

# Challenging Conversations, A Simulation Based Approach

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## Aims

As trainee doctors make the transition into their second year of foundation training and beyond they begin to take on leadership roles requiring effective communication, sometimes in challenging circumstances. We wanted to develop and evaluate an enhanced communication skills training programme for foundation trainees that would address their specific needs.

## Methods

In **phase 1** we surveyed 43 doctors >6 months after completion of FY2 using a questionnaire to establish their experience of existing training and what they perceived their further training needs to be. Based on the feedback received we have developed a simulation-based curriculum-aligned workshop to improve competency and confidence in managing challenging conversations. A pilot workshop was run with 13 participants, 8 of whom agreed to be interviewed about their previous experience before the session. In **phase 2**, 12 participants engaged in a pre workshop questionnaire and 11 in a post workshop questionnaire, evaluating the session and it's perceived impact. Evaluation will be completed by post course interviews at 3 months.

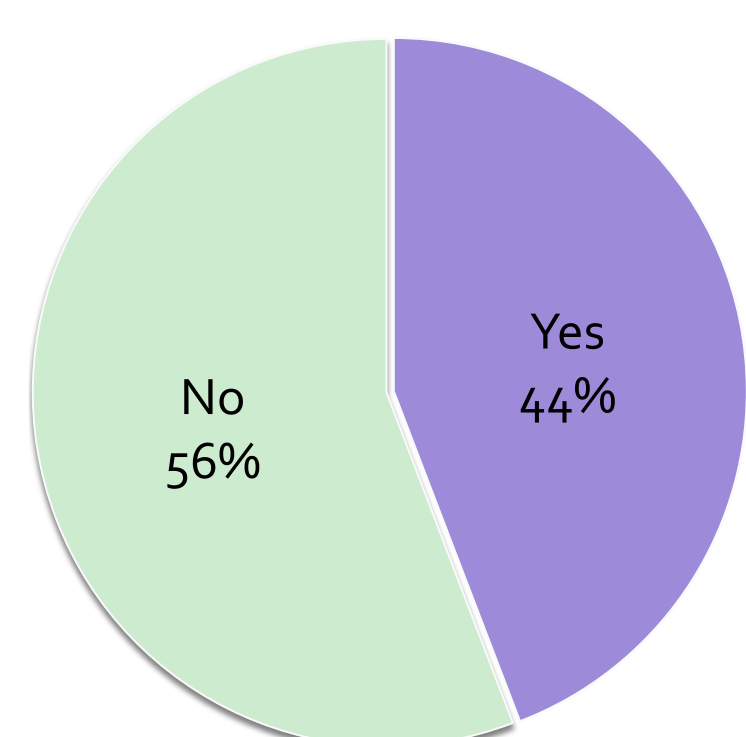
## Outcomes Phase One

Note: The surveyed cohort were all currently working in NHS Lothian but had completed foundation training in a variety of regions throughout the UK. We asked them about their perceptions of training they had received.

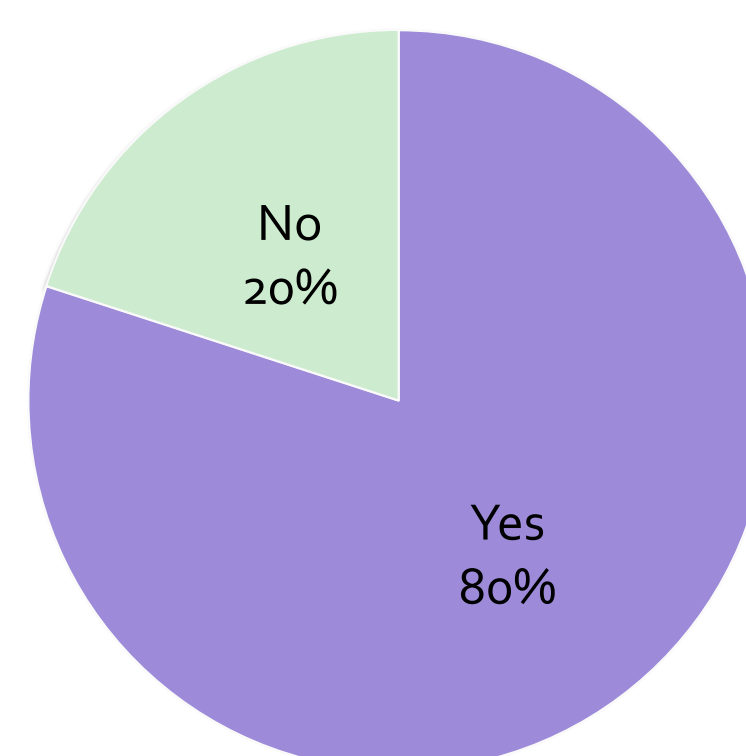
### 'What would you like included in a training session?'

