



Freedom Together

Together we can make a difference

SPRING PARK FREEDOM PROGRAMME REPORT AUGUST 2013

Funded by the Central Collaboration of Children Centres- CROYDON

Collaboration of Spring Park Primary School Shirley providing: Co-Facilitator -Mary Glover & Childcare

Group Facilitator: Freedom Together- Lou Moultrie

Posters are situated in the Croydon community; local schools, nurseries, FJC, Janette Wallis House, Medical Centres, Victim Support Offices and South London Rape Crisis (RASASC). There is also a web site for the Freedom Programme where the facilitators' details are currently available. Information was also sent out by email to local services and professionals working with vulnerable adults and children

Spring Park Freedom Programme Group

Start date: 1/5/13

End date: 24/7/13

48 Women registered

28 Women attended the group

116 Number of children within the families who registered

27 Number of children who were offered crèche places

244 Individual sessions completed

Update from previous FP January Oasis Group- Four women went on to support and work with their own children with the VVV- Values Versus Violence work, using their various educational journals. I do not have a follow up from the results of their progress as yet.

Freedom Together managed to recruit a volunteer from the May group, This lady has worked with Freedom Together during training days and the Spring Park Freedom Programme, She has been a great support addition, a welcoming added face to the Programme. She has gained in confidence and smiles!!!! This lady now has a reference to put on her CV and is more confident to approach other agencies for work experience. A year before her children were all on Child Protection Plan's, she has since managed to have her children removed from the plan due to all her growth and hard work she has achieved. She is unrecognisable from when she attended the first group, barely looking up when speaking; now she is vibrant, encouraging and optimistic about her future. A huge achievement for her, well done lady!!!

Spring Park Primary School was the set venue for the Freedom Programme, they generously provided a lovely welcoming room/hall in their school and as always the fantastic Co-facilitator Mary Glover. Spring Park also sourced 4 childcare staff and volunteers which provided fantastic crèche facilities for our under 5's. The reception staff played a crucial part of the women feeling welcomed once entering the school. Having this larger venue allowed the Programme to double its intake, which was fabulous news to all the ladies on the waiting list and walk ins.

The response was remarkable 48 women registered and 28 women at various times attended sessions. The funders, '**Central Collaboration Children Centres**' kindly agreed to open the referrals to all women once the first 20 places were taken from the catchment, this was only possible due to the use of the larger school venue. Women that would not have had the opportunity to attend due to their postcode were welcomed to join.

As predicted some women only came when they had a safe opportunity to attend, this is the nature of these groups, all women are welcomed through the doors every session. There was a core of 16-19 women who attended the course regularly; this was exceptional to see the commitment and attendance in such a large group.

There has been no added advertisement for the FP groups yet referrals have continued to stream in. The need for DV groups is becoming more apparent with the figures rising for each term.

The number of women referred from 'social services' are rapidly rising due to meeting criteria on the children's CPP's. We managed to keep many of these ladies with astounding results to personal growth and additional confidence in their parenting skills.

All Spring Park staff were welcoming to all our ladies that entered their premises, the women felt the Spring Park primary School was a safe venue. Most women travelled by public transport, there are several bus routes that stop directly outside the school. Women who came by car had adequate free parking in all surrounding roads.

The Central Collaboration of Children Centre's provided open links to their own Key workers and support staff which were on hand at anytime for the women and families. On one occasion Freedom Together were able to collaborate and address concerns for a family's safety and well-being. The mum was contacted by the FEP team and additional support was available to the family. Measures were put in place by Oasis FEP swiftly. Amazing work!!!

From the very onset of the course all women were given information and support regarding safety and the potential danger for anyone in abusive relationship. Safety plans, check lists and local support agency and emergency numbers were available for every woman throughout the programme.

Local Agencies and progression-All women felt more confident to use outside agencies for support and were pleased to have agencies come to them. Most women want the opportunity to continue their growth and have gone on to self refer onto counselling and support services. These services were invaluable to the continued growth after the programme. The majority of women went on to self refer to attend Encounter Freedom Programme which will start in September 2013 a fantastic progression in their recovery and growth. Other women went onto contact agencies to seek counselling, support and advice or go onto train for volunteer roles. Eighteen out of twenty women signed up to work on the (VVV), Values Versus Violence family journals with their children.

