops can be run simultaneously on any one day.

Community based premises are used which have good public transport links and meet accessibility and Covid-19 regulations.

Victim Engagement

Victim engagement and feedback is key to CARA. Between the 2 workshops, the partner/ex partner or family member of the offender is contacted to seek information on any changes (positive or negative) that they have observed in the offender's behaviour, and to assess any safeguarding and/or other referral needs. This feedback is provided to the facilitators prior to the second workshop in order that they can address any concerns or issues with the offender.

CARA in West Yorkshire

In West Yorkshire, the PCC has commissioned lead contractors Restorative Solutions CIC (RS), partnered with the Hampton Trust (HT), to introduce and deliver CARA over a period of 2 years. This partnership brings substantial relevant expertise and local knowledge to this project.

Eligibility is for standard risk first time offenders, issued with a Conditional Caution by West Yorkshire Police (WYP). Initially, all referrals/bookings will be made directly by WYP when issuing the Conditional Caution. The intention is to start taking referrals and running the first workshops during October 2020.

The Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) Guidance for use of conditional cautions for domestic abuse states police forces must have a robust approach to assessing risk and should only use conditional cautions for cases where a DASH or other risk assessment tool shows that the risk to the safety of the victim and/or family is not higher than the "standard" or "medium" classification. West Yorkshire Police will use these guidelines when issuing a conditional caution for CARA.

Whilst the initial focus is about engaging and raising awareness with the Police, RS will ensure that key stakeholders are aware of the service and are developing a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure services across West Yorkshire, including those hard to reach communities, are aware and confident of the new service. A series of one to one meetings and presentations to multiagency boards are already planned.

The CARA team in West Yorkshire

Restorative Solutions Directors Tony Walker and Kate Hook oversee and provide quality assurance for delivery of the service. Sophie Turner, our full time manager, has responsibility for awareness raising, developing referral pathways, and day-to-day management of a pool of specialist facilitators.

HT are training the team of CARA facilitators during September 2020, and will provide practice supervision throughout the life of the project. They bring their experience of developing and delivering the CARA workshops in 6 other areas to the service.

The pool of sessional CARA facilitators has been recruited locally by RS, and will be contracted by RS on an "as needed" basis to allow appropriate response to demand over time and across the 5 districts of West Yorkshire.

For More Information Please Contact

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