

Freedom Together

Together we can make a difference

CASTLE HILL FREEDOM PROGRAMME REPORT JULY 2014



Funded by the London Borough of Croydon Local Authority

Volunteer Shanelle from Spring Park 2013 group

Group Facilitator: Freedom Together- Lou Moultrie

Castlehill Children Centre Freedom Programme Group

Start date: 25/4/14

End date: 18/07/14

28- Women registered

22- Women attended the group

70 +2 pregnant ladies- (approx) Number of children within the families who registered

20- Number of children who were offered crèche places

112- Individual sessions completed

All women were asked to complete a registration form for the Centre. Mums registered to use the crèche are encouraged to visit children Centres before the group starts in order to settle in children and to allay any fears and anxieties.

Castlehill children's centre was the set venue for the Freedom Programme. Posters were displayed in all five collaborations of Children Centres across the borough of Croydon. There is also a web site for the Freedom Programme where the facilitators' details are currently available. Information was also sent out by email to local services and professionals working with vulnerable adults and children. This venue had a large room so it was agreed that Freedom Together would hold a large group. Yet again the response has been remarkable. There was a core of 11-14 women who attended the course regularly; again this was exceptional to see their commitment in such a large group..

Referrals have been received from a varied sources: FEP, Health Visitors, FJC, DV Helpline, CPN, Social Services, Refuge, Key into groups with as little hanging around as possible. Freedom Together was able to confirm places on the group mostly within 48 hours, each worker had been given information to go through with their client to enable women to feel more equipped emotionally to join the course. All self referrals were contacted directly by the group facilitator. workers, IDVA, Key workers and Solicitors. The process has become much more streamline and allowed women to be booked in quickly.

48% of women registered on the group had families on a Child Protection Plan and involvement with social services. This I feel had challenges within the group: Women who felt they would be judged as bad mothers. It was made clear to all of the ladies that at no point would their attendance in the group be subject to any reports for professional bodies. The first session was very emotional for many of our ladies. We managed to keep some of these ladies with astounding results to personal growth, self esteem and confidence.

It was extremely important that each session was made as welcoming, warm and unobtrusive. Castle Hill venue was used for the first time for the Freedom Programme. Some women felt nervous at first as the crèche was a few corridors away and some children found it hard to settle. It was not long before mums were commenting on how pleased their children were happy and the staff was friendly. The venue was a great size to hold a large group. It had good travel links into Croydon. Most women walked or used public transport which they found straight forward free parking was on all surrounding roads.

Collaboration of services: Freedom Together have now established strong links with local services collaborating with SV and DV services in Croydon. The Sanctuary Project/ CASA –Refuge/ RASASC/ NHS-Parenting/ Croydon Homestart/ NSPCC / Off the Record/ Family Lives/ FEP workers and Encounter Freedom. All are involved with the continued support and education for Freedom Together client group. Many women disclosed childhood sexual abuse and went on to use RASASC for support. Many spoke of training and volunteering for local agencies.

Local Service: All women were given information and support regarding safety and the potential danger for anyone in abusive relationship. There was a high number of women attending court cases, case conferences, solicitors etc all regarding their children's welfare and child contact. Approximately a quarter of the group were given safety plans during the programme, they were in current abusive relationships. A list of local and national support agency and emergency numbers were provided for every woman throughout the 12 weeks. Freedom Together invited local services into some of the sessions with the sole purpose of giving the women vital information for support or how to go onto volunteer and train in the community. Services were invaluable as it encouraged women and families to use the support to recover and enable them look at their future aspirations. They received information on support services, counselling, volunteering, training, and education. Many women went on to sign up to various agencies, many wanting to be advocates for women suffering abuse!

Women were given the opportunity to feedback about services they have used–this is what they wrote

I HAVE A VOICE!!

