



Evaluation of The Freedom Programme.
Autumn 2019

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Introduction

This evaluation examines the efficacy of The Freedom Programme. Through a quantitative assessment, this evaluation examines the impact and outcomes of the Freedom Programme for participants of the Autumn 2019 programme.

Aim of The Freedom Programme.

The Freedom Programme is a support group designed for women who are, or have been experiencing domestic abuse. The Freedom Programme is designed as an intervention to empower women to make positive choices about their lives by providing information and support within a group setting. It gives women an opportunity and space to develop ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves and their children from harm.

The aims of The Freedom Programme are:

- To help women understand the beliefs held by abusive men and in doing so, recognise which of these beliefs they have shared
- To illustrate the effects of domestic abuse on children
- To assist women to recognise potential future abusers
- To help women gain self-esteem and the confidence to improve the quality of their lives
- To introduce women to other women who share similar experiences

The Freedom Programme comprises 11, 90 minute sessions held weekly and run by a qualified facilitator. Resources and refreshments are provided for the women and whenever possible, childcare.

The Freedom Programme was developed in the UK by Pat Craven who works in the area of domestic abuse.

Evaluation Methodology

The information was collated using client questionnaires with qualitative and quantitative questions.

Process

- The client questionnaires were given out at the end of the 9th session.
- Participants were told there was no obligation to complete the forms.
- Participants were given the option of taking the questionnaire away and dropping it back to me at the office or completing there and then.

Response Rate

There were 2 women who attended 10 out of the 11 sessions. There were 2 women who attended 8 and 7 sessions respectively. The above 4 women completed a feedback form (questionnaire). They successfully completed the Freedom Programme and were issued a Certificate.

There was 1 woman who attended 6 sessions and who did not complete a feedback form however she was issued a Certificate as she had successfully completed the Freedom Programme.

They were also 4 women who although they attended 2 or 3 sessions at the beginning of the programme, they did not attend any following sessions and therefore they did not successfully complete the Freedom Programme. The women did not attend for reasons including being unwell, children being unwell, and having other appointments to attend.

Please note the participants are required to attend minimum 6 sessions for a successful completion of the Programme and in order to be able to have a Certificate.

Main findings

The analysis was very positive. The main quantitative findings are outlined below.

- 100% of participants said The Freedom Programme had a positive impact on their lives.
- 100% of participants rated The Freedom Programme as very helpful.

Because of their participation in The Freedom Programme:

- 100% strongly agreed, the programme has resulted in a positive change in their lives
- 100% strongly agreed, they are now more hopeful about the future
- 100% strongly agreed, they were more assertive
- 100% strongly agreed, they were more confident.
- 100% strongly agreed, they no longer blame themselves for their abuser's behaviour
- 100% strongly agreed, they can now make more sense of their abuser's behaviour
- 100% strongly agreed, they now feel less alone in their experience of domestic abuse.
- 100% strongly agreed, they benefitted from meeting other women on the programme
- 100% strongly agreed, they now expect to be respected
- 100% strongly agreed, they can now recognise and identify abusive behaviour.
- 75% strongly agreed and 25% agreed, they feel they have the ability to respond to abusive behaviour
- 100% strongly agreed, they could now recognise an unhealthy relationship.
- 100% strongly agreed, that they understood more about the impact of Domestic Abuse on Children.

Detailed Analysis

Overall impact of The Freedom Programme

The overall impact was very positive with 100% of those who completed the questionnaire saying that The Freedom Programme had a positive impact on their lives.

What were the impacts of The Freedom Programme?

- “Helped me realise the different types of abuse and how they affect us and our children’s lives. I loved the fact that were presented to us about how abuse impacts women’s rights”
- “Increases Confidence, empowerment and honesty”.

Overall rating of the usefulness of the programme by participants

100% of course participants listed the programme as very helpful.

Why?

- “It’s a great way to understand that I am not alone and abuse is a real thing, I didn’t just imagine it. I felt I was not alone anymore”
- “Because they teach me many things that I didn’t know before, they teach me and support me”
- “Gave me more awareness and knowledge”.

Which session did you find most useful?

Participants were asked which of the 11 sessions they found most useful and why.

- “The Headworker and the Jailer because that’s the type of abuse my ex-partner is”
- “All of them, mostly the King of the Castle and the Jailer”
- “Every session”
- “Every session”.

Which session did you find least useful?

- “None”
- “All were great!”
- “All were good”
- “None. I enjoyed every session thoroughly”.

Other suggestions/feedback

Participants were asked for any other comments or feedback.

- “Sharon and Anthi were lovely. Please continue doing this programme. It is absolutely amazing for women who decide to join us”

- “This programme is so useful for women who experience domestic violence. It’s like having free space for myself. I feel I can talk freely and be more open. This programme is so therapeutic. The option to have childcare is such a relief for mothers like myself. So “thank you” for helping women like myself. <3 <3”
- “Women who have completed the Freedom programme to come back and do talks or one to one with the new women in the future to give support on their journey”
- “N/A”.

Conclusion

This evaluation of The Freedom Programme, is extremely positive. The programme had a deep resonance with participants and had very positive impacts on their lives. The group nature of the programme was key to its success, and friendships were formed amongst all of the women who had previously not known each other.

There was no obligation for anyone to talk about their own situations and the programme is designed so that, that is not necessary. However, all the women choose to share their experiences with each other and supported each other accordingly.

The programme is, of course, serious, but there are also lots of opportunities for the women to laugh and have fun, especially when the programme content requires the women to talk in the voice of the abuser!

We had a tea break half way through each session where tea, coffee and biscuits are offered. The last session was a celebratory occasion and all the women brought in food to share and there was a celebration cake. The women were given their certificates of completion and attendance and each in turn spoke about what they will take away from the programme. Group photos were taken, and everyone spoke about how proud they were of their achievement to have a Freedom Programme Certificate!

The free creche facility was vital for the women who attended the programme. Most of the women did not have anyone else they could leave their children with and without child care, would not have been able to attend. Those women expressed also how it gave them some 'me' time, to be themselves, talk freely and be more open without having to worry about their child.

The suggestions and feedback in this evaluation are very useful when planning any future programmes. It was very rewarding to hear from the women that they found the programme therapeutic and that they enjoyed it thoroughly.

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