

## **The Freedom Programme – An Evaluation**

### **Introduction**

‘ Domestic abuse is the emotional, physical, sexual, psychological or economic abuse of power and the exercise of control by an individual or individuals of a family member, partner or ex partner regardless of gender, age or sexual orientation’.

(source – North Wales Domestic Abuse Forum)

This introduction does not attempt an in-depth explanation of the many dynamics involved in domestic violence. It will assume that the reader has knowledge and acceptance of the imbalance of power inherent in an abusive relationship and the myriad of ways that imbalance can be used to control another person. Rather, the aim of this work is to give a broad overview of the psychological / emotional effects for women who have lived with domestic abuse (in any of its forms) and to show that the Freedom Programme is an excellent tool for unraveling the emotional and psychological confusion that many women feel because of their experiences.

Domestic violence accounts for 25% of all violent crime. The insidious nature of domestic violence means that much remains unreported and hidden from the available statistics (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, Hanmer & Stanko , 1985, Worrall & Pease, 1986).

‘Any crime that is chronic and all crime between intimates is under-reported’

(Mullender, p.33)

It is pertinent here to suggest that much of domestic violence is, in reality, immeasurable; consistent emotional and psychological abuse is rarely, if ever, a criminal offence, but is at least as damaging to the victim as physical violence. Women survivors frequently cite this to be the most damaging part of their ordeal. It is by nature, difficult to name, wrought with confusion, isolation, self -blame and chronic intimidations, humiliations, degradations and deprivations. There are definite parallels between these types of abuse and the torture of hostages or POW’s (Kelly, 1988a, Pahl, 1993, Dobash & Dobash, 1992, Graham et al, 1998, McConnell, 1991).

Judith Lewis Herman (2001) highlights these issues and explains in detail the very real after effects for women who have experienced abusive relationships. Many experience symptoms of PTSD, due to prolonged, systematic, seemingly inescapable psychological, physical and sexual violence. It is a dire mistake for professionals to assume that once a women is ‘free’ from the abusive relationship, that her problems are over. In reality, she may experience depression, anxiety, acute energy loss, lack of sleep, weight loss or gain, irritability and thoughts of suicide

(Mullender, 1996, Stanko, 1985, Kennedy, 1992). Survival will have involved chronic adaptations of psychological functioning or consciousness such as dissociation, hyper arousal, or complete surrender. Women may have been driven to use substances as a means of psychologically escaping their situation.

'Traumatised people who cannot spontaneously dissociate may attempt to produce similar numbing effects by using alcohol or narcotics' (Herman, 2001).

Frequently women may accept their experiences of abuse as inevitable, normalizing them and developing coping strategies that enable them to manage extreme situations as best they can.

In the same way 'hostages' learn to live' with their captivity -----

'women draw on whatever reserves of courage and coping strategies they personally possess to survive from day to day in an atmosphere of terror. Contrary to the harsh opinion of some, this does not equate with learning to tolerate the abuse; it never ceases to be dreadful' (Mullender, 1996, p51).

Citing a recent study, Herman (2001) suggests that,

'victim blame remains a surprising phenomenon; the effort continues to explain male behaviour by examining the characteristics of women' (p116).

A woman may escape her abuser on several occasions only to return or allow him back into her life. She may have been able to dissociate from the horror of her experience and even believe that she imagined the whole trauma, or was at least guilty of over-reacting. She may have been persuaded into returning by promises of change, declarations of love or repentance, threats of suicide or threats to her own future safety or that of her children. Most women will draw some sense of pride by being able to maintain their relationships. Their commitment to 'hold their family together' will very often create for a perpetrator the opportunity to coerce her to return by appealing to the values she holds most dear. For to leave means that she must not only physically part from her relationship, but that she must also go against her strong personal value system. Understandably then, she may leave several times before she leaves for good.