*The following agencies provided information and services to our women. **A huge Thank you to;** South London Rape Crisis, Victim Support, Off the Record, Croydon Home Start, Sanctuary Project, Family Lives, Encounter Freedom and VVV. Together we can make a difference!!!!*

Women's feedback given on 24th July 2013 the last of the twelve sessions.

New Consent forms: 20 consent forms were completed at the end of the twelve week course. This is something Freedom Together wanted to introduce after the last FP to give women more of an opportunity to develop.

19 out of 20 women consented for Freedom Together to evaluate their progress in a years' time. This is a progression for future groups and will help get a realistic overview of the impact of the Freedom Programme on Croydon residents and their families.

20 out of 20 women said they would be interested in joining a Freedom support group on a monthly basis. (Encounter Freedom have a support group so this may be an opportunity to link ideas).

20 out of 20 women said they would be interested in attending future workshops or training in the Borough of Croydon.

20 out of 20 women said they would be interested in being part of a DV Steering Group. (developed within the Borough of Croydon's DV/SV Forum)

20 out of 20 women said they would be interested in meeting up for organised days out.

20 out of 20 women said they would be interested in becoming volunteers for the Freedom Programme

18 out of 20 women said they would like to write about their, journey, thoughts or create poetry as part of the Freedom Programmes survivor/ thriver development.

17 out of 20 women said they would like to attend a second Freedom Programme if available

We asked twenty women who attended the last session: Compared to before attending Freedom, how do you think the course affected you?

| Results from end session | Much Worse | Worse | The Same | Better | Much Better |
|--|------------|-------|----------|--------|-------------|
| Personal safety? | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 13 |
| Knowledge of domestic abuse? | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 15 |
| Knowledge of local services? | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 11 |
| Self-esteem & confidence? | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 11 |
| Understanding of the effects on children? | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 14 |
| Ability to 'spot' potentially abusive behaviour in you? | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 10 |
| Ability to 'spot' potentially abusive behaviour in others? | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 10 |
| Ability to deal with potentially abusive behaviour? | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 11 |

Emerging themes: Again and worryingly we had lots of disclosures from survivors regarding professionals not listening, minimising the violence, judging, blaming and sometimes colluding with perpetrators. A newer theme emerging is the feeling of being blamed and judged by their social workers for putting themselves in abusive relationships and situations. The women often felt they were judged as being 'bad mothers' and found it difficult to relay the real severity of their situations. Women felt some professionals needed more understanding and knowledge of how perpetrators manipulate their decisions by stalking, threats and pester power.

Availability of course – 100% of the ladies want to see this available throughout the borough to survivors, professionals, in schools and within the community.

Blame – Eighteen women said they felt they were to blame for their situation before attending the group, two did not comment. At the end of the course seventeen women now felt it was not their behaviour that was to blame for the abuse, it was the perpetrators. Two felt they had been abusive/ aggressive in their relationships and one did not comment.

Children – 92% of the mothers felt the course had made them better parents. They said their knowledge gained from the programme is having a positive impact on their children's lives. A high percentage of women now felt able and willing to seek support from local agencies without feeling judged as 'bad mothers'. Unfortunately they also felt there is a lack of children's counselling/support services in the borough.

Emotional aspects – 95% of women said they were positively affected by attending the course, 85% feeling really positive about their future and their choices. Some felt the sessions were challenging but also felt they had gained insight into abusive relationships and the affects upon themselves and their children.

Facilitators – 100% of the women felt the facilitators were either good or excellent and gave lots of thanks and praise throughout.

Group Aspects – This group was much larger than usual Programmes, having an average of eighteen women attend weekly. Unexpectedly the women spoke of feeling more comfortable in a large group as they didn't feel in the spot light. Some spoke of smaller groups feeling too intense. This may not be the case for the women who only attended one or two sessions and did not return, these ladies may have felt the opposite and overwhelmed by the group's size.

The importance of meeting other women in similar situations was highlighted by many women in the group. A significant amount of women spoke of feeling accepted and able to speak freely or not to speak if they chose. One woman fed back of feeling unable of speak freely about how she felt due to not having the space in the group, I am slightly in agreement with her as due to the number of women attending time management was imperative. Opportunities for one person to go into significant depth had to be balanced carefully and may have felt too constricting. The majority of the group exchanged numbers from early on in the course and have met and supported and spoken about continuing their support for each other into the future. The women gave suggestions, advice and comfort to each other throughout the course. Some I feel have also gained good friends.