- Communication with patients
  - Breaking bad news
  - Resuscitation conversations
  - Angry patients and complaints
  - Aggressive & abusive patients
  - Patients without capacity
  - As a junior doctor
- Communication with relatives
  - Anger, anxiety and distress
  - End of life discussions
  - Managing expectations
- Communication with colleagues
  - With other specialities
  - Within medical teams
  - With nursing staff
  - At handover

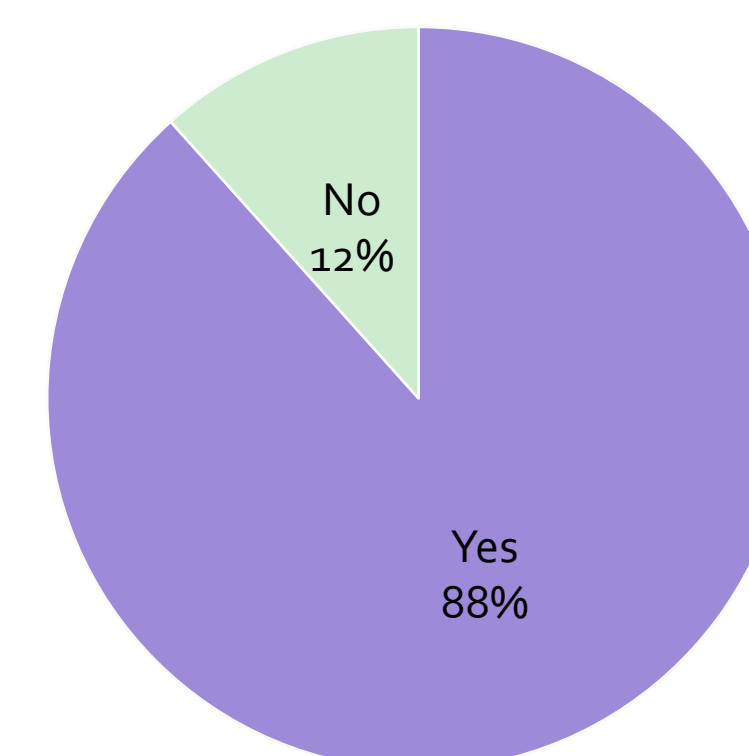
Did you have any training during foundation programme on clinical communication?



Was the training you received useful?



Would you have been interested in attending a full day training session?



### Key themes from pre- workshop interviews

'On the job' training varied between rotations, including exposure to difficult conversations. Lack of practical experience, and understanding of role, were perceived as challenges to professional communication. Tools and approaches, such as ways to initiate conversations and how to negotiate, were wanted. Interactive or simulated sessions were perceived to be safe and effective. Feedback, and being observed were seen to be helpful, and underused.