- **RASASC** is a great service but there are not enough of these services, making the waiting list long.
- Bad support services -**social services, police, Council, solicitors, schools**
I have felt more of a perpetrator from the above services than a victim. I have no confidence in the police protecting me when I was in the situation because they have no power. My solicitor has treated me like a pay cheque not an important client to fight for.
- **Social services** are unsupportive, they don't understand, they blame me for everything, force me to make decisions that I'm not comfortable with whilst making me feel isolated. They keep changing my social worker and it has made my teenage son fed up as we are going round in circles. They make the perpetrator seem like he never hurt me or my kids.
- Every women needs to go on the project also there should be workshops just for **Social Workers** as they have no idea. I should know as in two years I'm on number 7 social worker. Why funding has to come into it, is stupid, it should not be about money etc. As it costs enough to put our children into care where as in the **Freedom Programme** it was worth every penny.
- **Sure start** case worker was very friendly and helpful and is acting as an advocate for me. Sure start case worker was my voice to help perusing some of my problems
- **Social services** where very bad the social worker fabricated and twisted the facts and then contradicted himself. I requested a copy of assessment I never received this, no plan was put for to protect me and my children. There was nothing to say or plan any sort of counselling for the family. They left me policing around there was no help only advising to put molestation order occupation order and injunction. When I asked police/social workers what I should do after 12 months is over I was advised to reapply again.
- **School** was very good and supportive.
- **Social services** in Croydon need a lot more help in their job of being a social worker. We need better social workers in Croydon borough.

- GP referred family to relevant agencies was good.
- I think the **social services** don't have a clue what they are doing they have in fact put me in more danger than helped; they are not very good putting me and my children's safety at risk. I think social services should do a proper job and not back you into stuff.

Evaluation forms

We asked women who attended the last session:

Compared to before attending Freedom, how do you think the course affected you?

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

Emerging themes: Many women spoke of feeling let down by social services, workers being dismissive and lack of understanding and empathy towards them. Some women spoke of feeling judged and to blame for the abusers behaviour. There was a clear difference of experiences when other women spoke of good support services in Croydon. Women were able to support and encourage each other how to make improvements and complain about bad practice however many women felt when they did complain about bad practice they were not being heard.

Availability of course – 100% of the ladies want to see this available throughout the borough to survivors, professionals, in secondary schools and within the community. Most women throughout the course wanted all professionals to attend the Freedom Programme to gain a better understanding of the difficulties women face and the games Dominators play.

Blame – 100% of women said they felt they were to blame for their situation before attending the group. After the course 88% of the women now felt it was not their behaviour that was to blame for the abuse it was the perpetrators. 12% gave no answer or felt their behaviour was partly to blame.

Children –100% of the mothers who had attendance felt the course had made them better parents and had a positive impact on their children's lives and homes.

Emotional aspects – 100% of women said they were positively affected by attending the course, 88% feeling really positive about their future choices and 12% said they felt more able to look at the future. Women spoke of how emotional the course had been however expressed their gladness continuing through it and reaping the rewards.

Facilitators – When asked how they felt about the facilitator, good or excellent were the comments

Group Aspects – This group had variations of high level abuse. Most of the women had children with the perpetrator or were still in the abusive relationship. Most women had support services involvement. Women spoke of feeling good they had also learned and understood other cultures and the difficulties faced by women, without judging. Many ladies exchanged numbers for friendship but also to exchange ideas and help each other with work projects and exchanging skills. Two women were due babies during the course, one had a baby boy and never missed a week!! The other was due to be born in the last weeks and mum was very sorry to leave.

Learning – 100% of ladies felt it has been a beneficial learning about abusive behaviour. Some clearly struggled when learning about the tactics used to control them. The sexual controller session was a very emotional and challenging session for many women on the course, we lost some regulars after this session. Women openly spoke about tactics that were currently being used to isolate them. This honesty allowed others to speak freely and gave a sense of acceptance in the group

Self Awareness – 75% of the women in this group recognised signs of abuse in their own behaviour and all felt they have went on to change for the better. 88% of women said they felt more confident to use outside agencies for support. 12% said they would still struggle to use support services but now knew they were available.

Results – There were huge transformations within this group. Many women found their voice and bloomed with confidence during the sessions. All women were encouraged to continue their growth so many made plans and had ideas for their future. When asked 'tell me about your future plans?' This is what some wrote: *To continue with volunteering and training/ move on and start a new life for me and my kids safely/ to volunteer and do more courses and study in health care/ I would like to attend more courses such as Encounter Freedom Programme/ help volunteer and get Croydon to provide this course at no cost would be brilliant.*

Strength – Most of the women referred to feeling more confident and being able to recognise abusive behaviour. The women in current abusive relationships or had perpetrators returning to the family home pestering were high in this group. I feel the current abuse was reflected in the ups and downs in confidence throughout the weeks however, all spoke of feeling more able to look at their future plans and feeling emotionally stronger.