Learning – All felt that it has been benefit learning about abusive and controlling behaviour and their knowledge had helped them understand what was happening in their own relationships. Many spoke of how challenging the 'effects on children' and 'sexual violence' sessions were. Some spoke of how they can push away non-abusive partners through lack of insight and knowledge into healthy relationships. All women were encouraged to seek additional support, counselling or join support groups to continue their growth. Nearly all women have enrolled with outside local agencies to continue their growth. 80% would like this programme available in family centres/ clinics.

Self Awareness – A third of the women in this group recognised signs of abuse in their own behaviour and all felt they have went on to take positive steps to change. Upon attending the programme many of the women commented on feeling they were 'bad mothers' and to blame for the violence they had suffered however after attending the course they spoke of realising and feeling good about how resilient and courageous they have been. They now felt confident and 'good enough mums'. One mother felt anxious as she recognised that her adult son had taken the traits from his Dominator father, she is now determined to try and get additional support but is also distressed at the long term and ongoing effects on her family. She felt there was little support for her to work with her adult son such as mediation. She felt there are no groups for young male perpetrators not in the system – he is currently dominating his partners and his mother.

Practical aspects/ Crèche – There were no suggestions for changes in the venue building. Comments such as 'it's perfect and very comfortable' were made. A few ladies commented how the reception was particularly welcoming and friendly. Many women spoke highly of the crèche staff and how their children had really enjoyed coming every week. The mums commented how nice it was for them to feel their children were happy and it made attending the group less stressful all-round. One mother became very attached to one worker and would not allow anyone else to take care of her child, mum was quite unhappy when the member of childcare was off sick. (A note for Freedom Together to save any disappointment or anxiety to mums, explain clearly crèche workers will be taking care of all the children collectively and not on a one to one basis).

Strength – Most women referred to becoming stronger more confident and believing in themselves. Over a third of the women spoke of wanting to volunteer, coach, study, train and work in the community.

Suggestions –No suggestions were made for improvements in the delivery or material in the sessions however some ideas follow: Friday and weekend groups. Request for hand outs on each session, (after the evaluation all ladies received a book which covered the whole programme). Follow on support groups and organised days out for the group members.

Recommendation – **100%** of women said they would recommend the Freedom Programme to a friend. A large number the women whom attended wanted to be put on a waiting list to return for any future groups, they spoke of wanting to continue their own personal growth.

Results – Over the duration of the programme some women were attending court cases related to the abuser such as child contact, assaults, and child abuse. Many women spoke of the course helping them move forward and becoming more confident when dealing with ex-partners and especially when making statements to police or attending court. They felt more able to put a name to the various types of abuse they had suffered. These women often felt abusers manipulated professionals and often felt confused, judged and to blame for the situation by professionals. There were approximately 25% of ladies in current abusive relationships or had ex-partners currently harassing them. They could spot the tactics the abuser was using to control them (even in court) and they were more confident to tell the full extent of the abuse to the courts and to their families. The women were honest about the many variations of abuse suffered. Many tactics had led these ladies to be in the criminal justice system themselves, through control in their relationships such as prostitution, violence and drug trafficking offences. 100% of the woman felt they would recommend the Freedom Programme to a friend.

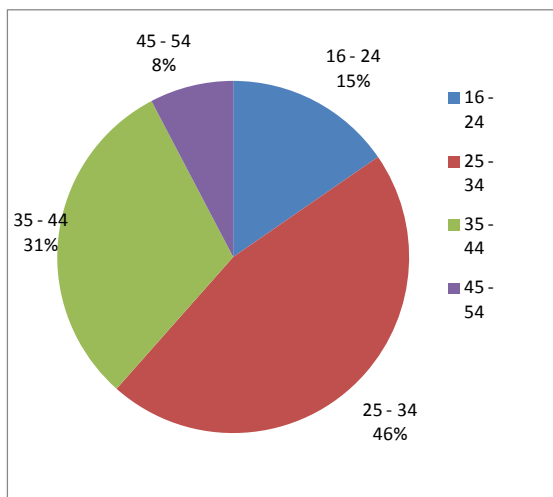
Books- Thanks to the Central Collaboration of Children Centres, every woman who attended the last session received a Freedom programme, ‘Living with the Dominator’ book and those women who completed all twelve sessions received an additional book highlighting the effects on children, ‘Freedom Flowers.’ The women were delighted!!!

Client information gathered from completed diversity forms

All clients completed a diversity forms however the information may not always be accurate.