## Outcomes Phase Two

### Workshop Feedback

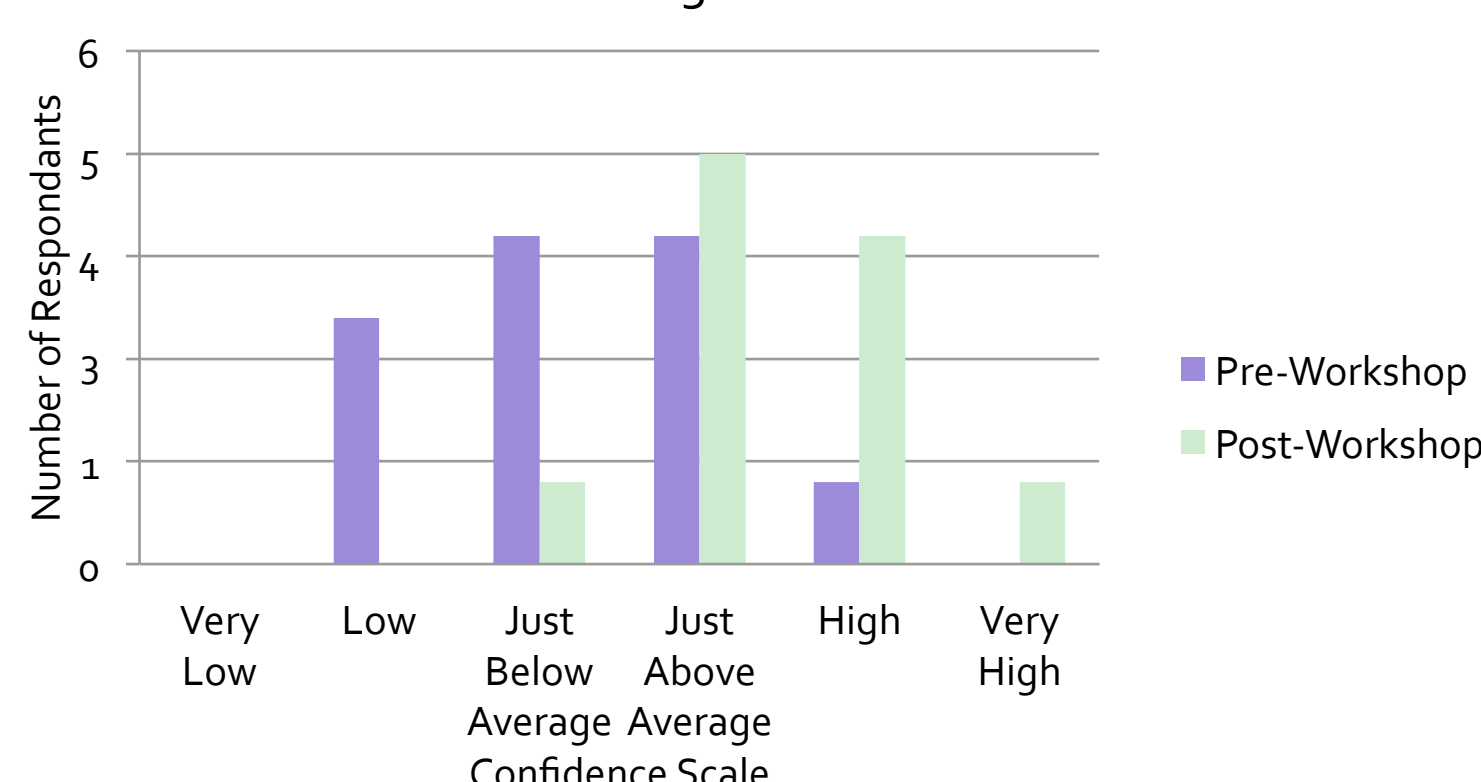
"Having the other participants feed in ideas as a group and then you synthesize them is a very good approach "

"Different views shared by the members of the group gave a variety of useful perspectives"

