

An evaluation of The  
Freedom Programme;  
A prison support  
programme for women  
who have experienced  
domestic violence

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## **1. Acknowledgements**

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## **2. Abstract**

This research evaluated The Freedom Programme; a group work support programme for women in prison. Three research questions were addressed: Does The Freedom Programme help women to develop ways of thinking and behaving that protect themselves, their children and others from harm; is The Freedom Programme of equal value for BME women, lesbian women etc as it is for white heterosexual women; and to what extent do women value the process of being able to discuss, share and explore issues with other women whilst attending The Freedom Programme? The research questions were addressed through 14 interviews with women who attended the programme, four interviews with programme facilitators and observation of two sessions. Analysis of the interviews and participant observation revealed that The Freedom Programme had a number of limitations which resulted in recommendations to address them. Women generally found the programme enjoyable, liked the opportunity to discuss their experiences with other women and felt that they had learned about warning signs which would prevent future abusive relationships. Some of the problematic issues were: the course raised awareness of domestic violence issues which was not in line with the official programme aims, there was a lack of support outside of sessions, resettlement issues were not addressed, there were issues with the processes of the programme including staff training, use of male facilitators and selection of women and diversity issues were not addressed. Conclusions and limitations of the research are discussed.

### **3. Introduction**

This Griffins Society Fellowship research project will evaluate the effectiveness of The Freedom Programme. The Freedom Programme is a support programme for victims of domestic violence and has also been adapted and used with male perpetrators. The programme currently runs in prisons and in community settings although the current study will focus on the effectiveness of the programme in prison. It is the only support programme available in the UK for women in prison who have experienced domestic violence. The programme evolved from the work of Pat Craven who developed the programme following her work as a probation officer working with perpetrators of domestic violence.

This research is important as at present there have been limited structured evaluations of the programme. Offending behaviour programmes in prison have received extensive academic attention and evaluation, whereas support programmes have invoked lesser interest. A significant finding of the 'what works' literature has been that doing 'something' is not to be considered to be better than doing 'nothing' (Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau and Cullen 1990a). Although the 'what works' literature is related to preventing re-offending I believe that it should translate to any work with offenders. Particularly on the sensitive issue of supporting women who have experienced domestic violence, it is important to acknowledge that doing 'something' could be worse than doing 'nothing' if it opens up difficult emotional experiences in an environment where isolation and lack of social support are common. Opening up difficult emotional experiences in prison needs to be managed sensitively to prevent any serious adverse responses, which may include self harm or suicidal thoughts (Scott 2004).

This research will bring significant insight into the effectiveness of this support programme in women's prisons. The research will also add to the limited academic field on the effectiveness of support programmes for women in prison. The findings will help service commissioners to understand the complications of providing support for domestic violence in prison. The Corston Report (Home Office 2007) recommended that the eighth resettlement pathway proposed for women - 'support for women who have been abused, raped or who have experienced domestic violence' - should be implemented in all areas. The result of this recommendation, which has been accepted by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), is that all areas need to consider how and what support services they provide for women who have experienced domestic violence. This study will help to contribute to the understanding of the strengths and limitations of The Freedom Programme.

The aim of The Freedom Programme is:

- ⌚ To provide an opportunity for women to develop ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves, their children and others from harm. To provide them with the knowledge they need to achieve this.

It also has the following objectives:

- ⌚ To increase women's ability to take control of their lives
- ⌚ To increase women's perception of the importance of, and ability to, make positive use of social provisions to increase employability and/or achieve economic independence
- ⌚ To help women to recognise the beliefs held by abusive men
- ⌚ To recognise the impact of their life experience on their own attitudes and beliefs
- ⌚ To increase women's ability to recognise what steps they need to take to protect their children (The Freedom Programme Manual 2007:3)

This research will evaluate the effectiveness of the programme by addressing the following research questions:

1. Does The Freedom Programme help women to develop ways of thinking and behaving that protect themselves, their children and others from harm?
2. Is The Freedom Programme of equal value for BME women, lesbian women etc as it is for white heterosexual women?
3. To what extent do women value the process of being able to discuss, share and explore issues with other women whilst attending The Freedom Programme?

By interviewing women who have attended the programme, interviewing programme facilitators and observing programme sessions, I hope this research will add to the significant field of literature on domestic violence. Much research has considered the aetiology of domestic violence (Hoyle 2007). There has been limited work on the effectiveness of support services for women.

My career to date has mainly involved working with male offenders to address their offending behaviour. I have four years experience in delivering cognitive behavioural group work.

In this section I have given a brief overview of the programme and what I hope to achieve with this research. In the next section I will briefly review the main literature on the effects of domestic violence on women.

## **4. Literature review**

Domestic violence is a complex problem that attracts a consistent level of interest from a number of organisations among others academics, practitioners, charities and the government. These interests are important to continue the work to reduce domestic violence and support those affected by it. Each organisation tends to establish its own definition of domestic violence. These usually relate to the work that they do with those involved. Useful definitions contain reference to the effects of the abuse, whether emotional or physical. In this literature review I will use the term 'domestic violence' which assumes all forms of physical violence and emotional abuse.

The Domestic Violence Intervention Project (DVIP) defines domestic violence as "the systematic use of violence and abuse to gain power over and to control a partner or ex-partner" (DVIP 2009). This definition focuses on violence between partners. Its strength is that it is clear and is inclusive of violence perpetrated by men and women. The Home Office have a similar definition: "any violence between current and former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever the violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse" (Home Office 2009). An advantage of the Home Office definition is that it explains the type of violence that may occur and recognises that violence might not only take place in a domestic setting.

### **Domestic violence – The problem**

The British Crime Survey (BCS) 2008/9 reported that domestic violence accounted for one in seven incidents (14 per cent) recorded as violent crime (Home Office 2009). Domestic violence is the only category of violence where the risk is higher for women than for men; in 77 per cent of domestic violence incidents women were the victims. These data revealed that domestic violence accounts for a significant proportion of all violent crime and women are mainly the victims.

The BCS (2008/9) recorded that 83 per cent of stranger violent incidents involved men. The survey showed that in general, incidents of violence against women are very different; 31 per cent of the violence was domestic violence therefore between known individuals. Violent incidents against women are generally committed behind closed doors which make them very different experiences to 'typical' male encounters of violence.

Domestic violence is an area where official statistics are likely to be an underestimate of the true number of incidents occurring (Walby and Allen 2004). Mooney (1999) reported that between one half and one third of women will tell nobody when they first experience domestic violence and the average disclosure period is between one and two years. This finding suggests that official statistics are unlikely to give an accurate



indication of the prevalence of domestic violence. There are a number of reasons why domestic violence is not reported; fear of repeat victimisation, not wanting to break up the family home, lack of understanding about the inappropriate behaviour and not having confidence in the criminal justice system to act on the report of the offence (Wykes and Welsh 2009) are some of these reasons. These issues highlight that domestic violence is a complex problem; one that victims may feel ashamed of and have difficulty dealing with.

Domestic violence is not exclusively perpetrated by men. Mirlees-Black (1999) after reviewing British Crime Survey data suggested that men and women faced equal domestic violence victimisation, although their experiences of the violence were different. Women were more likely than men to suffer repeat victimisation, to have been injured and to have experienced frightening threats. Dobash and Dobash (2004) interviewed 95 couples about the violence that partners had used against each other. They found considerable differences in the reactions to the violence. Males mainly reported that they were not bothered and some even reported feeling impressed that their partner had been able to respond in that way. These findings suggest that whilst domestic violence is perpetrated by both sexes women may have greater support needs, perhaps because they are more likely than men to be seriously affected by it. I suggest that it is important that support processes acknowledge and explore violence that is also perpetrated by women to understand and prevent abuse from either partner.

### **Risk for victimisation and the impact of domestic violence**

Research has sought to discover risk factors for domestic violence. An important part of this investigation is exploring why the violence is perpetrated in the first place. Saunders (1988) proposed an explanation that male violence was to “maintain the hierarchical nature of patriarchal domination to maintain control over women” and explained female violence as self defence (cited in Hoyle 2007). Crime statistics reveal that men commit far more crime, including violent crime than women (BCS 2007/8). Wykes and Welsh argue that it is possible to “see all crime in the same way as a trope of masculinity, it is not so much that men cause crime but crime is both an act and discourse of power” (2009:150). These arguments suggest that domestic violence is perpetrated by men to assert power and control.

Some victimologists suggest differently: Kimmel (2002) states that after looking at over 100 studies, domestic violence was perpetrated equally by both sexes which would not support the position of male dominance as a valid explanation. Renzetti (1992) suggested that motivations for female perpetrators also were power and control. Recent research reminds us that not all perpetrators will have the same personalities, motivations or exhibit the same behaviour (Dutton 1995, Saunders 1996, Gondolf

2002). It is therefore important that cases are assessed individually to direct an appropriate intervention.

Risk factors associated with women being the victims of domestic abuse include: women's passivity, hostility, low self-esteem, alcohol and substance misuse, violence in family background and having more education and income than their intimate partner (National Research Council 1996). Identification of risk factors is important as they can help prevent further violence. Those working with victims need to be skilled in preventing victims blaming themselves for the presence of risk factors. The risk factors identified appear to be psycho-social factors which may increase the risk of domestic violence.