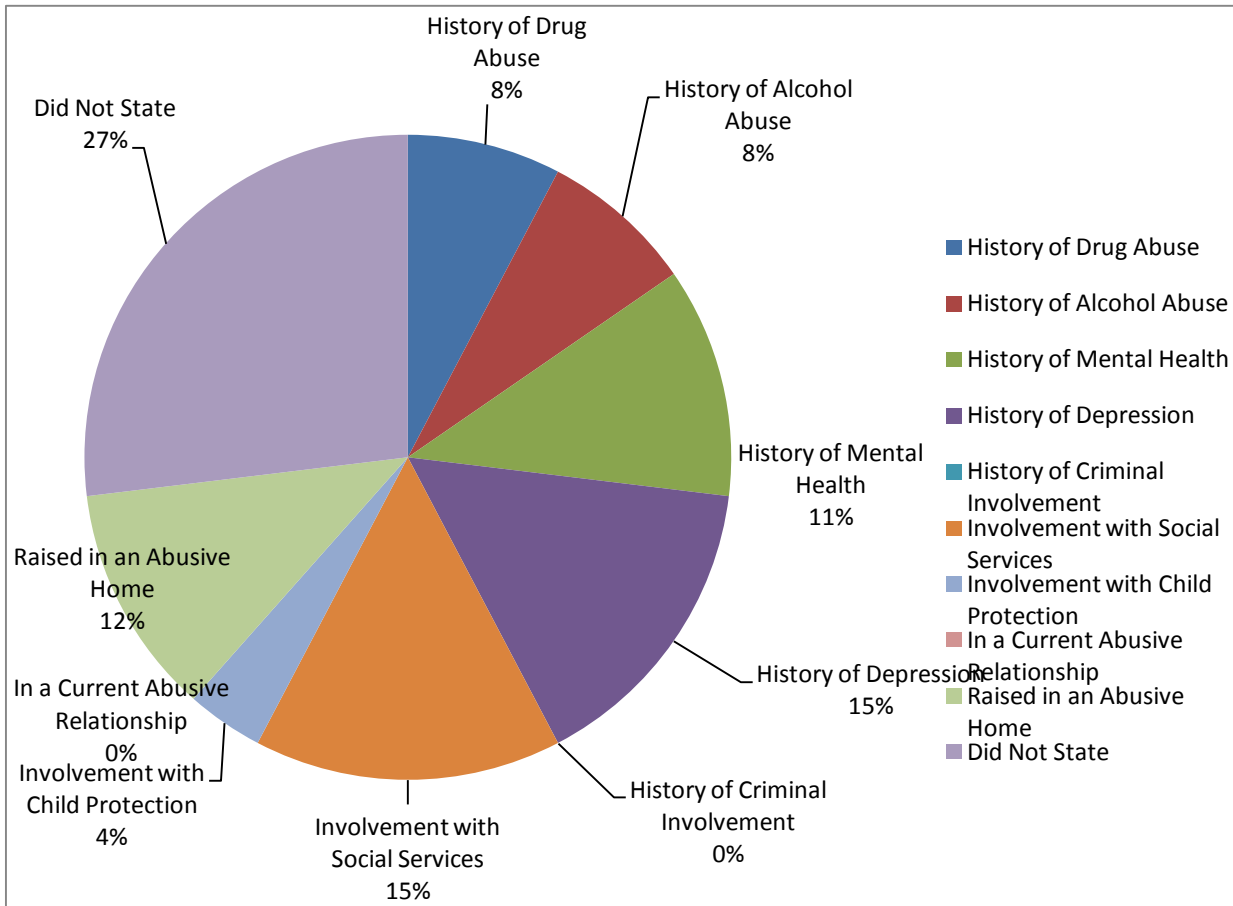
No women divulged any criminal involvement, yet during the 12 week programme four women disclosed criminal convictions, ranging from theft, soliciting and drug trafficking. The same for the question 'Are you currently in an abusive relationship? Not one woman disclosed on the forms yet during the group over a

quarter of the women were currently with perpetrators or being stalked or harassed by their partners. It is never easy to gain accurate statistics. This is the nature of Domestic Abuse – Hidden! We only ever know what people feel safe enough to tell us.