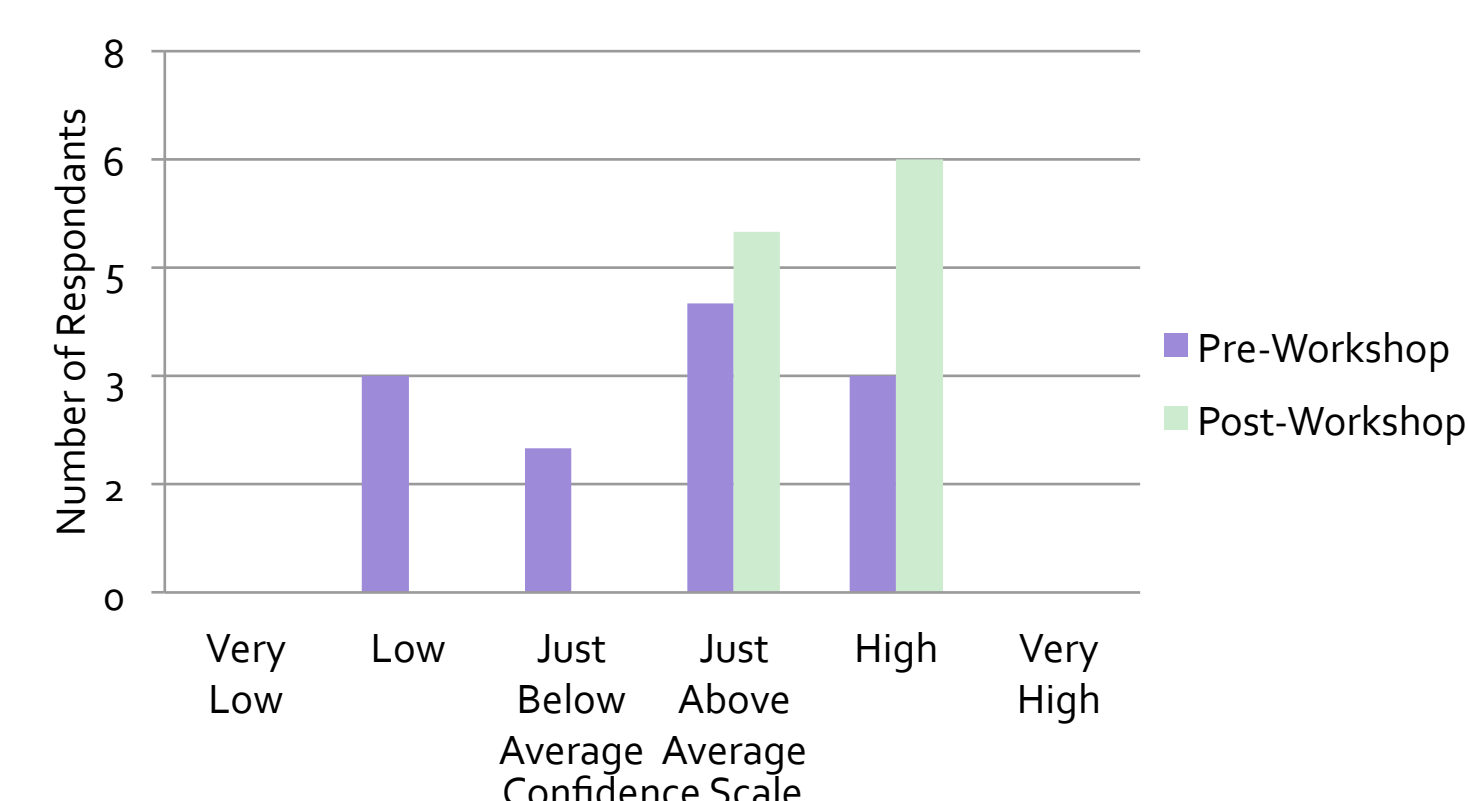
"I found being able to get feedback from the simulated patients and to be able to ask how they felt particular actions affected them to be extremely valuable"

"Really worthwhile being able to stop the interview and then go back and replay it using a different strategy to see how that might work"