The social surrounding may also be a risk for domestic violence. Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) suggested that those from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to be victimised and their needs are likely to be exacerbated by their poverty. Raphael (2002) has argued that men using violence against women as a form of power and control can further exploit by manipulating vulnerabilities such as poverty. Hoyle (2007) supports this suggestion and proposes that being disadvantaged could further increase power imbalances and put victims in greater need of support. Collins (2008) acknowledges the regularly suggested social causes of domestic violence such as poverty, social isolation etc, but suggests there is a further situational process that needs to take place to cause incidents of violence. This is an important point as many families may live for example in poverty but do not experience violence in the home. A combination of many variables may cause a situation where violence takes place, which is important to be aware of when supporting victims.

Griffiths and Hanmer (2005) suggest that while there are low reporting rates for domestic violence there is a high rate of distress from these incidents. The impact of domestic violence can be wide ranging and in addition to the physical impact of the assault may include: depression, eating and sleeping disorders, self-harming behaviours and low self esteem (Krug et al 2002). Herman (1992) claimed that some of the psychological symptoms of domestic violence are lowered self esteem, guilt, anxiety, shame and substance misuse. It is important to acknowledge that emotional abuse is likely to affect the victim psychologically which may be just as severe as or worse than the effects of physical violence (Herman 1992). These findings highlight the severe impact of domestic violence. Reports of the impact of domestic violence have been based on women who have asked for help (Eaton 1995, Gilfus 1995). It is highly likely that the impact may be worse for those who do not ask for help as they may be experiencing more serious incidents and be too frightened or embarrassed to report.

Research has also explored the impact of domestic violence on children in the home. Eaton (1995) found that children living in a home where domestic violence takes place have been shown to exhibit high levels of aggressive and antisocial behaviour as well as fearful and inhibited behaviours. Eaton cautioned that these findings are from children in shelters where they likely to be highly distressed. Worryingly it has been considered that some children exposed to violence in the home see violence as a useful means of solving conflict (Jaffe, Wolfe and Wilson 1990). Benda and Corwyn (2002) support this and suggest that the family home is increasingly a context where violence is seen to be valued. The wide spread impact of violence in the home should be considered when supporting female victims. Women may have been concerned about the impact of violence on their children but may have not known how to deal with it.

### **Trans-national comparisons**

It is necessary to be aware of the cultural impact of domestic violence when working with victims and perpetrators to help ensure that these are appropriately managed. When considering prison populations it is especially important to be aware of this. Black and minority ethnic (BME) women make up 28 per cent of the women's prison population, which is over three times their representation in the general population (Home Office 2007). BME women's perceptions of domestic violence may differ from those of white women and these differences need to be taken account of when providing support.

Cultural differences impact on the understanding and outcomes of domestic violence. Torres (1991) found that Mexican origin women tend to stay in abusive marriages longer, are more likely to return to their abusive marriage and are likely to report fewer incidents than their non-Latina white counterparts. Eng (1995) found that Asian immigrant women had difficulty acknowledging domestic violence due to feeling ashamed and explained that in Asian culture marital failure is considered to be the fault of the wife. These findings suggest that cultural practices may mean women are less likely to report abuse. Women living in non-native countries appear to suffer additional difficulties. Bhuyan and Senturia (2005) suggested that male perpetrators make take advantage of an illegal immigrant status to increase their power and control. These findings reveal that some ethnic minority women will have extensive support needs. Walby and Allen (2004) suggest that in the UK there is little variation in the prevalence of domestic violence by ethnicity but those from minority groups are less likely to report incidents. There might be a great deal of domestic violence perpetrated on minority groups in the UK that is not known about. These findings further support the need for individualised assessment and support for victims, which should take into account cultural differences.

## **Protective factors**

As well as considering the risks for domestic violence victimisation it is important to consider what factors can protect against the risks. Sullivan and Bybee (1999) considered predictors of re-victimisation for abused women and found that a key predictor was experience of prior abuse. They found that access to resources and social support serve as protective factors against continued abuse. This finding emphasises the need for support to prevent the cycle of re-victimisation. Robinson and Tregidga (2007) reported that the presence of supportive people in a woman's life increases options for protection and safety. Benight, Flores and Tashiro (2001) found that coping self-efficacy is an important predictor of distress following trauma, which suggests that increasing coping self-efficacy could protect against further abuse. These protective factors should be considered when supporting women.

## **Victim's needs**

Although some studies in victimology have been criticised for victim-blaming in domestic violence (Radford and Stanko 1996) they are useful for thinking about the general support needs of victims. Research supports the importance of looking at each case individually when considering the support required. Dunn (2007) stated that victims of very similar crimes may experience the event very differently and as a result will have varied needs. Dunn goes further to suggest that in addition the person's individual characteristics such as their race, gender and culture etc will influence their reaction and may result in them being beyond the reach of support services available. He suggests that not only do the needs of victims need to be individually considered but also what prevents them from accessing services and how services can address that through changes in practice should be a priority. Dunn describes the rights that victims should have, including fair and respectful treatment, compensation, support services and protection from further victimisation.

Historically there has been limited research on the support needs of victims of crime (Newburn 1993). Research by Marandos (1995) which involved a review of 20 studies that looked at the effectiveness of interventions designed to help victims found no reduction in psychological symptoms. She concluded that these studies did not support the effectiveness of short term interventions for victims. This conclusion might suggest that longer term interventions may be more effective in reducing psychological symptoms. Due to a lack of research evidence and the wide range of victim needs it is difficult to draw conclusions.

When considering the effectiveness of interventions for victims it is important to consider the outcomes of the service provision. It has been found that user feedback is an important part of victim service evaluation (Shapland 1993). Dunn (2007) argues

that service providers may often be tempted to look at the user's satisfaction of the service as the sole measure of its effectiveness, but suggests that the outcomes of the provision may be a more valid indicator of effectiveness. This latter method would also help to establish why users might not be able to access the service or leave the service, which would reveal important information for service development.

It is essential that services for victims are evaluated to help improve and develop the provision of support. Without evaluation funding may be directed at inappropriate resources. Evaluation can be risky for service providers as the organisation may not be able complete improvements or recommendations suggested (Dunn 2007). This may be uncomfortable for well established services which may have positive user satisfaction results. Evaluations can also be expensive. Service providers could argue resources could more usefully be directed at service provision. However, without effective evaluation it is impossible to determine the effectiveness of the service or suggest improvements

### **Consulting women about domestic violence support services**

Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter concern has been associated with consulting with victims of domestic violence about the services that they have received. Dunn (2007) wrote that the aim of trying to help victims move on from their difficult experience can deter service providers from asking about experiences of support. Johnson and Benight (2003) found that after asking women about their difficult domestic experiences many reported feeling upset, which was not anticipated by the participant. Hague (2005) in a study found that simply seeking of views of victims of domestic violence sometimes resulted in the re-victimisation of the participant. This was because the approach did not demonstrate empathy. Hague found that participation of abused women in service evaluation is an essential and concluded that by doing this services will be focussed, efficient, geared to women's real needs, and the process may empower the women.

Other studies have supported the finding that consulting with women who have experienced support services for domestic violence has an empowering effect. Hague, Mullender and Aris (2003) studied the thoughts of women who had experienced domestic violence and sought help. One opinion from a participant was that it was important to consult with women as they are used to having their power taken away and, by being consulted, they are given a voice. Many agencies recognize the importance of consulting with women in the development of services, but in reality few actually do so (Hague, Mullender and Aris 2003).

## **Effective support for women who have experienced domestic violence**

There is limited research on what effective support for women who have experienced domestic violence should entail (Eaton 1995). Counselling services have been considered to be important for supporting women affected by domestic violence. Gondolf and Fisher (1988) considered the services that 1482 battered women in shelters used and found that the most used service was counselling. Taylor (1995) surveyed 250 victims of domestic violence and found that 43.1 per cent of women sought counselling and 42 per cent wanted to discuss their feelings. These findings highlight that many women affected by domestic violence seek counselling, although they did not explore the impact of these services. Bennett (2001) evaluated an independent sexual and domestic violence counselling service through questionnaires with victims. This study found that the most frequently cited gain was increased confidence and improved self-worth. This study shows a positive impact of counselling on women's ability to cope with the effects of domestic violence.

Kelly and Humphreys (2000) state that advocacy and outreach responses to domestic violence are now used in local initiatives to provide support. Outreach services provide information for victims in their homes and communities. It helps victims to deal with their experiences and includes support for getting out or staying in relationships. Kelly and Humphreys acknowledge that resettlement support for women is vital so that women are not vulnerable to return to abusive relationships. Advocacy services provide victims with support, information and advice. These services also appreciate that victims may have difficulty in negotiating their way around the system and so take on this role for victims. After reviewing evaluation studies of these approaches Kelly and Humphreys suggest that they should form part of the responses to support those that have experienced domestic violence. Inter-agency working has also been considered to be important.

### **The Duluth Model**

The Duluth Model is based on the premise that domestic violence involves a pattern of coercion, intimidation and other forms of abuse by men against women. The model promotes an approach to dealing with domestic violence through inter-agency working (DVIP 2009). Dutton and Corvo (2006) are critical of the model suggesting that because it is theoretically rooted in patriarchy it ignores the role women have in abusive relationships. Ehrensaft, Moffitt and Caspi (2004) suggest that the Duluth model is not empirically supported because both partners can contribute to the risk of abuse and may need to be treated. These findings remind us of that the complexities of relationships need to be explored in the search to prevent future victimisation.