Deeside Women's Aid is an independent advocacy, action, crisis intervention and information service for women and children providing a network of support mechanisms for women via their refuge and outreach works. Their close links with statutory, legal and voluntary agencies ensure that women experiencing domestic violence are able to access all the necessary services to enhance their personal safety from one base. Professionally trained staff with a variety of skills

are able to offer individually appropriate support packages that ensure women get the help that they need when they need it. It is absolutely crucial that when this help is sought, it is provided in a sensitive, objective, empathic, holistic manner, and that it is given without delay.

One of the more recent developments available to them is the Freedom Programme designed and developed by Pat Craven, and facilitated (in this instant) by fully trained and experienced Women's Aid workers. It is important to note at this stage that most women on the programme will receive a range of additional advocacy or intervention mechanisms from DWA working alongside other voluntary, legal or statutory agencies should these be appropriate. All women will be continually reminded of DWA 24hr on call crisis intervention service.

As an advocacy and information service, specialising in domestic violence issues, we have been privilege to note the many and varied positive changes that have taken place in women who have completed the programme. However, there was no way of attributing any of these changes directly to the Freedom Programme (a necessary requirement to secure future funding). Therefore, it was considered that a pilot evaluation might help to support the on-going availability of this programme and provide DWA with more solid or visible support for their hypothesis.

The programme is based on the Duluth model of domestic violence, examining the beliefs, actions and responses of both perpetrator and woman survivor. Each one / two hour session details one mode of controlling behaviour e.g. intimidation. It will examine the tactics / behaviours of intimidation, the intentions behind that behaviour, the effects on women, the beliefs behind that behavior and the ways in which women, other men and our society can support and condone controlling behaviours. The final part of each session covers in depth discussion of the alternative, positive and encouraging behaviors that are healthy, liberating and equality –based. The programme is designed to provide a safe place for women to explore their personal experiences. It gives them a language that enables them to put into words the horror of their experience, helps them to understand the nature of domestic violence and how it has affected them in a way that make sense to them and others. It provides an alternative positive outlook for future relationships. Armed with this information, and having completed the programme, it is hypothesized that

- a) Women will have an understanding of the issues / dynamics involved in domestic violence and realize that they are not to blame for the perpetrator's behaviour.
- b) Women will have more confidence in their ability to protect themselves and their children from future abuse.

c) Women will consider the programme to be of long term benefit both personally and in terms of their relationships.

To date, Deeside Women's Aid has facilitated seven complete Freedom Programmes. These have been supported by

Communities First Grant

North Wales Probation

Local Health Board

Crèche and venue availability from Surestart programme

Outside agency referrals – Family Protection, Flintshire Children's Services, Surestart, Drug & Alcohol Services, Community Mental Health Team

And especially - The women who take part.

## Method

Eight women who had completed the Freedom Programme at various times ranging from 18 and 2 months prior to evaluation were contacted by standard letter asking if they would be interested in taking part in an evaluation. (See Appendix 1) Note that within the request letter were a number of items for potential participants to consider before the interview. This was added for two reasons.

- 1) to explain the nature and reasons for the evaluation
- 2) to give plenty of time to consider their feelings regarding the Freedom Programme so that their opinions were well thought through.

All requested participants responded positively and arrangements were made to interview them individually in their own homes or in another venue if that was more convenient. However, two interviews were not completed; one woman had the shock of an unplanned pregnancy and on discussion we felt it was not an appropriate time, another potential participant was unable to attend her interview though she had expressed a desire to take part. Another date was offered but it was not suitable. It was decided not to offer any further dates leaving the onus of participation on the woman should she want to contact us to plan a mutually convenient time. A guided questionnaire was devised (see Appendix 2) along with a quantitative questionnaire (see Appendix 3) that aimed to give both an in-depth, holistic insight into each woman's situation and experiences, and also to provide the evaluation with a measurable outcome. The standard briefing paper was read in full to each participant before commencement of the 'interview' and each interview took approximately 90 minutes inclusive of briefing (Appendix 4), guided questions interview, quantitative questionnaire and de-briefing (Appendix 5). At no point were participants hurried in any way i.e. plenty of time was allowed for pleasantries before and after the evaluation.

In addition a further seven participants were contacted by letter and asked to complete the quantitative questionnaire (Appendix 2) and return the completed form by post as soon as possible.