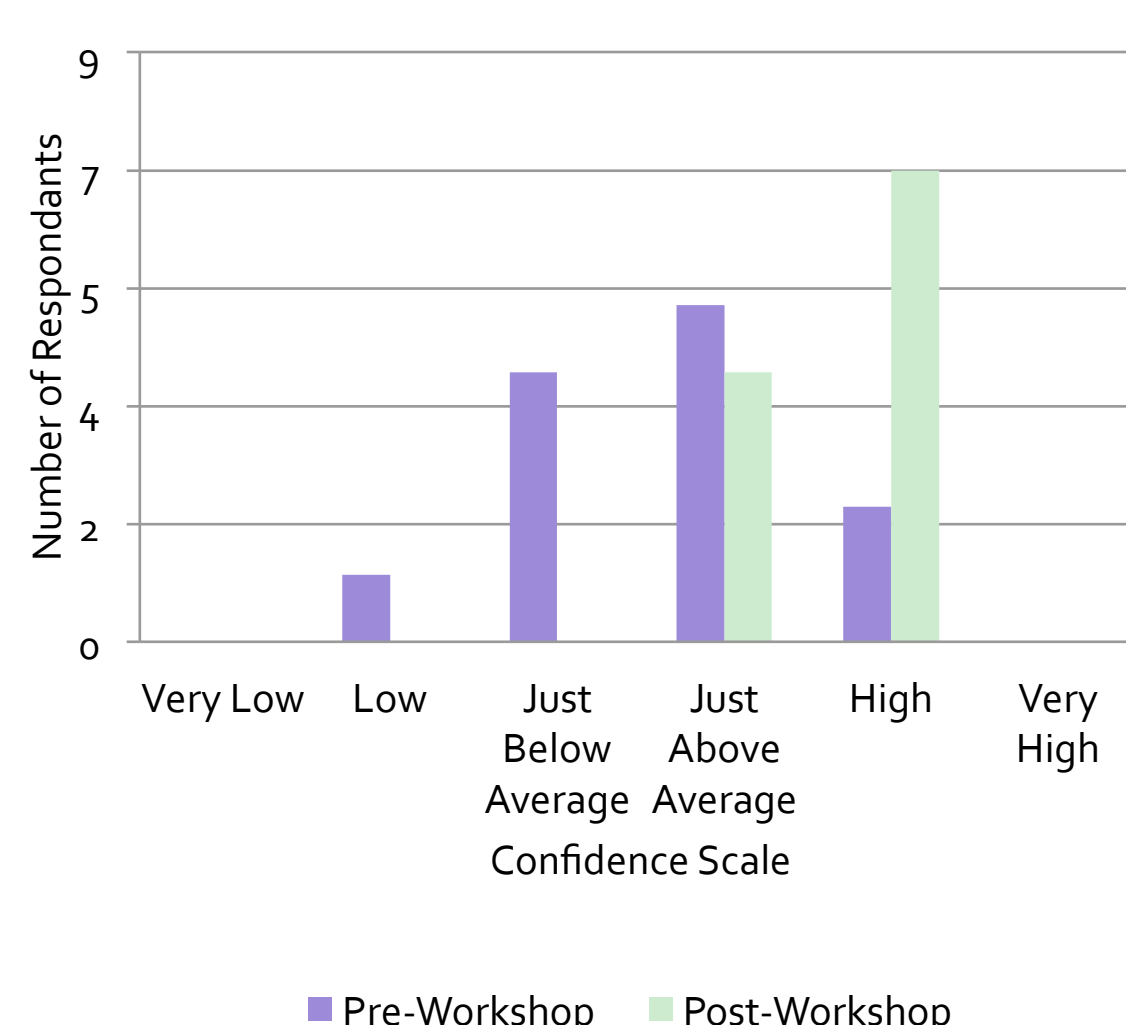
How confident are you at handling anger and other strong emotions?