## **Support for women in prison**

Female prisoners are often characterised by poor physical and emotional health and a lack of educational achievement. The Prison Reform Trust (1996) reported that 50-75 per cent of women prisoners had suffered physical and or sexual abuse in their past. Although it is not clear how this was established, the finding that it is likely that over half of women prisoners have suffered violence and abuse indicates high levels of need for support in this area. Support for women in prison may have two-fold benefits. McAvoy (1998) suggested that recent research is gathering evidence that violent victimisation may have a causal link to female offending; therefore preventing re-victimisation may prevent women from further offending.

Scott (2004) explains that some prisons have bought in counselling services for women affected by domestic violence, but this has often been due to particular concerns about individual women and not as a general provision. Scott suggests that prison officers might not always welcome counselling for women, reasoning that it may “open a can of worms” which the prison does not have the resources to deal with. Support for women in prison can also be difficult due to the frequencies of movement of women around the prison estate. Women may begin therapy and be moved suddenly to another establishment which could leave difficult experiences opened up and not dealt with. Kelland and Fraser (2001) therefore suggested those facilitating work with women needs to think that each session may be the last.

Having summarised the literature on domestic violence and support for this complex problem I will now describe the support programme that is the subject of my research.

## **The Freedom Programme**

The Freedom Programme is a 12 week counselling programme run in some women's prisons in the UK and in some community settings. The programme author states that the programme “draws upon the Duluth model; it is based on a theoretical perspective, derived from studies which indicate that a large number of domestic violence incidents are committed by men against women” (The Freedom Programme website). The author provides no further detail on the programme's theoretical basis.

The aim of The Freedom Programme is:

- ⌚ To provide an opportunity for women to develop ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves, their children and others from harm. To provide them with the knowledge they need to achieve this.

It also has the following objectives:

- ⌚ To increase women's ability to take control of their lives
- ⌚ To increase women's perception of the importance of, and ability to, make positive use of social provisions to increase employability and/or achieve economic independence
- ⌚ To help women to recognise the beliefs held by abusive men
- ⌚ To recognise the impact of their life experience on their own attitudes and beliefs
- ⌚ To increase women's ability to recognise what steps they need to take to protect their children (The Freedom Programme Manual 2007:3).

## **Summary**

In this literature review I firstly explored the prevalence and risks for domestic violence victimisation. This included understanding what some of the protective factors are. Domestic violence is predominantly perpetrated by men, and women may have greater support needs for their experiences. Violence in relationships is complex. Understanding should be sought in how it occurred and what the impact of the violence has been. I noted that domestic violence is an international problem and women will have different experiences and needs as a result of their individual differences. Support for domestic violence victims is important to prevent future victimisation although currently there has been limited evaluation of support programmes for women. A high number of women in prison have experienced domestic abuse and are in need of support for their experiences.

In the next section I outline the methodology of this research.



## **5. Methodology**

### 5.1 Initial development

#### **Research Strategy**

This is a qualitative research project. I decided that a qualitative approach was necessary for this research so that I could gather detailed data on women's views and experiences of The Freedom Programme. Quantitative methods would not have allowed for following up on interesting comments, or further questioning, which were necessary for finding out about women's experiences of the programme.

#### **Research Methods**

This research used two different methods for gathering data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with women who had attended The Freedom Programme and with programme facilitators at HMP Bronzefield and HMP/YOI Downview. In addition to this, participant observation was conducted in two sessions of the programme in one of the establishments visited. I decided to interview participants on the programme and programme facilitators to help increase the reliability of the findings. Interviewing both participants and facilitators meant that I could look for similarities and differences in what was said about the programme. The participant observation was used to explore the experience of the session; to hear what women said in the sessions, observe the process and to see how programme facilitators delivered the session. Combining interviews with participant observation will add strength to the research; "There are considerable advantages to be gained from combining interviews with participant observation. Each can provide data about temporal contexts which might have implications for data analysis that you can then assess. Actions are embedded in temporal contexts and these may shape them in ways that are important for the analysis" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 226). Gathering data from more than one source also helps to triangulate findings.

I devised a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix A) to use to interview participants. Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994) propose that semi-structured interviews allow a discussion of perspectives that were not envisaged by the researcher. Therefore, issues of interest that might not have been thought about when the interview schedule was devised could be followed up in the interviews. This is important as the study is concerned with finding out in-depth views about The Freedom Programme.

To answer my research questions and cover all important points I structured an interview schedule into sections. I began with asking about pre-course information and

expectations. I then moved into questions about the experiences from the programme and the learning that had taken place. I ended with questions about diversity and how to develop support for other women who have experienced domestic violence.

The interview schedule was developed in consultation with my supervisor and Women and Young People's Group at NOMS headquarters.

The interview schedule was piloted in the first interview with a participant on the programme. This interview has been included in the analysis as the interview flowed well and the questions were appropriate. The pilot interview helped me to familiarise myself with issues that might be presented. The questions were not changed as the interview worked well.

I also developed a semi structured interview schedule (see appendix B) to use to interview facilitators on The Freedom Programme. This was revised and updated following comments from my supervisor and NOMS. I devised an observation sheet (see appendix C) to use to record my thoughts after observing sessions of the programme.

I devised a consent form (appendix D) to record written permission from the programme participants to take part in the interview. On the consent form they were advised of their rights as an interviewee that they did not have to take part if they did not want to, they did not have to answer any questions that they did not want to, and they were free to terminate the interview at any time. They were also provided with some brief information about the study, what they were being interviewed about, and who the researcher was so they would know whom to contact about the interviews if they needed to.

## 5.2 Method

### **Participants**

#### *Semi-structured interviews with programme participants*

I interviewed women at HMP Bronzefield and HMP/YOI Downview. The staff contact at each of the sites was involved with The Freedom Programme as a programme facilitator. I asked for their help in identifying five women from different cultures, of different ages and with different types of offence who had attended the programme and in contacting them to find out if they would take part in an interview.

The semi structured interviews with programme participants lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. A total of 14 women who had attended the programme were interviewed.

#### HMP Bronzefield

I interviewed eight women at Bronzefield. Three of these women were still attending the programme. During the course of the interviews a programme facilitator stated that the women they selected were chosen as they were generally cooperative and enjoyed the programme. Although I privately thought that this was problematic as it could bias the findings I decided not to discuss this at the time as I thought it would have been inappropriate to do so. It is important to note that the sample from Bronzefield may have been selected to say favourable comments about the programme.

#### HMP/YOI Downview

I interviewed six women at Downview. I was given a list of all the women that were at the prison who had completed the programme and I selected participants based on those that were there and were available to be interviewed.

### **Demographic information**

The age range of the women I interviewed was between 27 and 54. Five out of the 14 women were in their 30s, four were in their 40s, four were in their 20s and one was in her 50s.

Nine women classed themselves as White British, two as Black African, one as British Nigerian, one as Iranian and another as mixed race.

The women had all been convicted and sentenced and were in prison for a range of offences including drug supply or importation, violence, arson, burglary, child negligence and blackmail.

The longest sentence length was 12 years. Four women had sentences for seven years or longer. The shortest sentence length was 13 months. Three women had sentence lengths of 18 months or less.

#### *Semi structured interviews with programme facilitators*

I interviewed two programme facilitators at each site. At HMP Bronzefield the facilitators were female; one was a prison officer and the other was a probation officer. At HMP/YOI Downview the facilitators were working in the Offender Management unit,

they did not wear uniform. One of the facilitators was male and the other was female. The interviews were between 45 minutes and one hour in length.

### *Participant Observation*

I observed two sessions of The Freedom Programme at HMP Bronzefield. The programme was not running at HMP/YOI Downview at the time of the data collection. There were seven women in the first session that I observed and ten women in the second session. The programme uses illustrations of 'typical' domestic violence abusers. These male personalities were 'The King of the Castle' and 'The Liar' in the sessions I observed.

### **Materials**

For all of the semi structured interviews a I used a Dictaphone. In addition to this I developed an interview pack for each interview which contained a list of questions, a consent form and a covering sheet to record basic information about the participant.

I decided not to makes notes during the participant observation so that I could concentrate on observing discussion and non-verbal communication. I made notes immediately afterwards.

### **Procedure**

The interviews with programme participants and facilitators at HMP Bronzefield took place in April 2009. The interviews at HMP/YOI Downview took place in May and July 2009. The participant observation took pace in April and June 2009 at HMP Bronzefield.

All interviews took place in a private room. Participants gave permission for the interview to be recorded. I explained the purpose and process of the interviews before the interview began. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions before and after the interview took place. A programme facilitator asked participants on The Freedom Programme for their permission for me to sit in and observe the sessions. During the sessions I sat in a corner of the room. I wrote up notes shortly after the sessions.

### **Ethics**

The Prison Service National Research Committee gave permission for me to do this research and collect data in prisons. I submitted an application which contained my proposed research methods and material. As part of this application The Griffins

Society provided a reference to say that ethics had been considered as part of the regular meetings that Griffins Fellows have with the Griffins Council.

The participants were fully informed about the purpose of the interview and were not deceived in any way. Programme participants gave informed consent to take part in the interview. They read the consent form and signed to state that they understood the purpose of the interview and they agreed to take part.

Participants were assured of anonymity. They were informed that their responses would be kept anonymous and only I would have access to the interview transcripts. I emphasised to participants that I was looking for their views on the programme and would not discuss our conversation with anyone else in the prison unless anything was disclosed that could indicate a risk of harm or danger.

In the sessions that I observed women gave their verbal permission for me to sit in and listen to the session. I stayed around after the end of the session to answer any questions that the women had about what I was doing there.