## Results – Quantitative Questionnaire

Total number of participants = 12 The sample for quantitative data is smaller than anticipated due to one unreturned questionnaire at the time of writing the report.

All questions are scored 1 to 5 (5 being positive)

Question	no. of women scoring question 1,2,3,4, or 5						
	1	2	3	4	5	Total score	%
How successful was the programme for you?				1	11	59	98.3%
How much did you benefit from the programme in the short term? (up to 6 months)				2	10	58	96.6%
How much have you benefited from the programme in the long term (over 6 months)			1		7	38	95%
<b>The following statements are scored 1 – 5 strongly disagree, disagree, agree a little, agree, strongly agree</b>							
I feel much wiser				5	7		
I am more assertive			1	3	8		
I have more confidence			2	5	5		
I understand myself better			5	1	6		
I am more careful in my relationships		1	1	2	8		
I no longer blame myself for my experience of domestic abuse			2	3	7		
I expect to be respected			1	3	8		
I can recognize and identify abusive behaviours			1	2	9		
I feel more able to protect myself and my children			1	2	9		
I could identify and avoid an unhealthy relationship			2	3	7		
I am hopeful for the future			1	3	8		
I have changed for the better			2	1	9		

The results of the questionnaire detailed above shows that

- Participants rated the programme 98.3% successful overall.
- They felt that in the short term (up to six months) the programme had a positive benefit measured at 96.6%
- In the longer term (over six months) the programme maintained it's beneficial effects losing only 1.6% of it's rating.

## Results Qualitative Interview

Total number of participants = 6

Full transcripts of interviews can be made available on request.

### Question 1 – how long ago did you complete the Freedom Programme?

P1, P2 completed the programme 18 months prior to interview

P3, P4 completed the programme 6 months prior to interview

P5, P6 completed the programme 2 months prior to interview

### Question 2 – What do you remember about the content of the programme?

All participants remembered the basis of the programme – they knew the different personas and the tactics that each persona might use to maintain control in the relationship. They also recalled the attitudes of Mr Right. Some remembered more specifically than others, but that was not related to how long ago they had completed the programme. In fact, the participant who remembered most specifically had completed the programme over 12 months prior to interview.

*‘the different attitudes of the abusive man – the bully, the headworker, the badfather – the behaviours and linking them up (to personas)’*

*‘the main thing I remember about it all is that I was abused much more than I thought I was – I thought I was being pathetic, asking for impossibly high standards, I knew I was very unhappy but I couldn’t have said or put into words why. Now I can.’*

*‘based around the personalities of the dominator, the sexual controller, the bully, the liar etc. and we looked at all the traits you might find in the people that displayed these personalities. These behaviours are based on their value systems which means that they’ve obviously been brought up to believe or – the influence of the television, the media, the way their mum was treated and stuff and behaviours are very difficult to change I believe. I believe that it’s not very often that someone like that will change.’*

### Have you used the programme in any of your decision making since? Can you give examples?

*‘I’ve identified behaviours in other people, particularly in work -----’*

*I find it less acceptable now – I don’t know if I’ve USED it – I’m just aware ---’*

*'O definitely----- I've been able to put my experiences into boxes in my head – it's been very useful and helped me to evaluate what's happened'.*

*'I do use it, not in a very direct way. Mainly I have been able to recognize behaviours for what they are'.*

One participant gave the following example. She had begun a new relationship with another man and had taken care not to divulge anything of her previous experiences of domestic violence (during the freedom programme we explain the risk involved in sharing our past with new boyfriends). She had clear boundaries despite attempts to hurry her into a commitment and though she did doubt herself at times she kept her 'emotional distance' and began to realize quite quickly that a continued relationship with him would have been unhealthy so she ended it. It transpired that her unease was justified because when she told him the relationship was over, he *'went to slap me'*. She believes that had she not done the Freedom Programme she would not have been *'that firm'*. When asked why she thought the programme made a difference she said, *'because I think I would have gone back to the way I was with my husband. ----- It made me realize that men aren't up here (gestures) and women down here.-----I don't feel I have to compromise my own feelings too much'.*