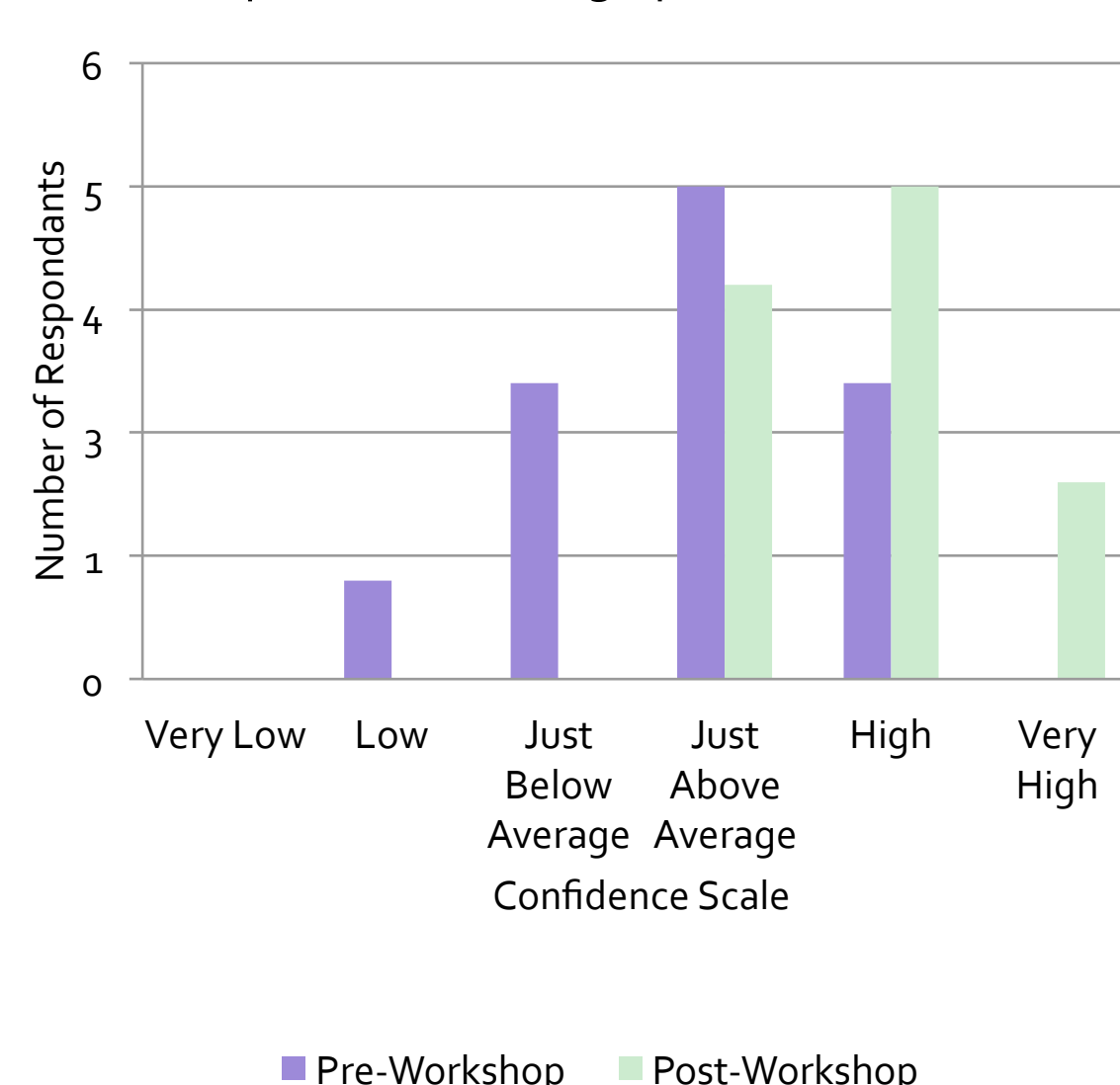
How confident are you at discussing deteriorating health, care and treatment including CPR?