In this methodology section I have outlined how I have designed and collected data for this research. The three different research methods that I used provided rich data and allowed me to answer my research questions. In the next section I will describe the data, its analysis and the findings.

## 6. Analysis

### 6.1 Participant Observation

Jorgensen (1989) states that “the methodology of participant observation aims to generate practical and theoretical truths about human life grounded in the realities of daily existence” (1989: 14). He describes participant observation as being appropriate for when “little is known about a phenomenon, there are important differences between the views of insiders as opposed to outsiders and the phenomenon is somehow obscured from view of outsiders” (1989: 12). Participant observation is appropriate for this study as it allowed insights into the processes and content of the programme that would not have otherwise been possible.

#### **Observation One – ‘King of the Castle’ (seven women, two facilitators)**

Participants were welcomed and an ice breaker was used to introduce everyone, including me. The ice breaker exercise involved the women using a positive word to describe themselves. This exercise invoked laughter and everyone was smiling, creating a welcoming atmosphere in the group. The importance of confidentiality and a non-judgemental attitude were highlighted at the beginning.

It seemed that at the beginning of the session there was a lot of talking from the facilitators. This mainly involved the use of the programme manual, which they read from. Facilitators used open questions, although they also at times told the group what the learning points were rather than enabling them to identify these for themselves. There were some examples of effective facilitation skills such as active listening and making eye contact. Use of reflection was often simply repeating back what was said and was not used skilfully to pose questions and further learning. The atmosphere in the group was relaxed and some women were active in discussions, and freely gave their views.

At one point one woman left and re-entered the group, which was distracting. If group members leave the room it may give the impression to others that the content of the session is not important and would seem very disrespectful if a one group member went out whilst another was talking. There was no attempt made to re-integrate the group member, which meant that she missed what was covered in her absence.

There was a discussion about how the ‘King of the Castle’ might present himself. The main learning point appeared to be that men will try to dominate women in the home. This appeared to be a very simplistic view. Nevertheless, the group collectively appeared to agree with this, with some women and facilitators providing examples of how men try to dominate women in the home. Discussions on this character focused

on what men might do to get women to do all of the domestic work, as a form of abuse. The women appeared to enjoy these discussions and provided examples, one leading on from another. This led onto discussions about more serious physical and emotional abuse. I felt uncomfortable during the discussions as women and facilitators appeared to be very generalist about male behaviours. They described domestic work that they felt was expected of women but there was no balance with how women might stereotype 'male jobs'. I personally did not agree with the general assumptions made in the session and I felt that this simplistic belief could be misleading.

The group was asked to do an exercise in two sub-groups. There were few instructions given about this task and I felt unsure if all women would have been clear on what they needed to do. In the groups one or two women appeared to take the lead whilst others sat back. The exercise lasted for around 40 minutes which included feedback on the task. The feedback suggested that they understood what to do: however those giving the feedback were those most involved in the task. It was not clear what the quieter group members thought.

One participant commented that her husband had attended The Freedom Programme for men although she felt that he did not need to. Another group member directly challenged her belief, which seemed quite harsh. I felt uneasy about this as it went against the rules of not being judgemental. By not dealing with the inappropriate behaviour the facilitators could have given a negative impression to the rest of the group, of being judgemental - almost displaying some of the 'male' behaviours that the session was aiming to identify. Whilst the group member did not appear upset at the time, I wondered whether after she went back to her cell, and thought about what took place, she might have been upset.

The session ended with 'Mr Right'. This took up around ten per cent of the time in the session. It was important that this character was covered to help the women to think about positive future relationships. However the time spent on 'Mr Right' was brief, which gave the impression that it was not as important as knowing about the negatives. I wondered to what extent women would take on board the character of 'Mr Right'. I thought it might be misleading to suggest to women that they will be able to achieve future relationships where they will not have to do any domestic chores in the home.

During the session there were no links made to the impact on children, or resettlement issues. This was worrying as the aims of the programme are to help women to learn how to protect their children. There were no discussions about how what was talked about in the session could be used on release. There was no reference to diversity

issues which could have been explored, such as how domestic experiences are different in other cultures or what differences there might be in lesbian relationships.

### **Observation Two – ‘The Liar’ (10 women, 2 facilitators)**

The session began with the same ice breaker exercise. There were three new women in the group. A discussion of ground rules started without welcoming them or explanations about the group. There was a quiz at the beginning to recap on the previous session. A quiz at the beginning about the content of the previous session may make a new member feel isolated when they potentially could have been nervous starting the course. Some questions were inappropriate and re-wording them would have made the information of benefit for all group members. Following the quiz an explanation of the programme was given which was helpful for new group members. The door to the group room was left open, and although it was a very hot day, some women may have felt that they did not want to speak if others outside could hear.

The session covered the male personality of ‘The Liar’. I felt confused during the discussion of this character as the term ‘The Liar’ was used interchangeably with ‘The Dominator’. One facilitator introduced the material and was very engaging and enthusiastic. The other female facilitator sat to the side and did not engage as much with the group. The facilitators read from the manual and pre-planning of the session was not apparent as they asked each other a number of times ‘do you want to do the next bit?’.

Facilitators used some open questions, although there was a lot of telling of learning points rather than group members coming up with the learning themselves. Facilitators did most of the talking in the session and there were three group members that appeared to dominate. Over half the group were silent during the session and facilitators did not encourage quieter group members to take part. I wondered how without hearing from everyone it would be possible to know what women had got out of the session or if there might be any concerns that should be passed onto wing staff.

Group members were involved in an exercise where they were asked to state strong negative views that a man might hold, to one of the facilitators. Some examples were ‘you’re worthless’ and ‘no one will want you’. Some women seemed to really get into this exercise and enjoy it. After, the facilitator was asked how she felt and explained she would feel ‘mad’, which seemed very rehearsed. The exercise ended with an explanation that feeling ‘mad’ is how men justify their violent behaviour. I was not clear on the point as the impact of hearing those negative views is likely to make a



person 'mad' and although violence is never acceptable, it is not acceptable to be verbally abusive either.

One group member stated that she was attracted to violent men and acknowledged that she could also at times be violent herself. The facilitator dealt with this by telling her that men should not behave violently. I felt that this was an example that could have been dealt with by exploring why she felt that she was attracted to violent men, why she has acted violently previously and whether other women had similar experiences. Instead this seemed to be dealt with quite abruptly. Other women shared examples which could have been explored further by opening up a discussion.

## **Discussion**

Coffey (1999) explains the importance of the ethnographer writing about the self in research as a "mechanism for establishing authenticity" of the findings (1999: 117). It is therefore important that I reflected on the impact of my presence during the participant observation.

I am aware that my presence in the group room may have meant that women may have been cautious about speaking of their experiences, or acted differently. However, the explanations of why I was there and not taking notes in the session helped to minimise my impact. At times I felt uncomfortable with the session material and with the judgemental generalisations about male behaviour. I personally, however, have never experienced domestic violence and I am aware that my experience of the session may have been different if I had been so affected. Observing these two sessions helped me to see women interacting in the group and how the facilitators led the session, which gave me a fuller insight into the programme. I would not have gained this information from interviews alone.

The participant observation provided data concerning each of the research questions:

1. Does The Freedom Programme help women to develop ways of thinking and behaving that protect themselves, their children and others from harm?

During the two sessions that I observed I felt that the content of the programme manual helped women to identify with some traits of male behaviour which they have experienced in abusive relationships. I do not think this led on to them developing ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves. The focus of the discussions was on what had happened to them and not on what they can do in the future to protect themselves. The lack of focus on prevention is a missed opportunity for providing women with protection. There was very little reference to children. Whilst

there are specific sessions about children in the programme that I did not observe I felt that opportunities to discuss the impact of abuse on children were missed.

2. Is The Freedom Programme of equal value for BME women, lesbian women etc as it is for white women?

There were no explicit references to diversity issues. The group was not solely white women, there were black and mixed race women in the group although these women formed a minority in the group. It is difficult to know whether The Freedom Programme is reaching out to all women. Clearly, the male 'personalities' used would have been of doubtful value to any lesbian group members.

3. To what extent do women value the process of being able to discuss, share and explore issues with other women whilst attending The Freedom Programme?

Due to many of the group members not speaking in the sessions it is difficult to say what benefit they got from being in the group with other women who may have had similar experiences. I got a sense that the women enjoyed some of the exercises and discussions. However, enjoying the process is different to benefiting. I am not sure what the value was in some of the exercises and the discussions they seemed to enjoy.

## 6.2 Facilitator Interviews

The interviews with four programme facilitators provided information about their understanding of the programme aims, what they thought they had achieved and how they ran the programme.

The interview data has been analysed using a 'general inductive approach to qualitative data analysis' described by Thomas (2003:1). This approach allows raw data to be condensed, establishes links with the research objectives, and develops theory about the experiences or processes which are apparent in the data. This method has been chosen to establish key themes and to explore these findings with existing literature.

The main themes that emerged were: aims and expectations, process issues, impact of prison setting, success and impact, and diversity.

## **Aims and expectations**

Facilitators were generally in agreement that the aim of the programme was about raising women's awareness of domestic abuse:

"I don't think it's about teaching skills at all. I think it is raising awareness and giving information."

The official programme aims state women will "develop ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves" (The Freedom Programme Manual 2007:3), which is more substantial than the facilitators' aims. Facilitators thought another aim was about raising awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on children. A facilitator said:

"And also to raise their awareness about how domestic violence affects children; I think the common theme is that because the children weren't in the room, they weren't affected."