AGE OF WOMEN

HISTORY



Ethnic Origin:

Black African- 21%
 White British-50%
 Black Caribbean- 22%
 Any other White background-7%
 Other named ethnicities-0%

Religious Beliefs:

Athiest-7%
 Christian-57%
 Muslim-7%
 No religion-14%
 Prefer not to state-14%
 Other named religious beliefs-0%

Receiving Benefits:

Yes-46%
 No-39%
 Did not state-15%

Disability:

Disabilities - 7%
 No disabilities- 86%
 Did not state –7%

Sexuality:

Bisexual-7%
 Hetrosexual-72%
 Gay woman Lesbian -0%
 Prefer not to state-21%

Women's Feedback!!!

What tools or skills will you take from this programme?

- ✓ Staying positive and having confidence. Still being a good parent to my son- knowledge.
- ✓ Happiness and friends and meet someone to bring me positive things in life.
- ✓ I don't know how to achieve this but my son is a dominator- I want to learn how to help him and help my future.
- ✓ AWARENESS
- ✓ Therapy, government, other survivors.
- ✓ Exercise and mediation, time for myself, forgiveness (hate doesn't make my future a success), I can't forget but I accept.
- ✓ Knowledge/ support/ love/ understanding/ to keep fighting.
- ✓ Support groups, talking to other women. Understanding manipulation, felt emotions, listening to others.
- ✓ I want to change my life completely get my kids back, get a job and gain more confidence.
- ✓ Support groups, be kind to myself, read books of self help and DV.
- ✓ Look for all the signs I have learnt in the freedom project in future relationships.
- ✓ My professional, academic and personal skills
- ✓ Knowledge, assertive, smarter, confidence, objective, enthusiastic.
- ✓ Controlling my own future towards abusive partners and make my own world
- ✓ Happiness love for myself and others.
- ✓ Conquer my career, prospects, training, self educating, and choices career.

What would you like to DUMP in a bin since attending this course?

- Guilt
- Hate and Pain
- Social worker/ social services. Guilt and MY PAST
- I would love to get social services off my back and get my children back. I would love to get rid of all the bad things that happened- Guilt
- Everyone who has hurt me in my life, all my family except my kids.
- The word Cunt- abusive marriage- negative thoughts- depression
- My guilt about my children
- Not good enough court system 'closed'-current
- I HATE HIM. The guilt has gone
- My Ex
- PAIN DISAPPEAR. The word 'cunt'. My nan, isolation, my family beliefs, violence. GUILT, it's my fault.
- Hate and pain that I felt for myself
- Police/ Justice System/ My own violence
- Social Workers
- ***** ,ex -husband's name, his family. Bad feelings- the blame. Depression, men, destructive behaviour
- MY EX THE FOOL

What will you take with you in your heart from this programme/
group?

- ✓ Love...Kindness....Decent people
- ✓ Love for myself and my son. Mine and my son's future. My gorgeous little boy ***.
- ✓ To challenge current court process, to raise awareness and bring to light personality factors related to perpetrators through mapping with personality disorders
- ✓ My children-My future-Myself respect
- ✓ Love, patients, generosity, sympathetic, tolerance, listening, friends.
- ✓ Myself, my children, life, safety and my family.
- ✓ Love and regret
- ✓ Love 4 my family, give them things that they deserve.
- ✓ Children my happiness and confidence.
- ✓ Love for myself and my kids. Respect.
- ✓ My children, my home and my hair.
- ✓ My children. My mum. My sister. My nieces. Myself.
- ✓ 1. Knowledge, 2. Sharing experiences with other victims and justice of my feelings its right for me,3. Effects of D.V. 4.Power to go away from abusive relationships. 5. Look after yourself and make a choice.
- ✓ My kiddies unconditional LOVE. JOY ***** and***** (names of children)
- ✓ Support myself and my children better. My home is safe
- ✓ Believing my experiences, I can change, feeling love, be myself, Acceptance

Your personal comments about the programme please be honest about
what you have gained or felt about the course:

- Knowledge I'm not alone. Knowledge incidents occur many times before police are called. Confidence to look after myself, not just the children. I left after 18 years of marriage.
- I have gained confidence, knowledge, strength, a bit more self esteem, understanding
- Ability to identify dominators behaviour for any future relationships and in other couples. I no longer wish to belong to anyone else ever again and do not think I will get involved in another relationship.
- I feel I have gained confidence and have become a stronger person.
- I have gained knowledge, confidence, self esteem, strength, courage, power, happiness, peace, harmony, and understanding.
- One of the most valuable programmes I have had the pleasure of being part of my life.
- I have gained so much from the course the effects children have and yourself. How a dominator can change you without you realising the tactics, you would never notice. The emotional feelings your children go through.
- Knowledge-not being alone-a better future.
- Mary and Lou have been excellent- very compassionate, I have observed the girls, how they have grown in strength to confidence. The girls can have eye contact when talking but in the beginning of the course this was not the case for many of us. So in all because of Lou and Marys great knowledge we have all benefited from the great time and effort they have taught us. The girls body behaviours, their walk, their talk and most important as I have mentioned above strength and it is so good to see the girls happy and laughing- so a big Thank you. (this lady was one of the girls).
- I have gained a lot from freedom programme just learned not to blame myself anymore and how I am a good mum to my son. How to protect me and my son and learning the signs, also made me a confident person.