**Following this theme, when asked if they would use the FP in a new relationship participants responded**

*'Yes definitely – for warning signs- definitely'*

*'I do use it, not in a very direct way.'*

*'I would yes. Like if I was with someone and he said, for example, o you're not going out with the girls tonight, or you're not wearing that skirt or I want you to stay with me, that would make me think. Things like that.'*

*'If my current partner spoke to me in a way I didn't like, I'd recognize it and I would not put up with it. I'd highlight it so he wouldn't do it again'*

**When questioned about the relevancy of the programme all of the women participants said in various ways that the programme was a 'part of who they are' now.**

*'I think also that the programme is ingrained in me now, I don't have to think about it consciously even, it's just there.'*

*Today, every day. Yes it's part of my thinking, part of who I am now'.*

**What positive effects do you think that the programme has had for you?**

*'Positive effects is reinforcing in my mind the things that had happened to me weren't acceptable. -----going through the course made me realize just how bad the abuse I suffered was. Because it was all different aspects. I think I'd often minimized things – like I'd said to myself it's not that bad or I'd become conditioned to it – it was almost accepted. Whereas now, I don't know, I was able to say it wasn't right – what I'd been through was, was terrible. By admitting that to yourself – it's a big milestone.'*

*'It helped me talk about it (my experience) and make sense while I'm talking about it. See people can't understand why you stay with a man that hits you, but if you understand it yourself – you can explain it better to other people if you need to. It takes away the confusion.'*

*'In a lot of ways it's made me realize that I am a strong person----- I don't have to be strong all the time. It's alright to say I was a bloody stupid cow for putting up with that but these were my reasons at the time. I used to think I couldn't manage the kids on my own but things are much better without him. I'm not having to deal with his moods and I'm not on edge all the time. I'm more aware and watch out for my older kids in their relationships. I can have a good wail now without feeling like I'm being pathetic. I think a lot of abused people hide their emotions don't they? Otherwise they'd walk round crying all the time!*

*I know it wasn't my fault. I really know that it's their (abusive person's) responsibility. I really learned a lot and it made me realize that other women have gone through almost exactly the same thing'.*

*'Not to say you can't trust another man, but to be more careful – not just to fall into his arms. It helped me come to terms with things a bit more, I feel more confident. I used to say it was my fault in the beginning, but it wasn't my fault at all. He was the one.'*

*'I look at things from a different light. Like before I ever met him, I was a different person, and the FP helped me find it again. Because you're not walking on egg shells, you can think in a different way.'*

### **Did the programme have any negative effects for you?**

*'I found it helped, I really do – helped me to understand things and see them in a different way but really no – nothing negative.'*

*'Well I don't know if it's negative – but I don't think I'll bother again with a relationship. If I need something doing I'll pay for it – jobs around the house I mean!!!! It'd be cheaper than living with someone.'*

*'At the beginning it did definitely. I felt angry. But then I was anyway.... I got a bit confused at first because my ex was both mr. Right and the dominator and I couldn't understand how he could be both. Even though you explained about consistency with mr right, it took 3 or 4 weeks to click.'*

*'I don't know about negative – you tend to get really involved with what other women have been through and perhaps it's easier to look at other people rather than yourself – easier to worry about someone else – and because my experiences were so extreme – they might have had the same effect on the other women and made them minimise their own experiences. I think it would have been quite dangerous for me to have done the course if I'd still been in the relationship because the after effects of the session would have caused a row.'*

**The interviewer questioned the participants about feelings of anger, bitterness, hatred because it was felt important to clarify their negative feelings and know whether they felt that the programme encouraged negativity.**

*'I don't think I felt any of that at all – it just opened my eyes'.*

*'I'm very realistic about my own weaknesses. I tend to rush into things. I really don't believe I would anymore. I think it would be better to be friends for a long time now before anything else. I've never had that in me before'.*

*'the information I learned has helped me heal emotionally. When you come out of an abusive relationship, you're really confused, After doing the Freedom, I'm not confused, I don't hate him, I just have no feelings for him. I still get angry if he's being obstructive about the divorce, but that's not to do with him, so much as being frustrated at the stalling.'*