While the facilitator thought that the women believed children may not be affected by violence if they did not see it, the literature review revealed that in some cases where there is violence in the home children have been found to have high levels of aggressive behaviour (Eaton 1995). It is therefore important that the impact of violence in the home on children is explored with the women. Facilitators did not explain how raising awareness of the impact will provide women with skills to protect their children. Women may leave the course with awareness, but without any skills to protect their children from the perpetrator. They may blame themselves for the harm caused rather than the perpetrator.

One of the facilitators thought the aim of the programme was to provide women with information about where to go to get further support:

"To make them aware of the areas of support and where they can access support on release."

Whilst this aim was only mentioned by one facilitator it is an important one, as providing women with sources of support for release could be very helpful in their successful resettlement (Kelly and Humphreys 2000). This aim does not form part of the official aims and objectives of the programme. This is concerning, as resettlement support is vital to prevent women from returning to abusive relationships.

One common expectation was to help women try to understand that they are not to blame for what happened:

“The women to learn that they're not at fault, that they can't be blamed for someone choosing to be violent or abusive towards them.”

Reducing the sense of blame that women put on themselves is an important part of the psychological recovery of domestic violence (Herman 1992). This expectation is therefore important as reducing the feelings of blame may help to alleviate the psychological impact of the abuse.

Facilitators expected that the programme would be helpful for protecting the women from future abuse:

“They will feel that they have got more information, that they're able to recognise abusive tactics at a much earlier stage and that they know who they can turn to for support.”

When explaining the protection that women get from the course the facilitator indicated that the course would provide women with guidance about where they could go for future support. The facilitator's expectations are important and, if they work, could prevent involvement in future abusive relationships.

It appeared that the main aims and expectations of the facilitators were to raise awareness of the issues and the impact of domestic violence. Raising awareness of the issues is the first stage in women changing their thinking and behaviour. It is significant that the facilitators' aims for the programme do not match those described in the manual, as the effect of the facilitators' departure from the programme aims is to weaken programme delivery (Hollin 1995). It is also significant that increasing awareness without providing skills for the women may lead them to reflect on what has happened and conclude that they are to blame. As women who have experienced domestic violence often blame themselves, direct action needs to be taken when providing support to protect against this (Bennett 2001).

### **Process issues**

Facilitators talked about the training to become a facilitator. The training involved experiencing what it was like to be a group member on the programme.

“It's more experiencing what it's like, really. Pat Craven facilitated the training and we acted as the participants whilst giving our own answers, but you can see how it should be done and bring that into your own practice.”

One facilitator found some aspects of the training uncomfortable:

“I think that the training is largely about male-bashing and I don't think that is healthy. When I did my training, I felt that a lot of women on the training had previously experienced domestic violence, whereas that wasn't the case for me, so I think in some ways it was almost like a therapy for them as well. So, there were little things about it that I didn't think were entirely appropriate.”

For this facilitator, what was particularly worrying was her comment about facilitators experiencing the training as ‘therapy’. Although survivors of domestic abuse have had a huge role in developing services for domestic violence (Aris, Hague and Mullender 2003), it is important that potential facilitators are personally able to deliver support. I believe that the training should be more involved than simply experiencing the programme. It should cover the varied and many ways that women experience domestic violence (Hester, Kelly and Radford 1996). None of the facilitators mentioned training on specific issues about supporting women in custody. Working with women in prison needs particular consideration due to the environment they are in and their removal from the situation in which the violence took place.

At both HMPs Downview and Bronzefield the programme had a policy of not selecting women. Instead, women would put themselves forward for it. Facilitators were in agreement that this was an appropriate way for women to be selected:

“I think it's really important that they make that choice for themselves because it's going to raise issues for them that we can't even begin to imagine if we haven't experienced it. So, I think that is important that they refer themselves.”

This facilitator thought self selection was best as it gave women a ‘choice’. This may be helpful in starting to empower the woman after being in a difficult relationship where they did not decide what happened to them. However another facilitator raised an important point:

“Some women don't even know that it is domestic abuse or domestic violence.”

Whilst some women will like the opportunity to choose whether they take part in the programme there may be many that would benefit who do not realise that they have experienced abuse. Aris, Hague and Mullender (2003) found that the stigma of being abused would prevent women seeking support. By only using a method of self selection there may be women who are in the most need, who are not reached by the programme.

Facilitators explained that women did not have to talk during the sessions. They felt that this was the right approach to prevent feelings of being controlled or pressured:

“No one has to stand up and tell their story and be victimised, no-one is judged, and we really say that a lot.”

Whilst it can be intimidating talking in front of others I am not sure that the experience would be ‘victimising’. Hague (2005) reported that simply seeking of experiences can serve to re-victimise if no empathy is shown. In the sessions that I observed the women who spoke appeared to be at ease with talking about what happened which was reinforced with empathy from others. However, there were many women who did not speak but may have been able to, had the facilitator encouraged them and if they felt that their contribution would be understood and valued. The facilitator’s view of not needing to get women to speak during sessions is risky. It would be difficult to know to what extent they were taking on the learning and also how they are handling the course emotionally.

There were no formal requirements for support or supervision for facilitators:

“There isn’t a great deal of support. We have supervision for other programmes that we run which is formal supervision, but for this one we kind of support each other.”

Facilitators also appeared to use their line management structure to get supervision whilst delivering the programme:

“There weren’t any specific criteria for supervision but in the role that I do we have monthly supervision, anyway, and our manager operates an open door policy.”

There was no formal supervision for group work skills. Group work skills are very important for getting the learning across and looking after participants during the sessions (Hollin 1995). Without formal supervision or monitoring, facilitators would be unaware of how their skills were impacting on the effectiveness of the programme. This appeared to be a weakness in programme management.

As part of the process of the programme the women shared experiences on the group. Facilitators saw value in this process:

“I think it is helpful when women do share their own experiences because it’s likely that someone else has been through the same experience as well. So many women feel that they’re the only one and they feel completely isolated in their experience.”

It appeared that a benefit of women sharing their experiences is feeling that they are not alone in what has happened to them. This may have links to enhancing self-esteem and confidence which are important aspects of support for those who have experienced abuse (Benight, Flores and Tashiro 2001).

## **Impact of prison setting**

There are advantages to running a programme of this type in a prison:

“I think the benefits of running it in prison are that it makes it easier for the women to do it. It's sometimes very difficult for a woman who is in a DV relationship to actually get away from the home to participate.”

Facilitators thought that a disadvantage of running the programme in a prison is that it can be a difficult time emotionally:

“I think sometimes when women are in prison they're often at their lowest.”

“But they will start to use it as a self-help group or whatever and we're not set up for that in the prison.”

One facilitator was concerned that the women might use the session for something that it is not set up for. It is worrying that a programme on an emotive topic is run in prison without having ways to deal with the emotional impact. Previous research on supporting women in prison has found that a hazard of the environment is that women talk about difficult experiences and then go back to their cell upset (Scott 2004). One site running the programme had a policy of being available to talk women outside of sessions:

“We always say to the women at the beginning of our sessions that 'If you ever need to chat, either stay behind or ask to see either myself or X' ... women either collar us when they see us around the prison or sit and wait for us at the end of a session.”

The quotation suggested that women take up the offer of extra support after session. It also suggested that as some woman spoke to facilitators when they saw them around the prison, that there are needs for additional support. The use of language in this quotation is interesting as ‘collar us’ resonates with capturing or policing; it may be that the facilitators see the approach of women outside of the session as unwanted. One facilitator commented on the problem of the lack of support available:

“There isn't any specific counselling available to them if it does raise some really powerful issues which they feel they can't deal with themselves.”

“There is no extra support - only through their offender supervisors.”

The suggestion that the offender supervisor could provide support is significant. This role is about sentence planning. While some offender managers may support women

in addition to their main job they should not be relied upon to provide support as their role is about reducing re-offending. Scott (2004) suggested that prisons only bought in counselling services in response to the needs of individual prisoners and it was not generally available. There did not appear to be a plan at either site to deal with difficult emotions that might arise from attending the programme.

## **Success and impact**

Facilitators stated that one of the achievements of the programme is raising the women's self esteem:

"They have no self-confidence, no esteem, no self-worth, and then gradually throughout the sessions you can see them sitting up a bit straighter, looking you in the eye, coming out of themselves, and just improving their confidence and their self esteem."

The description of the change in posture and body language provided evidence of how the women appeared to develop self esteem and 'confidence'. The facilitators did not offer any views about how the improvements could be maintained by the women. Maintenance of skills is important to ensure that women are able to stay out of abusive relationships in the future (Kelly and Humphreys 2000).

Assessment of the programme's success was drawn from women's feedback:

"We do this pre- and post-course questionnaire and that just kind of assesses their knowledge of DV ... what their self-esteem and confidence are currently, and then the same questionnaire at the end."

It appeared that facilitators assessed success by whether the women know any more about domestic violence and if they reported their self esteem and confidence had improved. It is important to evaluate actual outcomes of services and not simply look at user satisfaction to find out about the effectiveness of the service (Dunn 2007). Whilst the information from the questionnaire might be interesting, it does not explain how the women will be able to use what they have learned. The information from the questionnaire will not inform whether the learning has helped women to develop their thinking and behaviour to protect themselves from future abuse. There was no indication that these issues had occurred to the facilitators.

Addressing resettlement issues is important when working with victims of domestic abuse (Kelly and Humphreys 2000). Facilitators acknowledged that resettlement was not addressed by the programme:



“With their relationships when they get home. There's not a 'When you get home, X...' but I think it's just that that extra knowledge will help when they get out.”

This comment suggested that women were not given information that would help prepare them for release. It was an assumption that the ‘extra knowledge’ would help them.

Some facilitators mentioned that there were resources available:

“We have a table full of resources, if you like: paper clippings, a list of emergency helpline numbers and addresses and we've got a directory covering the whole country. They know it's there and if they want us to help them with that then we do that.”

There was an absence of consideration to how resettlement information might best be received by women and there appeared to be an assumption that ‘paper clippings’ might be helpful. Resettlement support was not an important part of the programme.

## **Diversity**

The programme is based on different male ‘personalities’ and examples were used which described Western cultures. I asked facilitators if the programme reached out to women who did not fit that norm:

“What's been fantastic is the diverse amount of women that we've had on the programme, and I think this is one of the few programmes, apart from Parenting, where you've got women of all ages from all over the world coming together and realising that they've got something in common.”

“Although you say that the programme looks predominantly at DV perpetrators being male, you do obviously emphasise that there can be same-sex relationships where there are DV perpetrator and that there are DV perpetrators where the DV perpetrator is a woman against a man. So, although for the sake of the programme we're looking at it as a male DV perpetrator, that is not always the case and that theme is carried out through every session.”

What seemed to be lacking in the statements was an acknowledgement of different issues for lesbian women. It appeared that the facilitator thought that lesbian relationships would have the same issues and it was enough to just say the perpetrator might be a woman and not a man.

## Key Points

- ⌚ These data show that the aims and expectations held by facilitators were less substantial than what the programme states it will deliver
- ⌚ Of concern was the assumption that raising awareness of the impact on children will be helpful for women, with no consideration of ways to protect women from blaming themselves
- ⌚ The success of the programme appeared to be seen in terms of improved self esteem and feedback received by the women. There did not appear to be an awareness of the importance of thorough evaluation. There appeared to be little concrete evidence of what learning took place
- ⌚ There was no formal supervision process for facilitators, which meant that their group work skills were not monitored or developed. Neither was there formal support for some of the difficult content they will experience by facilitating this group
- ⌚ The absence of selection procedures for women meant that facilitators were unprepared for the individual needs and histories of the women attending the programme
- ⌚ Whilst the facilitators acknowledged that women of different sexualities and cultures attended the programme there appeared to be little attention paid to exploring issues related to these. In addition the promotion of the programme may exclude women from non-heterosexual relationships as they may not understand that they could be eligible.

In section 6.1 and 6.3 I explored data from my participant observation and interviews with women. What will become evident is that there are some quite fundamental differences between what the facilitators hope they are delivering and what the women who attend the Freedom Programme actually gained from the sessions.

### 6.3 Interviews with women who had attended the programme

The interviews with women who attended the programme have been analysed using the same method described in 6.2. The 14 interviews with women provided a great amount of data which was split into the following main themes: suitability of the programme for all women, sharing experiences, experiences of being on the course, learning and resettlement.

## **Suitability of the programme for all women**

The programme is based on a 'typical' type of male perpetrator. Women were asked if the course would be suitable for women who were not in heterosexual relationships. Some women felt that the abusers discussed during the course could also explain abuse in lesbian relationships:

"Even if it's another lady - it's not just a man that can be a Dominator, you know, anyone can be a Dominator, it doesn't matter if they're male or female. It's how they are in that relationship isn't it?"

This comment came from a woman who had previously experienced abuse from a male partner. One lesbian woman explained that she did not feel completely at ease in a group of women talking about male abuse:

"Not isolated, but I didn't feel like I could be 100% honest. I could only talk about certain past experiences."

It is worrying that this woman felt that she could not be completely open during the group. This indicated that this particular course was not effective in supporting all women to explore difficult domestic experiences. Women also talked about whether they felt that the programme was suitable for women of different cultures:

"Having done the course and speaking to other British people and people from other countries as well, it made me realise that no, it's not [domestic violence] acceptable."

This comment was from a Nigerian woman who found that it was beneficial to discuss the issues with women of different nationalities. It is positive that women not just from white backgrounds felt that the course was accessible:

"I found that a lot of African women and a lot of women from the Caribbean - Jamaica and places like that...talked a lot. They told a lot of stories and spoke a lot about their experiences, and everybody was really interested in what they had to say, because it was really fascinating."

'Fascinating' is an interesting choice of word that suggested she thought the story was interesting rather than disturbing. It may have been that women from different cultures were in reality less integrated in the group. Bhuyan and Senturia found that domestic violence might be particularly difficult for women with illegal immigrant status, as male perpetrators could use that status to further exert power and control (Bhuyan and Senturia 2005). If the course hopes to be suitable for women of diverse

backgrounds then recognition and support should be provided for their individual needs.

### **Sharing experiences**

Women described some of the positive experiences of being in a group with other women who had similar experiences to them. One woman valued:

“Sharing our experiences with each other and knowing that it's not just myself that's gone through it, that other people have gone through it.”

An advantage of sharing experiences is that women learned that others have gone through similar experiences. This is helpful for removing some of the feelings of isolation that often comes with domestic violence (Hoyle 2007). Sharing experiences can also be empowering for women (Hague 2005).

Women also described some of the difficulties with sharing their experiences with other women:

“You're always nervous because you're going into a room full of abused women and that's not easy at the best of times, let alone when you're going in there with the intention of talking about why you're all there.”

Many of the women reported that attending this group was the first time that they had received support for domestic violence so it is not surprising that they would have been nervous talking about what had happened to them.

It is important that women attending a group are helped to prepare for it. At one site women reported that they had an interview and were provided with written information prior to the course. At the other site the women just put their name down for the course and turned up:

“Yes, I came for the first day. They wrote me a movement slip, gave it to my friend and said 'Oh tell her to come next week' if she wants, and they welcomed me into the programme and just gave me the rules about everything.”

It is concerning that there is no consistent policy of providing women with information and that women attend without facilitators knowing anything about them. A lack of information could be potentially dangerous if the woman was particularly vulnerable. Accredited offending behaviour programmes have structured pre-course assessments to provide information about risk and need. Whilst this programme does not seek to be ‘accredited’ this practice would be useful in providing an individual assessment to help

inform the support the woman requires, which has been found to be an essential component of effective interventions (Dunn 2007).

Women talked about whether being in a group covering this subject matter meant that they needed to be confident to speak about their experiences:

“I don't think you do have to be. I'm quite confident and outspoken but there were a lot of people in the group who weren't. I think that generally, when you get a group of girls you'll find that the most confident ones will support each other and the more confident ones will egg on the more placid ones, you'll say 'Go on, you're alright' and you'll find that they start to say things.”

This comment was representative of what most women reported. Those who came into the group and were originally quiet got involved and talked by the end of the course. It appeared that the support women got from each other empowered quieter group members to get involved. Sharing experiences also helped with learning. Most of the women felt that their learning came from the facilitators and hearing each other's stories:

“I think with the back up of the tutor and the group it sort of gets put into different stories in different ways and so I think both helped because even though the teacher may not have explained it properly someone else would say it.”

Clearly there were benefits to women sharing their stories for learning and to confirm what the facilitators were saying.

### **Experiences of being on the course**

Women described how the facilitators created an atmosphere of safety:

“I think the main thing was because it felt very, very safe and comfortable to talk.”

Many women talked about how they felt 'safe' or 'comfortable' to open up during the sessions. This is a positive finding as many women feel very isolated and fearful after experiencing domestic violence (Collins 2008); a safe space in which to share experiences appeared to be a prerequisite for a positive experience of the group.

At both sites there were male facilitators. Some of the women I interviewed thought that this was problematic:

“Because I don't think the women would open up as much, I really don't. Because it's all women together and we tend to trust them, of course, whereas I feel that where men have proper abused me that I don't really trust them.”

However many thought there were advantages of having a male facilitator:

“It did help because you see a man there who is a different sort of man and he's saying 'It doesn't have to be like that'. That was very positive for the women because you're not only listening from a woman's perspective, but you're hearing it from a guy's perspective as well.”

The first quotation revealed that the experience of abuse created a lack of ‘trust’ in men. The presence of the male facilitator meant that she not only had to deal with her experiences but also deal with her issues of trusting a man. The second quotation indicated that hearing a man’s views during the course was helpful. Hearing a male perspective may have made women more positive about the prospect of future relationships. Some women felt that a male facilitator might feel uncomfortable during the sessions:

“It depends how the man would feel because, obviously, we're all in there basically slagging a man off for what he has done to us. I suppose it might have been a bit uncomfortable for him because you tarnish him with the same sort of brush when it's not really fair to him.”

Two women revealed they were worried about the impact of the discussions on the male facilitator. This finding suggested that the women felt guilty about not taking care of the male facilitator’s feelings. This finding is significant as it may parallel women’s experiences in abusive relationships in that part of the abuse could be that women may feel that they are responsible for their partner’s feelings. This fits with the literature which states that domestic violence is perpetrated for power and control which is disempowering for women (Renzetti 1992, Wykes and Welsh 2009). Facilitators were not aware of this potential impact and the programme missed an opportunity to explore the women’s feelings about male facilitators, which could have had benefits of empowerment. I have consulted with academics and established that there is probably no direct literature to support this finding. The implication of this is that the presence of a male may prevent women from focussing on their own needs and learning from the course. This finding highlights an area that needs attention by those delivering the programme.