Recommendation – 100% of women said they would recommend the Freedom Programme to a friend, 100% of women want to see the Freedom programme available to their children and in schools

Suggestions :

- The crèche should open and shut 15 minutes before and after the programme. It's hard to be on time and settle in the kids.
- Have the last session to talk about things and not a taught session.
- Not so far for me to travel but that's just a small problem
- Want this everywhere for everyone
- Maybe it could be longer there is so much to cover
- Maybe facilitating sessions outside if the weather is hot * change of environment at times is nice
- The staff in the crèche should start a bit earlier so people can get in the room to benefit from the full 2 hours

Changes for future groups:

To discuss an overlap of child care to allow women to settle in and to ground themselves before collecting their children.

As always the feedback has been overwhelming from women who have attended Castle Hill children centre.

Women's Feedback

What tools or skills will you take from this programme?

- ✓ Trust my gut feeling
- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Confidence and my knowledge to tackle the dominator and recognising them
- ✓ Identifying names of the dominator and all the different kinds of abuse
- ✓ understanding the Dominators beliefs
- ✓ Everything
- ✓ Gut instinct
- ✓ Confidence and courage

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

- The 3 men I had children with
- (name ***) for taking my daughter
- My husband
- The men that hurt me, my kids and my family (***fathers full name)
- Pimp
- Not trusting people-MEN
- My heart aching!
- Insecurity
- Arguments (***perpetrators name)

What have you kept in your heart from this course?

- ✓ Not the only one...I am not alone!!!!
- ✓ Everything
- ✓ Friends
- ✓ The support and respect from the other girls
- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Everything
- ✓ Everything especially todo with my kids
- ✓ Everything about the Freedom Project- The whole sessions
- ✓ Tired of disrespectful men

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

- The freedom programme project is an eye opener to all women living or where in DV relationships.
- There's a good chance for women to find strength etc and maybe leave and live a normal healthy life.
- Freedom programme is excellent and very supportive.
- I'm really happy that I took part in the freedom project and they should be a lot more projects like this in every area in London and England. We need more freedom projects.

- The freedom course has taught me a lot about domestic violence its made me more aware of how a man is meant to treat a women, I really believe this course needs to be taught in schools to build awareness. I am a youth worker and I have worked with a lot of girls who have experienced abuse and believe that the abuse they are experiencing is normal *****Please build awareness to enable people to engage in positive relationships*****
- I think everyone should do the freedom programme it has really helped me (professional people to police- social workers)
- I have received no good services from any organisations to help victims of domestic violence except for the freedom programme.
- This course has changed the way I am around my husband and family, he is not happy and says he doesn't like the change, he says I am too strong and full of myself NO IM HAPPY! I wore a shorter skirt and armless top, something he hates, I feel happy and my mum has said she is please I am myself again. He hardly speaks to me now, doesn't bother putting me down anymore because it doesn't penetrate me. I was not going to come to this group I'm so happy I did.
- I was in an abusive relationship for 6 years thought I had moved on and been with my new partner 8 months. Since coming on the course I started recognising signs and abusive tactics and realised I was heading for another abusive relationship. He was at the stage of hitting walls; I ended it before he was hitting me!
- I'm much more confident and stronger I know now I don't need to be with anyone, I'm a good mum and I do a good job!
- I stood at the door and really didn't want to come in to the group it was so nerve wracking and yet it has been amazing. I remember I didn't want to tell you my name, I didn't want to be here. I have learnt it's ok for me to be on my own with my kids now. I am going to be alright.
- I learnt the most from the sexual abuse session it was difficult but worth it I've gone on to use services that will finally help me from childhood abuse I suffered
- The persuader session was an eye opener I was reluctant to attend because he had only pushed me around and held my face tight so I thought I'm not being beaten up but no I can see so much more what he was doing. He has broken me from the inside out.
- I always reacted and looked like an aggressor but now I realise I was just protecting myself from years of abuse at last I understand.
- I keep telling people in my children's school about how good this course is.
- I can't wait until my case conference, I will show social services I'm ready and I know what domestic violence is unlike them.
- The Head worker was the session for me. It was all emotional abuse, you cannot see those scars
- I have learnt so much being on this course
- I was a bit unsure at first as already been on a course and this one just brought back everything. Especially as I am still with HIM! But I soon got over it and enjoyed it so much Brilliant info great great..bloody great!
- Should of been on longer and on more days of the week.
- This should be available for professionals, children, perpetrator and victims.