*'I'm at a point in my life where I think all men are arseholes. I don't know. I'm not sure'.*

**Were there any times you felt uncomfortable on the programme? Do you know what made you feel this way?**

*'I felt very unhappy when we did the children bit. I really didn't like it at all. That's only because you're realising how many things they've done to your children. But I wouldn't have given the programme up..... I think the most positive thing to come out was that it's not just about violence. I always kind of thought he'd been alright with the kids. Because I'd been abused as a child, I thought his behaviour was kind of ok. But he wasn't – every day he's have a go at (son) and really scare him. Kids are just another thing he owned.'*

*'I found the sexual controller the most difficult because that's the thing you keep most hidden. It's not something you would naturally talk about and for me it was a tense session. That for me was the only week I felt really uncomfortable at the time'.*

*'The bits on the effect on kids, see I'm filling up now just thinking about it. Things like that, cause I feel, I felt guilty sometimes because of it. ---- because I allowed it to go on for five years – and I went back – when I left him the first time, I should have never went back – four times I left him*

*before and each time I went back – the kids heads must have just been (whoah) you know what I mean’.*

*‘I didn’t like that video – I felt uncomfortable then, but that’s all really – I don’t remember feeling uncomfortable any other time’.* (N.B. Sleeping with the enemy is not normally used in the FP for women. )

*‘No never, never at all. I remember you said we could go out at any time – but I never needed to. Because everything was true what was being said’.*

### **Overall what long lasting effects has he programme had for you?**

*‘More confident, more assertive, and seeing it in people – like potentially abusive behaviour’.*

*‘More confident, more informed. I’m not frightened of him anymore’.*

*‘I’ve got a totally different mind set now. I could easily feel like this about men anyway, because of my past experiences, this like I’ll take a break fro a while, but the REASONS for doing it are totally different this time’.*

*‘It’s made me stronger in a way. I’ve got more knowledge – about what I feel is right and wrong – it’s my choice all along. But long lasting I think overall I’ve got quite a good awareness of what is acceptable to me and what isn’t. I think it’s changed my beliefs as well’.*

*‘It’s made me more aware of what could happen in the future, especially when you first come out of refuge, you could meet someone and think, o great this is love, and find yourself in the same situation all over again. Like now I’d be more wary. ....It worked for me and it’s easy to understand and make things clearer.’*

*‘I can talk about it – and actually make sense while I’m talking about it. I can put things across to other people much easier. Because I guess it’s not just a load of jumbled up feelings anymore, and I can make sense of it, and I’ve got the words to use now too’.*

**In addition, all participants agreed that they would welcome a follow on programme.**

## DISCUSSION

All of the women involved in this evaluation have experienced psychological and physical abuse. All had used whatever coping mechanisms available to them to manage the situations that they were in. One participant had used alcohol as a coping mechanism, in that she had joined her alcoholic partner on drinking sessions because it was easier that way; the more she drank, the less alcohol that was available to him. It was also her way of feeling like she had some small element of control in a frighteningly out of control situation. She would not feel the physical violence so much when it came. (Herman, 2001).

Another participant recognises the pattern of dissociation, 'cutting herself off' emotionally in order to deal with chronic physical, sexual and psychological abuse. She acknowledges that one of the hardest things during the programme for her was to admit that what she had been through was terrible. She spent many years trying to minimise and normalise her experiences (Mullender, 1996).

One lady's experience occurred more than 13 years ago but both she and her son still have occasional nightmares. She had been isolated from friends and family and physically, psychologically and economically abused.

*'when my family come round he (my son) will remind them what he (ex husband) used to do to me, like when he put a hot iron on my neck you know, things like that.'*

This lady now uses the information on the Freedom Programme to talk to young women she knows are being badly treated and who aren't ready yet to come to the programme themselves. She feels more confident and no longer blames herself for the experience.