- This course has taught me that I'm not alone and I'm not to blame.
- It has given me confidence in myself to enable me to keep safe in an abusive relationship and to recognise the signs of impending abuse. I can accept that that the abuse is NOT MY FAULT IT IS HIS and to keep me and my family safe.
- I have gained so much confidence that in September I am starting a training course.
- Excellent for me and my babies' future!
- Perhaps inclusion of a 'checkin's' at the start of the session where members can voluntarily share any thoughts/feelings as there appeared to be a need for people to share personal information- to manage group sharing, seemed that quieter individuals had more difficulty sharing in the groups when others were talking.
- Knowledge, wisdom- all the above been an amazing journey in the world of discovery. I could not identify so much but now I can see through. I would like to go on the second round(to get more knowledge. It's been so helpful thanks everyone-smiley face xx
- Interesting, emotional, awareness, strength, understanding, dealing and healing with past and present and being strong enough to leave..... Dangerous, controlling, abusive situations or circumstances. Get my children to a place of safety. Be able to spot the signs of aggression abuse intimidation control, and then find a way to leave.
- It's really been hard because I was in the relationships for such a long time but I can see in the group that if you leave earlier in the relationship, when the children are young- you have the best chance of a better future.
- I think this group is brill I have found a way to finally get rid and find strength to get out of my relationship thanks Lou and Mary
- This course has changed my way of thinking and my future it is supportive, comforting and I have met great women. I think the way the course is run is fantastic it teaches practical facts and although it's painful to hear it's strengthening and with all the other girls it brings us together and out of ourselves. It's the best thing I've ever taken part in and completed.
- This has been amazing as I now feel I am me again. I no longer feel worthless or need to be in company
- I think I was abusive when I was with my partner; I'm not that person anymore.
- I have learnt a hell of a lot on this programme. Thanx for letting me on this course.
- This project has put me back in touch with who i am and what i would like in my life and where i want to be.
- I am positive in learning, to trust my own feelings and im happy to be on my own until the normal man comes along. Thanks so much for the project.
- Thank you so much this group gave me back my confidence and i no longer feel guilty and blame myself thank you xxx
- The FP has given me so much confidence and knowledge and living with a dominator and Has given me valuable coping mechanism. It has freed my mind soul and made me value my life xxx (heart and smiley face)
- I wished that every woman that has been through bad expediencies they could be on one of this freedom course. I think that really helps to identify the tactics really really good. I suggest to anybody in the same situation.
- The freedom project to not blame myself for what me and my children have been through. It has made everything in my relationship with the dominator make sense. It has been very difficult to listen to many of the tactics and effects but i have felt safe, un-judged and comfortable by everyone in the group. I have got so much stronger and have more belief in myself and who I am. as emotional as it has been , I don't feel so traumatised or alone in the world. Thanks so much to Lou and Mary and everyone who has gone on this journey too. I now feel free and ready to move on.
- I came to the freedom programme blaming myself for all that has happened to me and my family. Since coming here i have learnt so much and come to terms with ever thing I now know I wasn't to blame. It was him he hurt us. One session in particular which I found really hard to stay through, it

ended up giving me the strength to do a statement to the police as first time in seven years i stopped blaming myself, so thank you.

- I have learnt to start liking myself from being on this programme. I have stopped blaming myself which has helped me to become less guilty and anxious. I feel so privileged to have been referred for this programme as I know it has changed my life. I think a lot of professionals should have the opportunity to go on this programme as it would benefit them.
- Good detailed information provided. It would be helpful to be provided with literature to take away on each character at the end of each session.

End of Report.

'Freedom Together' would like to say a special THANK YOU to Croydon's Central Collaboration of Children Centres and Spring Park Primary School for your endless belief, support and funding towards helping END VIOLENCE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN.