



Respect Statement The Freedom Programme for Men

The Freedom Programme is primarily and originally a programme for female survivors of domestic violence. An adapted version of this programme is now offered for men. According to the official Freedom Programme website (www.freedomprogramme.co.uk) this is for men “who want to learn more about relationships”.

Pat Craven, the author of both programmes, runs the Freedom Programme for Men over the course of a weekend single handed. The manual, which she wrote, is also available for sale and so the programme may be delivered by others. Various organisations are considering running or are already running the programme as a programme for working with men who have abused their female partners and ex-partners. Many of these organisations are unclear about the purpose, status and functions of the Freedom Programme for Men. They believe that it is an appropriate and effective response to perpetrators of domestic violence and that it constitutes a perpetrator programme. Respect has therefore prepared this statement about the nature and status of the Freedom Programme for Men.

Respect staff have consulted Pat Craven about the programme and given her the opportunity to respond to this position paper. They have also read the manual, watched the accompanying DVD, and reviewed the material on the website.

The Freedom Programme for Men is not a perpetrator programme

The Freedom Programme for Men is emphatically described by Pat Craven as **NOT** a perpetrator programme. The website also states that the programme is not specifically for perpetrators of domestic violence and there are no aims on the website about changing abusive behaviour. However, the manual does state that the primary aim is “to provide an opportunity for men to change both their abusive behaviour and the beliefs which underpin it” and that the target group is “all men who wish to reduce their level of danger to women and children”. This apparent contradiction is contributing to the confusion about the purposes of the programme amongst some practitioners and policy makers. The purposes, aims and target client group need to be clarified in all documents and materials to help practitioners and policy makers make informed decisions about appropriate safe interventions with perpetrators of domestic violence.

The Freedom Programme for Men does not meet key requirements of the Respect Standard

The Freedom Programme as described in the manual and website, would not pass Respect Accreditation as it does not fulfil the requirements of the Standard in the following key ways:

- The primary aims do not include increasing the safety of women and children.



MEN & WOMEN WORKING TOGETHER TO
END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- There is no integrated support service for partners and ex-partners of men on the programme, which is a pre-requirement for applying for assessment and a crucial aspect of a perpetrator programme.
- There is no risk assessment, monitoring or management described in the manual or website. Organisations are not provided with any guidance about the use of evidence based risk assessment tools or risk factors. There is no guidance or information about the increased risk of violence from a significant minority of men during the first three months after starting a programme.
- There is no assessment of programme suitability or client needs.
- There is no case work management.
- There is no system of reviewing the facilitation of the groups to ensure the delivery is meeting programme aims and no supervision of staff.
- There is no system of monitoring the safety of partners and ex-partners or children, or gathering systematic data from them about the impact of the programme on their partner's actual behaviour.
- The model of work describes the programme as taking place over one single weekend, which does not meet the criteria for length of programme.
- Men can only attend the programme if their female partner or ex-partner has attended the Freedom Programme for women. This means that the woman is responsible for her partner's participation in the programme, which contradicts the Standard and does not fulfil the requirement for partner contact. Whilst partner contact must be proactive, it is not compulsory for women and is not about re-educating women but informing them about the programme work with men, ensuring that they have safety plans and access to information about support and legal rights and monitoring their safety during and after their partner or ex-partner participates in the programme.
- There is no mention in the website or manual of the programme being part of a coordinated community response with adequate working links to police, social services, women's services etc. Organisations setting up or running the Freedom Programme for Men do not appear to be making these links.
- The website states that the programme is open to gay men but the materials are not adapted for use with gay men. Gay men's partners are not required to attend the Freedom Programme for women as a condition of the abusive partner's participation, unlike female partners.
- The welfare of the children affected by the violence and abusive behaviour of the men attending the freedom programme is not assessed.

Evaluations

The feedback provided on the Freedom Programme website is limited and could not be described as evaluation. One document describes indicators of the limitations of the programme which do not appear to have been taken into account.

Respect does not consider the Freedom Programme to be a perpetrator programme and, therefore, would not refer clients using the Respect Phonenumber to it. For more information about Respect and the Respect Standards please visit the Respect website: www.respect.uk.net Statement - April 2008.