*'It helped me come to terms with things a bit more. I feel more confident. I used to say it was all my fault in the beginning, but it wasn't my fault at all. He was the one.'*

All would testify that psychological abuse has had the most long term effect on their recovery; it has been the hardest to understand in terms of power and control, and until the Freedom Programme many experiences of abusive behaviour had gone unrecognised as such (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Four participants were referred to the Freedom programme from outside agencies, three were resident in DWA refuge at the time they took part, five women self referred to DWA and the programme was suggested to them as part of a 'support package' All completed the programme with 75% or more attendance. Each woman has shown remarkable courage in her willingness to take part. All have given honest and frank responses to difficult questions that have required deep thought and feeling and I am very grateful to each one for their valuable inputs.

One of the obvious criticisms of this evaluation is that having facilitated the Freedom Programme myself, I should not have been the person to conduct the interviews. However, having built up relationships of trust with each of the participants before, during and following the Freedom Programme, I considered that each participant would have felt comfortable to give honest and thorough evaluations. Although in many ways their experiences may be similar, in as many ways they are profoundly different. I believe that previous knowledge and understanding of each participant's very individual experiences resulted in more relaxed and in depth interviews.

The results of both questionnaires support the Freedom Programme as being a valid tool to help women overcome the confusion inherent both during and following an abusive relationship. In many ways, women lose their 'sense of self', and their ability to distinguish between 'right and wrong behaviours'. The Freedom programme validates their experiences as wrong, as something that they were not responsible for and in many ways had no control over. Their confusion is significantly reduced; they become able to perceive their experiences in terms of power and control. Once their perception of events is altered, clarity of thinking is inevitable; they see their experience/s for what it was.

However, this is not an easy process. It may involve some internal psychological 'battles' and self doubts before this shift in perception is attained. It will most certainly invoke feelings of anger, guilt and shame that need to be identified, managed and understood. As one participant said, *'I was able to put things in boxes in my head. Now I can evaluate what's happened to me. ...I don't blame myself for it anymore'*.

Significantly, the programme gives women a language or vocabulary to express themselves that may be vital in terms of this understanding, aiding their recovery and their ability to protect themselves in the future. As another participant noted, when a woman is traumatised *'she cannot accommodate information in the normal way; it has to be made simpler and easier to absorb.'*

Another,

*'at the time it happened, I put it all in a big miscellaneous bin that I just shoved the lid on. Now it's organised and I have been able to deal with it a bit at a time at my own pace'*.

For some women, there will remain elements of guilt, especially when they feel they have at times failed to protect their children by returning to an abusive partner. I don't know whether these feelings ever truly disappear, but they may serve some purpose for future protection.

One participant displayed strong regret for having returned to her abusive partner four times before leaving for good. Knowing that other women on the Freedom Programme had done similarly helped her to see that she was not the only one.

Her (now ) ex partner is the father of her youngest child and her commitment to maintain the relationship was very strong. She left for the final time following a very serious physical assault. Unable to bring her youngest child for fear of waking the perpetrator and increasing the risk of serious harm to all of the children, it was months before they (mother & child) were reunited and that too may have contributed to her feelings of guilt. Although she did all she could possible have done to be reunited immediately, she had to endure a prolonged custody battle that took months before it was resolved. She understands that she did the best she could under the circumstances, but her regret does remain to a certain extent, although it does not overshadow her hope for the future. She sees that her children are recovering well and they are now a happy family unit, resettled into a home of their own.

All participants considered the programme to be of long term benefit in terms of their recovery and in terms of their ability to avoid future abusive relationships. They all consider themselves to be wiser, to have clearer boundaries and realistic expectations of mutual respect in future relationships. All felt able to identify potential abuse early in a relationship, and two were able to give clear examples of how this has already been of assistance to them. All felt that the programme had become a 'part of who they are', displaying a significant shift in their perceptions. They explained,

*'I've got a totally different mind set now.'*

*'I think also that the programme is ingrained in me now, I don't have to think about it consciously even, it's just there.'*

*'Yes it's part of my thinking, part of who I am now'.*

*'– it just opened my eyes'.*

## **CONCLUSION**

In completing the Freedom Programme participants have gained renewed confidence and hope. This may result from knowing that they have the information and ability to prevent future involvement with abusive partners. It may result from the therapeutic process of the programme and the knowledge and heartfelt acceptance that we are not responsible for someone else's abusive behaviours. It has certainly given women a voice and a language to talk through their experiences and understand them in a structured way. Women who completed the programme over twelve months prior to interview maintain that the information and knowledge acquired is still current in their psychology, in their ways of thinking and behaving.