- Made me realise that I'm not the only mum the social services are out to get and that I am stronger than, I think all thanks to your help Lou thank you xxx
- Loved it
- I have gained my life back. I feel everyone should do this course., its fantastic and lou makes you feel so comfortable. I didn't want to walk in the room but so glad I did its changed me and my out look on everything
- I feel more confident and feel me and my kids will be o.k in the end (drawn a smiley face)
- It was excellent

This feedback was sent to me from a FEP worker whos ladies attended Castle Hill group

Feedback from my families while discussing the Freedom Programme.

"I am more confident now because of the groups I have been going to, like the Freedom Programme.

Able to understand what happens to females, look for things and prevent it happening again for next relationship. I do not want my daughter to be a victim" Also expressed how good the Freedom Programme is and would like it twice a week.

"Freedom Programme is good, Social Services needs to go on it as they think it is easy to come out of a DV relationship need to listen to us"

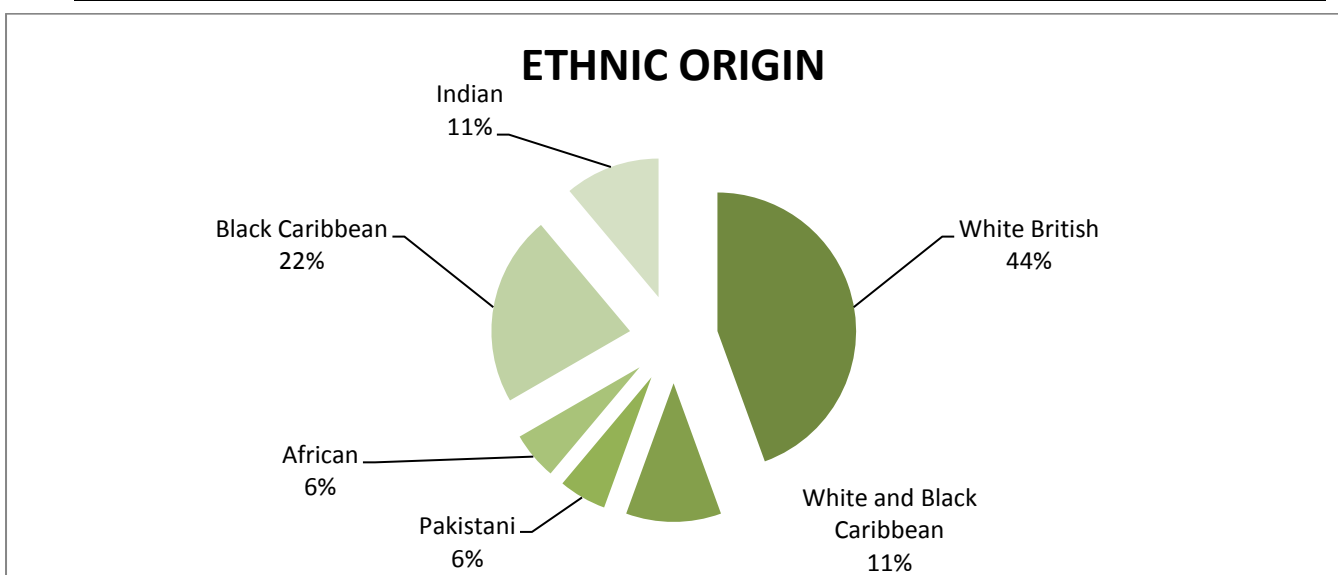
Parents have also discussed how the programme will help them come off CP as their live is much better now as they have never been on a course before.

Many Thanks

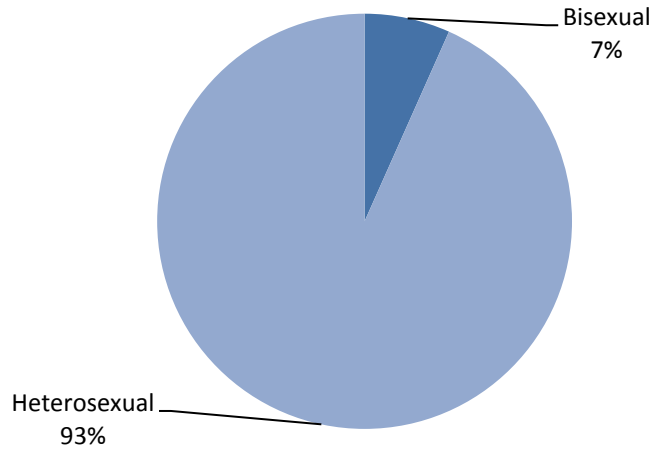
Continued: Client information gathered from completed diversity forms

All clients completed a diversity form on the first session they attend however the information may not always be accurate. Women disclosed throughout the 12 weeks significant harm they had suffered and effects. This is the nature of Domestic Abuse – Hidden! We only know what people feel safe enough to tell us!

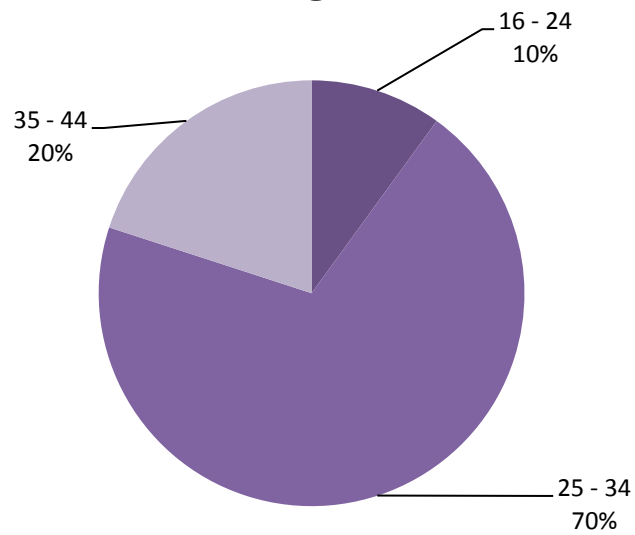
Castle Hill Freedom Together Diversity Monitoring Information



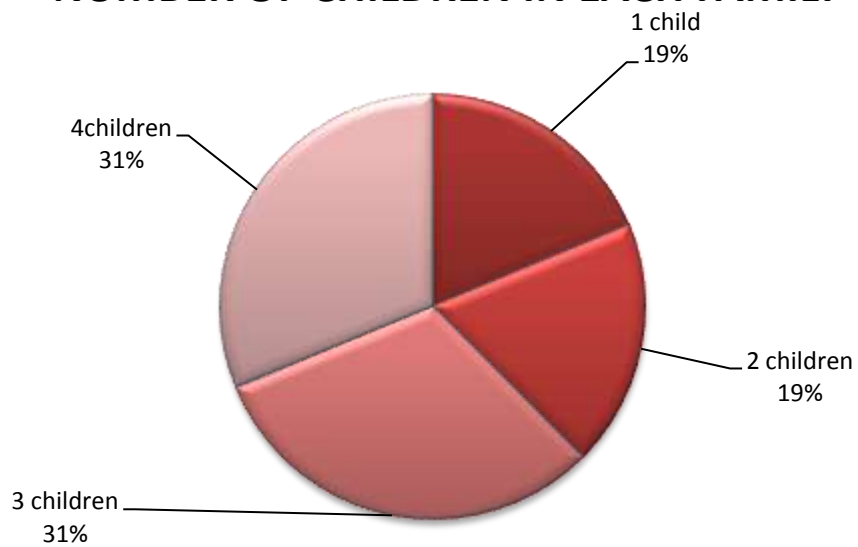
SEXUAL ORIENTATION



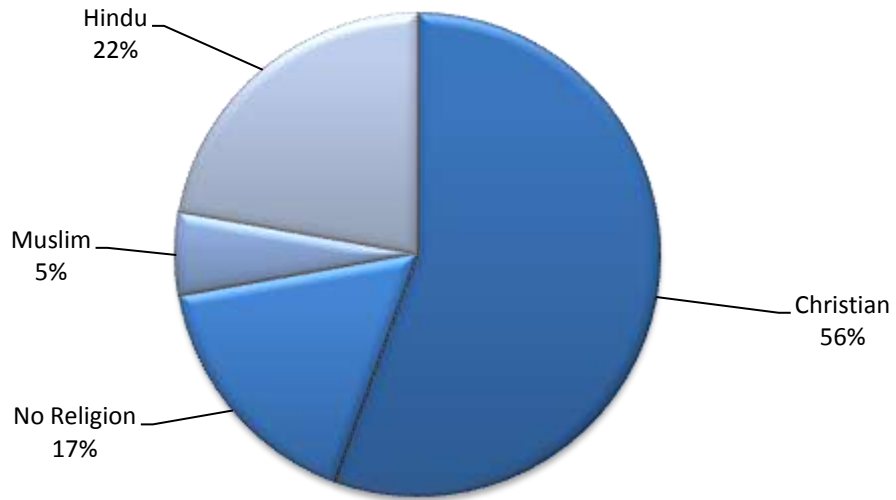
AGE



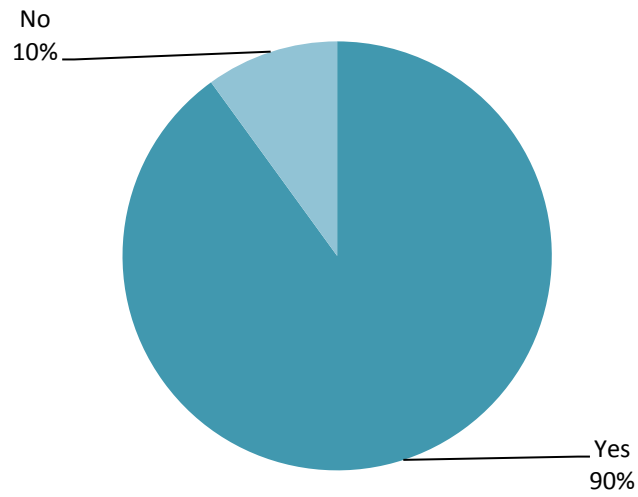
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN EACH FAMILY