Women seemed to appreciate that facilitators did not make them speak:

“But you don't have to speak, which is the good thing about it. So, getting a group of women who it's happened to, they'll be learning as well who can't speak, because it'll be going in, even though they don't want to share their experiences.”

Not hearing all women speak meant that it was impossible for the facilitators to know what the women went away from the session thinking. Some of the women described their feelings after the sessions. One woman revealed very worrying emotions that she experienced post-session:

“I tried to do The Freedom Programme before, but it kind of done me.

*What do you mean?*

I think I self-harmed after one of them, quite seriously. I think I hung myself.”

Another woman felt positive after the sessions:

“I felt positive. I felt really positive and very encouraged as well. I also started questioning a lot of things that happened in my relationships.”

The first quotation is very concerning. The course appeared to have invoked some very strong emotions which the woman found difficult to deal with. The attempt to take her own life happened after a session that covered the effects on children. This is a very real example of how dealing with difficult experiences while women are in prison needs to be handled extremely sensitively. The second quotation highlighted a different response to exploring issues. Although some women could use the course positively, the severe emotions that some women may have experienced after the sessions need be anticipated and effectively managed.

Women described the support that was available to them after the sessions:

“X (a facilitator) would always say that they were available straight after for anyone who wanted to talk to them about anything in particular, which was lovely of them. I think that meant a lot to a lot of ladies, especially perhaps the quieter ones who didn't have the confidence to talk within a big group.”

This woman recognised that ongoing support would be particularly useful for quieter women. Her comment also indicated that she might have concerns for them as she did not know how the course was affecting them. None of the women mentioned support available at other times or from anyone other than facilitators. It appeared that support was not readily available other than immediately after the sessions. Women talked about how one to one support would be beneficial for some women:

“When you actually have individual support you can come out more to the person because there is nobody else listening. You can say more things.”

Women had varied views on whether it was better get support for their experiences in one to one settings or in a group. The majority of women, however, did feel that one to one support should be available for women that want it. This finding is important for NOMS to consider as they have a duty of care and rehabilitation for women in prison.

## **Learning**

A frequently cited outcome was an understanding that domestic abuse was about emotional abuse as well as violence:

“It was learning that it's not only violence but the way that women can be held prisoner or emotionally abused and controlled, sometimes without any violence.”

Many women felt that learning about emotional abuse gave them a new insight into what had happened to them and found it helpful. Helping women to understand what domestic abuse involves is an important first step in preventing future abusive relationships.

Almost all women were able to identify some of the male personalities that were covered on the course. They could relate personally to what was described:

“He's definitely a Liar - lies about anything and everything yeah. He's also really hurt me - physically - and he feigns that it was kind of 'it was only...it was only...' - he's put me in hospital and he thinks 'you only went to hospital'.”

The learning about the male personalities gave women an understanding of some of the ‘tactics’ that abusive men might use:

“Spotting the signs. Hopefully, I think I'll be able - well, I *know* I'll be able to: I don't think, I *know* I'll be able to spot them early on, and if I do spot them then there'll be no more dates with that particular guy.”

“Basically, to be able to walk out at a sign of anything, of any problems.”

The majority of women interviewed described warning signs that they would be able to recognise. Some women explained that if they saw those ‘signs’ they would end the relationship. Whilst that might be a wise decision in some cases it is a simplistic



view of relationships. One woman expressed her view that some of the concepts on the course were unrealistic:

“Yes, that is a bit unrealistic because no-one is perfect and you're explaining this man as perfect, like he's going to bow down and do this for you. He's not going to want to do that every day of the week, he's going to have shitty days like you do, so how is that fair to Mr Right that he's got to keep smiling for you?.”

The course needs to ensure that it presents a realistic view of male behaviour and avoids any simplistic assumptions about relationships. If women think that some of the concepts are ‘unrealistic’ it may put them off attending the course or undermine the relevance of the programme for them.

Some women revealed that they learned about their own violent or controlling behaviour on the course:

“The way I say 'Oh, darling you have to do this' - I always use the word 'darling' - so it makes me feel bad now after the programme, thinking 'Am I abusing him?'. You know, if he did this programme would he sit there saying 'Oh, this woman has been abusing me'? When the instructors told us that women do it as well, that's when I sat and started to look and say 'Yes, they're right'.”

There did not appear to be anywhere on the course where complex relationship issues were explored. Ehrensaft et al (2004) stated that as both partners can contribute to domestic violence both need to be treated. The simplistic assumptions of the course about ‘typical’ male violence might have led women to falsely believe that without addressing some of their own inappropriate behaviour they would be able to achieve positive relationships.

Many women described how the programme impacted on their views of children witnessing violence:

“It just sort of showed me that it really affected the relationship with my son. It made sense that the time he started to rebel was the time that I was seeing that Dominator.”

Children are seriously affected by violence in the home, such as having high levels of aggression (Eaton 1995). The programme had a positive impact on this woman as she had been able to recognise that the rebellious behaviour of her child was as a result of the abusive relationship. This learning could be beneficial in strengthening parent/child relations if women are empowered and enabled to take control of their lives.

Women felt that the course had an impact on their confidence:

"I've actually now got the confidence to know about it and I would tell them straight 'When you say that, you make me feel like this. Please don't do it'. Honestly, it's given me so much confidence."

Domestic violence has a detrimental impact on women's self esteem (Herman 1992, Griffiths and Hanmer 2005). It is encouraging that many women report improvements in their self confidence and as a result undoing some of the damage that has been caused by the abuse. Increases in confidence are also a protective factor against future abuse (Benight et al 2001).

Some women felt they learned a lot from being on the course, however, many thought that the information supported what they already knew:

"It's just reinforced, and it's just nice having it there and that you're not going mad kind of thing, and knowing that what you are saying is what the professionals say."

The quotation revealed a positive outcome but suggested some women may be more in need of support than others. As the course had no selection policies it takes a scatter-gun approach to recruiting women to the course and therefore may not be reaching the women who need support the most.

## **Resettlement**

Many thought that follow-on classes after the course would be helpful:

"That the programme lacks... it's a shame you can't keep having maybe refresher courses or something when you've finished the programme, to kind of keep reinforcing it."

Some women thought that they would not need any further help:

"No, because I've already learned. It's already in my head. They give you a book so if there was ever any doubt in my head I'd look it up in the book anyway. While I've been through it for so many years, now I'm out of it I know that I'm never going to go back to it. I can't say 'never', but I know that I wouldn't."

Resettlement support is vital for to help women to not return to abusive partners (Kelly and Humphreys 2000). The second woman felt that reading the book she got from the course would be helpful in preventing her from returning to abusive relationships. Information learned in prison environment needs to be followed up in

resettlement plans. Consideration should be given to ways to maintain learning to ensure that women are adequately prepared for release as this will be very important to help them not return to abusive partners.

### Key Points

- ⌚ The data shows that although women of different nationalities, cultures and sexualities attend the course there are some difficulties for women of diverse backgrounds
- ⌚ Sharing of experiences appeared to have a number of benefits. Women felt that the experience helped them to feel less isolated and not at fault for what happened to them. Another benefit was atmosphere in the group empowered quieter women to get involved. Some women found it nerve-wracking being in a group with the expectation to get involved
- ⌚ Women reported that there was varied learning achieved from the programme. They said they learned about the type and impact of abuse. They were able to identify with the concepts being taught and felt that the 'warning signs' they learned would be helpful to them in the future. Some of the assumptions about male behaviour were simplistic and a few women thought that parts of the course content were unrealistic
- ⌚ Many women experienced the course with a male facilitator. While some felt that this was useful for identifying a positive male role model, others were pre-occupied with not offending the male facilitator and were therefore not focused on their own development.
- ⌚ Women liked not being made to speak in the group, but this created difficulties in knowing how and to what extent the programme was affecting all the women. Support for women outside of the sessions was limited. One woman talked about a serious self harm attempt following one session that very starkly highlighted the emotive nature of the course.
- ⌚ There were few avenues available to further the learning from the course. There was no focus on practical application of the skills which may mean that when women are back out in the community they will have lost what they have learned from the programme.

In section 6.1 and 6.2, I explored the data from my participant observation and from the interviews with facilitators. In the next section I will bring together what I have found to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

In this section of the research I draw together the findings from the analysis, draw conclusions and make some recommendations about the effectiveness of The Freedom Programme. I do this by using the evidence from my findings to answer the research questions.

### Similarities and differences amongst the findings

Interviews with participants and facilitators produced similar findings about women getting involved in the sessions. Facilitators revealed that they would not expect women to talk unless they wanted to, and women liked that approach. In the participant observation I noticed that there were a number of women that did not contribute to the session. Whilst this approach is favoured by the women it presents risks. Without women contributing, facilitators cannot know what women are learning and how they are coping emotionally. One facilitator thought that expecting women to contribute might 're-victimise' them. In the sessions I observed those women who got involved spoke freely and appeared to find the process enjoyable and not 'victimising'. This difference is significant, as the result of the facilitator's unfounded concern could be that not all women are sufficiently drawn into the sessions.

Interviews with both women and facilitators reported apparent similar gains from the programme. Increases in confidence and self esteem were described. Women and facilitators both thought that through women sharing experiences, they gained a sense of not being alone in their experience of domestic abuse. I was not able to observe increases in confidence and self-esteem in the participant observation, due to only observing each group of women once. I did however note that women appeared to enjoy and value sharing their experiences.

The impact of male facilitators evoked different responses from facilitators and women. Facilitators felt an advantage of male facilitators was in providing a positive male role model, and women generally agreed with this. The negative issues with male facilitators present came from women, and included ability to trust and feeling guilty that they might offend the male facilitator. The facilitators that I interviewed did not seem to be aware that this might be a problem.