The majority of women who took part in this evaluation said that they found the sessions on the effects on children the most difficult emotionally. When women stay with, or return to abusive men, their decision generally stems from a commitment to the relationship, from the feeling that she is doing the right thing for her children by holding the family together. She may have told herself that the children aren't aware of the behaviour of the perpetrator and therefore not really affected. More often she has thought she is doing the best for her children and it is a shock for her to learn the significant effects that some children will experience. Facilitators should be aware that this may be a particularly poignant session and should make provision for this. It is vital that all participants leave the session knowing that they did the best they could in very difficult circumstances.

This outcome of this evaluation supports all three hypotheses proposed in the introduction.

All participants believe that they have benefited in the short and long term by completing the Freedom Programme. The questionnaires and interviews have shown that each participant has had a positive experience with long term, stable advantages. The information shared on the programme is remembered; it has been psychologically accommodated in such a way that it has become a part of the individual's personal being.

All participants happily recommend the programme to others as a means of recovery and prevention and all expressed a desire for a follow on programme

## **Prologue**

Any experience of domestic violence will leave its scars. The best that services like Women's Aid can offer is an introduction to an holistic package of interventions which may at some point on the survivor's journey to recovery include the Freedom Programme. We (DWA) believe that women can be encouraged to take part in the programme, they can be reassured that it is non threatening and that the outcomes for them can be enlightening and empowering. We can share some of the ways that other women have benefited, but it must remain their decision whether or not to take part. We must not pretend that the FP is an easy option. DWA support participants on FP with their 24hr on call, the WWA Helpline and other forms of help, advocacy and support. For example, two participants on our last Freedom Programme made the decision to apply for injunctions against their ex partners and they requested our support to do so. Though the decision was theirs, they felt stronger knowing that DWA would advocate on their behalf as necessary. Taking the steps to protect ourselves from further harm can be an unnerving process, requiring substantial measures that can, at some stage in the process, be improved by embracing the Freedom Programme.

## References & Bibliography

**Craven, P. (2002)** The Freedom Programme Manual

**North Wales Domestic Abuse Forum**

**Dobash & Dobash, (1979)** in Mullender, A. (1996) *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Routledge: London & New York

**Dobash & Dobash, (1992)** in Mullender, A. (1996) *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Routledge: London & New York

**Hanmer, J. & Stanko, E.A. (1985)** Stripping away the rhetoric of protection: violence to women, law and the state in Britain and the USA *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 13:357-74

**Herman, J.L. (2001)** *Trauma and Recovery: from domestic abuse to political terror*. London, Pandora.

**Hotaling, G.T. & Sugarman, D.G., (1986)** An analysis of risk markers in husband to wife violence: The current state of knowledge, *Violence & Victims* 1: 101-124

**Graham et al (1998)** in Mullender, A. (1996) *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Routledge: London & New York

**Kelly, L. (1988)** *Surviving Sexual Violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press

**Kennedy, (1992 )** in Mullender, A. (1996) *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Routledge: London & New York

**Mc Connell (1991)** in Mullender, A. (1996) *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Routledge: London & New York

**Mullender, A. (1996)** *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Routledge: London & New York.

**O'Haire, C. (2005)** Psychological violence in intimate relationships. *The Domestic Abuse Quarterly*, Winter 2005, 20-22.