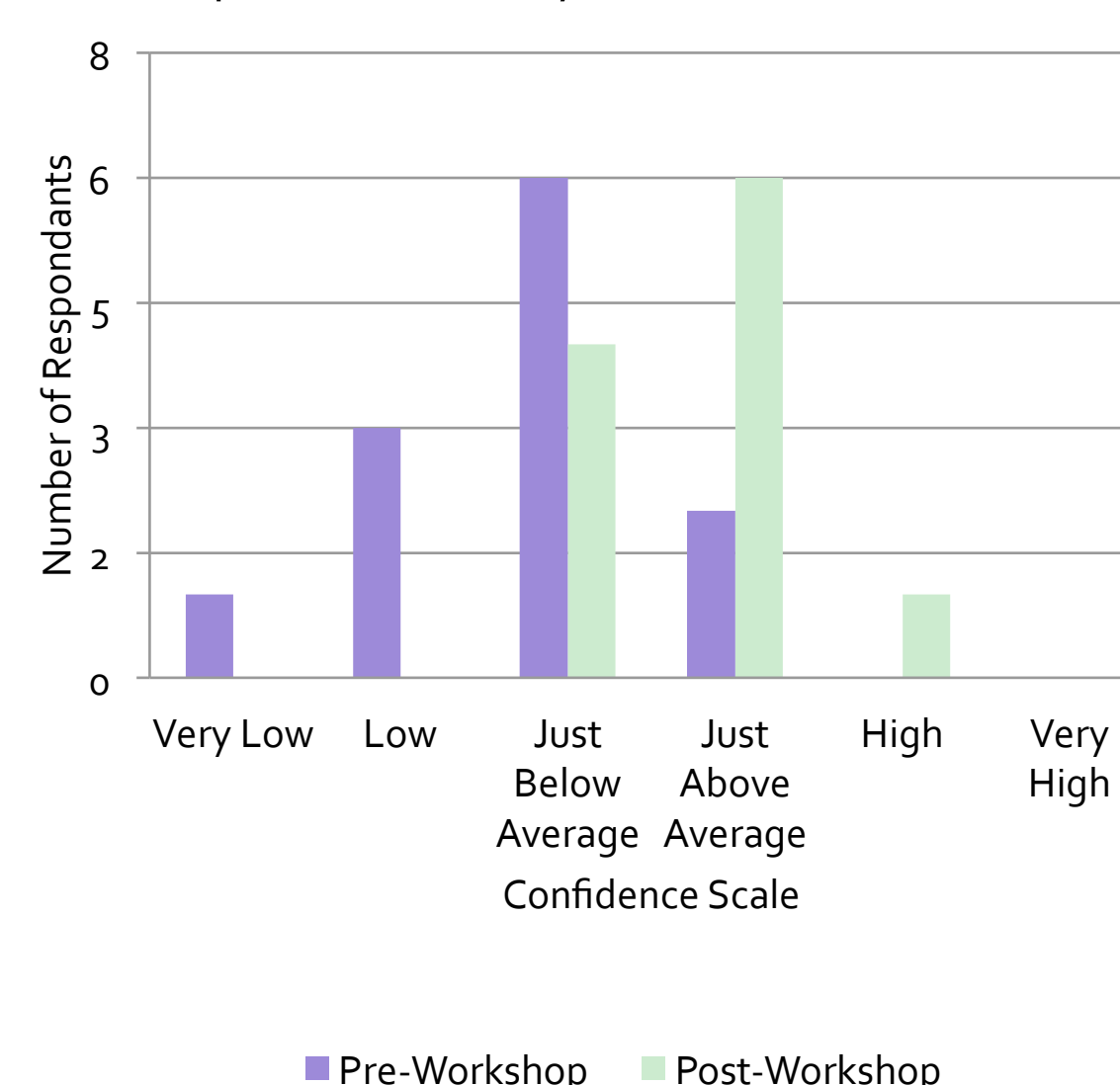
How confident are you at discussing complex decisions about treatment or care with patients and/or relatives?



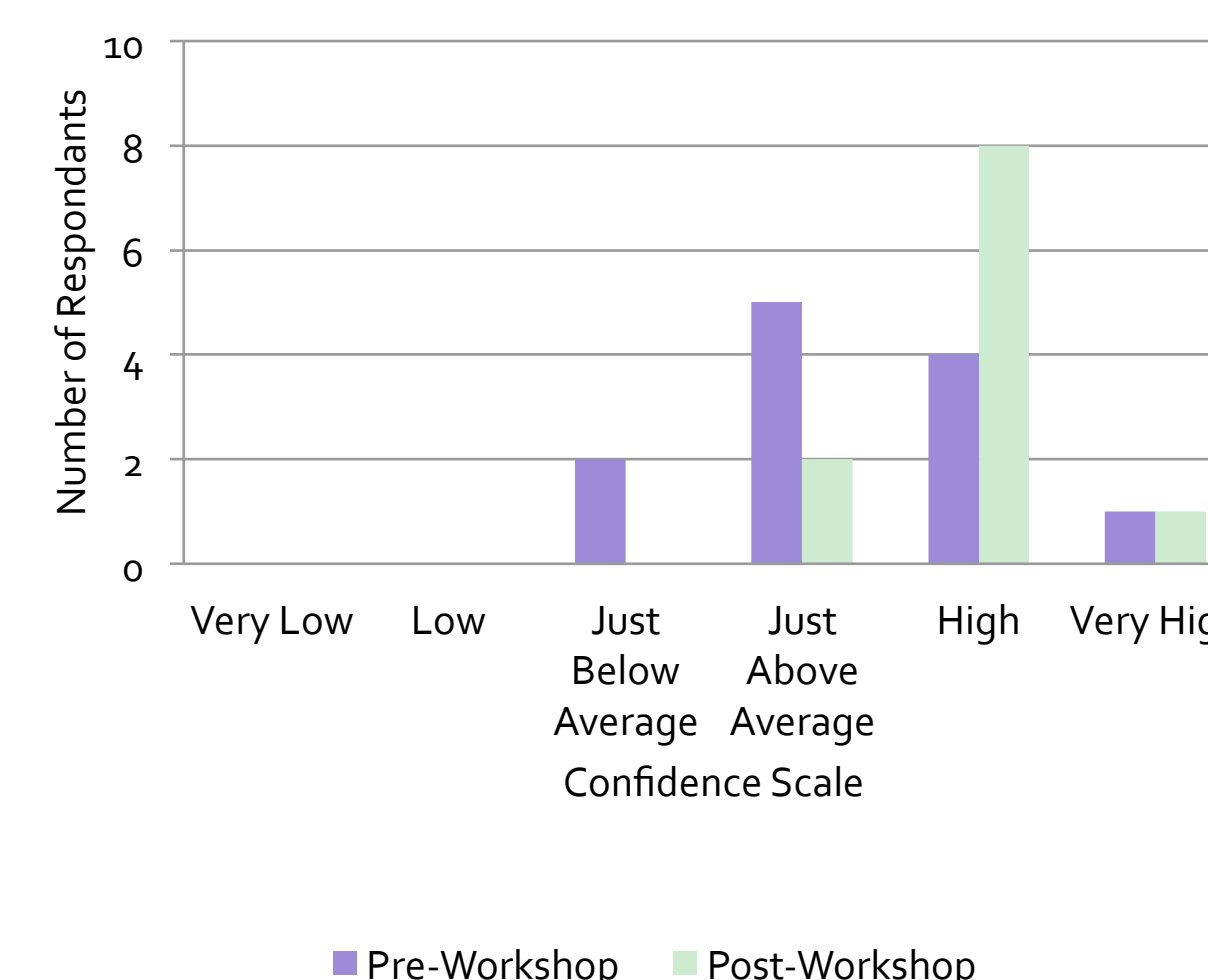
How confident are you at responding to complaints and being open about errors?



How confident are you at addressing poor performance in your team or service?



How confident are you with interprofessional communication: with your colleagues, other team members or other services?



## Conclusions

Trainees feel inadequately prepared for the challenging conversations they encounter in the workplace and wanted an opportunity to develop their abilities to handle these in a safe learning environment. Simulation is an area of expertise within Lothian; the broad spectrum of this methodology is well understood by our team and we have been able to utilise this to develop and deliver a simulation-based and curriculum-aligned pilot workshop that has been well received.

Trainees perceive that participation in the pilot has improved their communication competencies and built their confidence. We anticipate a long term benefit to their clinical practice, and the final phase of evaluation of the pilot will include post course interviews at 3 months to identify whether there is incorporation of learning from the course in to ongoing daily clinical practice. Based on the feedback we received from the initial survey and the pilot workshop we aim to roll this programme out to all FY2's across Lothian, to improve competency and confidence in managing challenging conversations.