Facilitators recognised that one of the difficulties of running a programme on this subject in prison is that it is a difficult time emotionally for the women. Findings from interviews with women supported this belief, and the example of a woman attempting serious self-harm after a session particularly highlighted the extreme emotions that women may experience after sessions. There was generally no *systematic* additional support available following sessions. This does not sit well with the findings about the

emotional difficulties of dealing with domestic violence which may preoccupy women after sessions are over, when they are alone in their cells.

A finding from the interviews with women was that some descriptions of male personalities were not helpful. This finding was supported by the participant observation. In the sessions I observed I felt the discussions about 'typical' male behaviours were often simplistic and could present a misleading view to women about future relationships.

The identification of similarities and differences within the findings has shown where three sources of data overlap. The similarities and differences will be used to help answer the research questions and formulate recommendations.

## **Research questions**

### **Research question 1: Does The Freedom Programme help women to develop ways of thinking and behaving that protect themselves, their children and others from harm?**

The programme appeared to be a first stage in getting women to think about what had happened to them. Facilitators stated their aims were to 'raise awareness', which is an appropriate first stage. Their aim was fitting based on the content of the programme, and in the sessions I observed the focus of discussions was raising awareness of 'typical' male behaviours. However, the official programme aims state that something more substantial than this will be achieved, which is reflected in this research question. The stated aims of the programme were not delivered in these two establishments, which appeared to be a fault of the programme design.

When raising awareness of domestic violence it is important that facilitators consider how to protect the women from blaming themselves. Facilitators explained that they raise awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on children. Raising awareness of this topic must be very sensitively conducted. It is important that women are protected from blaming themselves for the impact of the abuse on their children.

In addition to raising awareness there was additional reported learning that took place. Women learned about the impact of emotional abuse. I was concerned about the simplistic nature of the course content. Accepting basic assumptions of 'typical' male behaviour without exploring the complexities of relationships including women understanding their own, at times, violent behaviour; could be misleading. Women reported they had learned some of the signs of male behaviour which would be helpful in future relationships. Some women stated that if they saw these signs they

would end the relationship immediately. Whilst this learning might protect women it also might give them an unrealistically optimistic view of relationships.

The way in which the facilitators conduct the programme will impact on what women gain from attending. Through looking at the processes involved it is helpful to see what recommendations can be made to help the programme achieve its aims.

The training for facilitators is experiential. Facilitators are not trained in specific skills about how to deliver the programme, effective group work skills, or about the issues arising from delivering this programme in a prison setting. There are no formal supervision requirements. This means that facilitators' skills are not monitored. Some facilitators received supervision from their line manager. In the participant observation I noticed that the group work skills of facilitators could be improved. This would enhance the learning by exploring the material in more depth and widening some of the views put forward.

Facilitators confirmed there was no selection policy for the programme. Some women attended the programme without knowing anything about the programme apart from it being about domestic violence. Facilitators often did not know anything about the women that would be attending. This meant that there could have been no planning for individual needs prior to the programme starting. There was also no structured processes for evaluating the impact of the programme. Women should be consulted on their views of the programme to help inform its development.

Male facilitators were used at both sites. Whilst women and facilitators thought this provided a positive role model some women felt uncomfortable with their presence. Women can be provided with positive male role models from staff, such as prison officers, within the prison and it is not necessary for this to be through the programme. Male facilitators could be an advantage if the facilitators are able to explore with the women how they feel about the men who are present. Facilitators should monitor and regularly review the impact that the male facilitator is having.

One site had a policy of providing support to women directly after the sessions. Apart from this opportunity there was no systematic support available for women after the sessions. Women felt that additional support should be available. The lack of additional support is not suitable with a programme supporting very emotive experiences.

The course did not focus on resettlement issues. This may be because the programme was designed for community settings and in that context issues about domestic life would be continually addressed. Some women felt that they would like additional support after they had finished the course and some felt that they had

learned enough It was concerning that women thought that they had learned enough, as clearly, limited learning took place.

To summarise, the programme provides the first stage in women thinking about their experiences. It does not provide them with new ways of thinking and behaving to protect themselves, their children and others.

**Research question 2: Is The Freedom Programme of equal value for BME women, lesbian women etc as it is for white women?**

The programme is based on a 'typical' male perpetrator of abuse. There were mixed views on whether the programme would be suitable for lesbian women. Some women thought that the course would be suitable for lesbian women although they might not think the programme was available to them. One lesbian woman felt not fully comfortable in a session of mainly heterosexual women. Facilitators did not mention attempts to explore issues for lesbian women although they believed that the course would be suitable for them. It appeared that the programme might not reach out to them and more could be done to integrate them into the course.

Women and facilitators believed that the composition of the course was diverse and women of different nationalities and cultures attended. It is a positive sign that the course appealed to a diverse group of women. Women reported that examples of experiences from different countries were heard during the course. There was an absence of evidence of how individual differences were explored.

The Freedom Programme does seem to appeal to diverse groups of women: the value of the programme for women was explored in answer to the first research question. However, more could be done to work with individual needs of women during the course of the programme related to their diversity.

**Research question 3: To what extent do women value the process of being able to discuss, share and explore issues with other women whilst attending The Freedom Programme?**

Women and facilitators saw great value in the process of sharing experiences during the programme. The main benefit appeared to be that women overcame some of the feelings that they had of being alone in their experiences. This was helpful in removing some of the feelings of isolation that accompany experiencing domestic violence and may link to the reported increases in confidence and self esteem.

Women thought that their learning from the programme came from hearing from other women's experiences and from the facilitators. This finding revealed that the process of being in a group aided the learning on the course.

There were some limitations to being in a group and sharing experiences. Women did feel nervous prior to and during the course at the thought of talking about what happened to them. However, women also felt that being confident to speak in a group was not a necessary prerequisite of attending the programme, and evidenced this by explaining that by the end of the course all women generally got involved in the sessions. Women and facilitators liked the approach of facilitators not getting women involved unless they wanted to be. I noted in both sessions that I observed that not all women got involved and contributions came from a limited number of women. There may well have been benefits for women in hearing the experiences of others but it is not possible to know benefits there are without hearing their thoughts. Not getting all women involved in the session is risky as facilitators would not know whether women were learning or how they were dealing with the course emotionally.

The Freedom Programme does have benefits for women in being a forum where women can share experiences and learn from others. These benefits appear to have links in psychological improvements including improved self esteem and confidence. It is important however to engage all women in the programme to address their individual needs.

### **Limitations and further research**

One obvious limitation is that the women have not tested their learning from the programme in the community and therefore women have to make their own assessment of how the programme will have benefited them. It is only on release that the full benefits or limitations of the programme will be seen. Further research to follow women up in the community would be essential to assess to what extent the programme has been effective when they build new relationships. The programme was designed for community settings. This research has not looked at the effectiveness of the community programmes and therefore cannot comment on how successful it might be for women attending outside of prison. An interesting future piece of work could compare prison and community settings to find out where it is most suitably delivered.

This research had some methodological limitations. Only two sessions were observed for the participant observation. Ideally more sessions, or the whole course, should be observed to allow reliable conclusions about the experience of the session to be drawn. The selection process of women to be interviewed for the research was not the same at each site. At one prison a member of staff chose the women to be



interviewed and stated that these women would have positive reports of the programme. In order to mitigate this risk an additional two interviews were conducted at a different site. Nevertheless, the sample were somewhat biased in favour of the programme, which may make these results unreliable.

## **Conclusion**

In the introduction I referred to an accepted recommendation by NOMS to the Corston Report (Home Office 2007) which was that “support for women who have been abused, raped or who have experienced domestic violence” should be implemented in all areas. This research has revealed that the only current support group for women who have experienced domestic violence is not fit for purpose. It is a credit to the facilitators that they have such commitment and motivation for working to support women who have experienced domestic violence. However, The Freedom Programme is not suitable for supporting women who have experienced abuse. NOMS must consider the support they provide and if they continue to run The Freedom Programme they need to attend to the many limitations highlighted by this paper.

## **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1: The programme aims should be in line with the programme content. Facilitators should be fully aware of the programme aims and work towards these.**

**Recommendation 2: Facilitators should ensure that all women attending the programme are enabled to speak and contribute to the sessions.**

**Recommendation 3: The programme should ensure that women are fully and systematically supported, during and after sessions, particularly when their awareness is raised of the impact of violence on their children. The programme should not be run in prisons unless effective procedures to ensure support is available after sessions can be put in place.**

**Recommendation 4: The course manual should be revised in consultation with service users. Facilitators should attempt to provide women with more balanced expectations about the highs and lows of future relationships.**

**Recommendation 5: Supervision for facilitation skills to maintain programme quality and integrity should be introduced.**

**Recommendation 6: Facilitators should devise a policy for recruiting women for the programme that successfully identifies all women who might**

**potentially benefit from attending. This should include pre-course interviews to assess women's backgrounds and individual needs. Information should also be provided to women before they start the course.**

**Recommendation 7: Male facilitators should not be used on the programme until such time as all of the concerns about their use can be effectively addressed.**

**Recommendation 8: NOMS should consider how the programme can contribute to meeting the particular resettlement needs of women prisoners who have been affected by domestic violence.**

**Recommendation 9: The individual needs of each woman on the course should be addressed. The course should be delivered in a way that enables all women to attend regardless of sexuality, nationality, culture etc.**

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