**Pahl, (1993)** in Mullender, A. (1996) *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Routledge: London & New York

**Stanko, E.A. (1985)** *Intimate Intrusions: Womens experience of male violence*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

**Worrall & Pease, (1986)** in Mullender, A. (1996) *Rethinking Domestic Violence*. Routledge: London & New York



# The Freedom Programme

Devised and developed by Pat Craven

Delivered by Deeside Women's Aid

Sponsored by LHB

Working in partnership with NWP

Tel: 01244 830436

[deesidewomensaid@btconnect.com](mailto:deesidewomensaid@btconnect.com)

Dear

I am doing a small evaluation of the Freedom Programme and would like to ask you a few questions about your opinion of the programme and give you an opportunity to reflect upon how it may have helped or hindered you since you took part. I envisage that the interview should take approximately one hour of your time. With your permission, I would like to record the interview in order to make sure that I do not miss any important comments that you would like to make. All evaluations will be completely confidential, and no names will be used in the write ups. The purpose is to evaluate the programme as a service and to try to improve the quality and content where necessary. It will also be used to show other agencies and funding bodies the effectiveness (or not) of the programme.

I would like to interview you at home on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to take part, please let me know as soon as possible by replying in the prepaid envelope. If the date or time is inconvenient, please suggest an alternative.

In the meantime, can you think about

- What you learned on the programme
- How much of the programme you can remember
- What you have found useful
- What you have found a hindrance
- How it has affected any relationships since – positively or negatively
- What you thought about the delivery of the programme and how it might be improved
- Would you be interested in taking part in a 'follow on' programme

Thanks for your time and I look forward to seeing you

Kindest regards

**I would \* like to / \* not like to take part in the freedom programme interview**

**The date and time are inconvenient for me\***

**I suggest the following date & time instead\***

**Please indicate \* as appropriate**

**Name -----**

**Guided Questions**

Can you tell me how long ago you completed the freedom programme ?

What can you remember about the content of the programme?

(prompt)

Have you used any of the programme in your decision making since?

Can you give examples?

Do you think that the programme is still relevant to you? For example, Would you think about it in a new relationship?

What positive effects do you think the programme had for you?

Do those effects remain?

What negative effects did the programme have for you?

Do those effects remain?

Were there any occasions when you felt uncomfortable on the programme?

Do you know what made you feel that way?

Overall, can you tell me what long lasting effects the programme has had for you?

Would you be interested in attending a follow-on programme?

Would you recommend the programme to other women who have experienced domestic abuse?

**Freedom Programme Evaluation**

Please rate the following ( 1 is the lowest 5 is the highest)

How successful was the programme for you?

How much did you benefit from the programme in the short term  
(up to six months after)

How much have you benefited from the programme in the longer term (over six months)

Consider the following statements – how much do they apply to you? Give each statement a number **1 (strongly disagree)**

**2 (disagree) 3 (agree a little) 4 (agree) 5 (strongly agree)**

Since attending the Freedom programme,

I feel much wiser

I am more assertive

I have more confidence

I understand myself better

I am more careful in my relationships

I no longer blame myself for my experience of domestic abuse

I expect to be respected

I can recognise and identify abusive behaviours

I feel more able to protect myself and my children

I could identify and avoid an unhealthy relationship

I am hopeful for the future

I have changed for the better

**Briefing - Freedom programme evaluation**

As you know this interview is to evaluate the freedom programme, its benefits and any problems you found associated with it. There are two parts to this interview - the first part consists of guided questions which I would like you to answer as fully as possible – this is your opportunity to tell me as much as you can about the programme, how it helped you and how it may have hindered you. The second part involves rating different aspects of the programme on a scale of one to five.

If at any point during either section you do not fully understand a question, please say so and I can explain more fully.

Similarly, if at any point you are not comfortable and would like to stop the interview, please say so and the interview will cease.

If on reflection, you decide that you do not want your contributions to be used in this evaluation, please let me know before November 30<sup>th</sup> 2004. Please be assured that no names will be used in the evaluation. However, important direct quotes may be used. When the evaluation is written up, I will forward you a copy.

Thank you for your time.

**Debriefing – freedom programme**

Thank you for taking part. I hope that it has been a positive experience for you. If at any point you would like to discuss your interview or you want to withdraw any of your contributions, please contact me before 30<sup>th</sup> November 2004. I really appreciated the time you have given and the valuable comments that you have made. Thank you