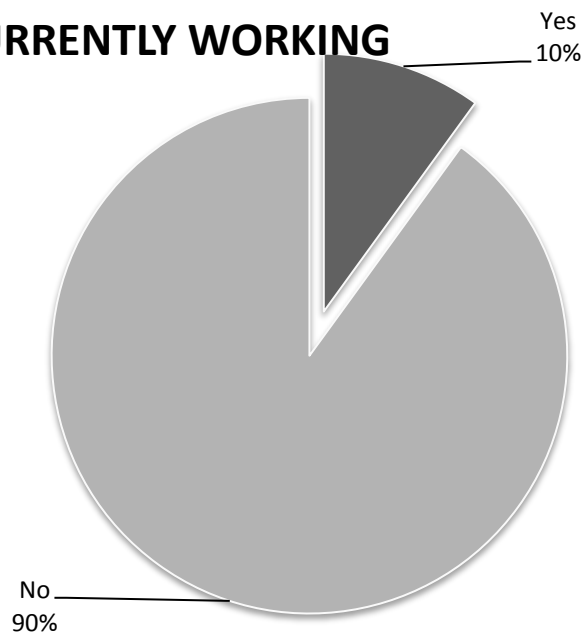
RELIGIOUS BELIEF



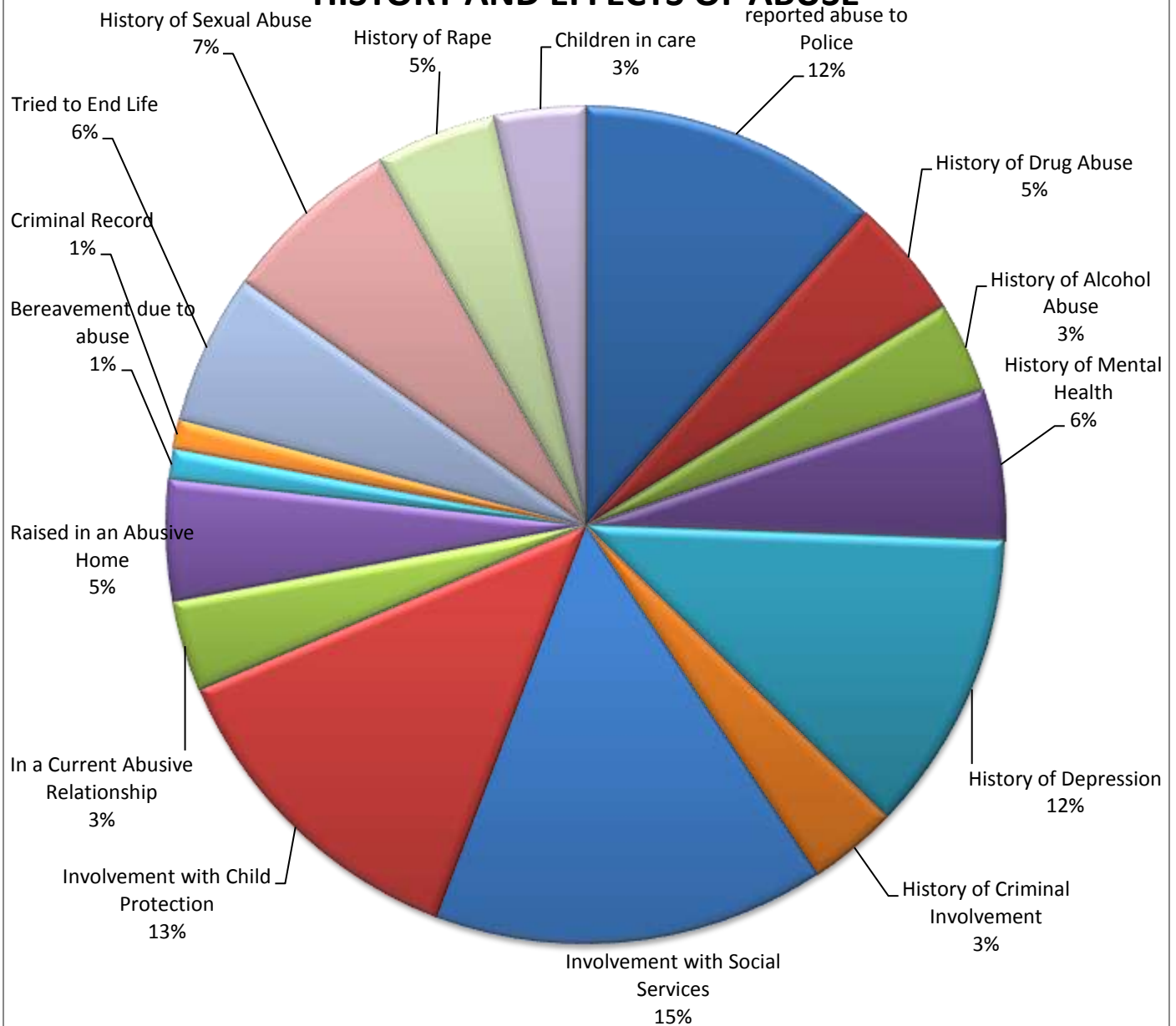
FREE SCHOOL ENTITLEMENT



CURRENTLY WORKING



HISTORY AND EFFECTS OF ABUSE



HISTORIES OF WOMEN AND EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 12% Reported to the Police
- 1% Criminal record
- 3% Criminal Involvement
- 3% In current abusive relationship
- 5% History of drug abuse
- 3% History of alcohol abuse
- 6% History of mental health
- 5% Raised in an abusive home
- 15% Involvement with Social Services
- 4% Involvement with Child Protection
- 1% Suffered a bereavement due to abuse
- 12% History of depression

- 6% Tried to end their life
- 6% History of sexual abuse
- 5% History of Rape
- 3% Children in care

END OF REPORT

'Freedom Together' would like to say a special THANK YOU to the London Borough of Croydon Local Authority for the funding 'Freedom Together' and to Croydon Children Centres for the safe venues and excellent crèche facilities provided to all the families attending the programme, and lastly to all the local agencies for your endless belief, time and support towards helping END VIOLENCE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

Freedom Together

Together we can make a difference!

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