

**"Living Without Violence"  
The first organisation to receive  
Accreditation**

**Binah Taylor. Director of Living without Violence (LWV) talks about how they did it.**

LWV is a small programme, receiving about 60 referrals a year and delivering two men's groups with an integrated women's support service for the (ex)partners. The groups operate as a 36-week rolling programme, and our groups are usually full (8 to 9 members in each). The typical waiting list is between 4-8 weeks. Our referrals mainly come from Social Care Services or the Respect phonenumber with smaller number from arranges of agencies e.g. GPs, solicitors, etc.

We also do assessments for Social Services and/or the family courts, as well as work individually with those who are not able to access group-work. Individual work includes working with women identified as perpetrators (or having significant issues around their aggression), gay men, men whose English is insufficient to keep up in a group setting and men whose mental health needs are such that they cannot use the group effectively.

The women's service provides 1-1 support as well as a women's support group - called The Journey - in partnership with Rise, the DV women's specialist service. This year we would like to deliver a women's perpetrator group as our referrals are on the increase; also there are plans - still in the formative stages - to deliver a gay male perpetrator group in partnership with a locally based GBT specialist agency.

LWV has been operational now for more than five years and we have had the same team delivering the group-work since the beginning (with one addition, a facilitator who used to deliver for IDAP). This has allowed us to build a strong identity as a team, and speaks to the passion and commitment of the team to do this work.

Our struggles, like other programmes I expect, are mainly around securing funding year on year. From September 2004- December 2008 we got most of our funding from the New Deal for Communities grant, and apart from some uncertainties in 2006, we enjoyed relatively stable period in terms of resources. After that it became tricky the NDC came to an end and following a series of difficult negotiations, LWV was finally 'moved' into the Brighton Community Safety Team alongside the Family Intervention Project since. This financial year we received 85% of our funding from the Safe in the City partnership (formerly Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership), and the rest (15%) via income we generate (as a Cafcass

provider, undertaking assessments and reports, individual work which has to be funded either by the referring agency or self-funded).

2010-11 will be tougher as we face budget cuts across the city - we are still in negotiation for the budget post March 2010 but there are positive indicators that we will be funded for this coming year. 2011 will be even tougher...

## **2) Why did you want LWV to be Respect accredited?**

For a number of reasons (and they are all interlinked, in my view):

Firstly, it is the ethos of our team to ensure that our standards as a programme reflect best practice and accreditation was an opportunity to challenge ourselves and achieve that - not only for us professionally but for our clients, so they can experience the best service we can provide. (Our clients have been really pleased that we got the accreditation; I think some see it as adding value to the work they have done in the programme or, in the case of the women, the service they have received.)

Secondly, it was one of the targets in the 2008-11 city DV strategy - led by the Senior Officers DV group and the DV Forum - that LWV would obtain accreditation. Brighton and Hove set up a specialist court in 2008 and the city went through a rigorous process with CPS/CJS to ensure

we had in place all the necessary structures to deliver a co-ordinated response to DV, including both Probation IDAP and community based perpetrator programmes; the partnership also went through CAADA training in setting up our MARAC - these factors made it logical and necessary

that LWV would seek accreditation to 'come in line' with the kind of scrutiny we were undergoing around our DV service provision in the city.

In January 2008 we had been externally evaluated by Reassess, and one of the recommendations was that we should seek accreditation. This, too, fed into the strategy.

Thirdly, there was the hope/expectation that being accredited would give us an advantage in obtaining more secure funding (still to be tested!) as it would raise our profile and 'legitimise' our service. There is still some controversy/fear around perpetrator programmes, and accreditation is I think a useful means to reassure those who are concerned that the programme has been carefully looked at and monitored and meets professional standards.

In terms of our funders and partners: I see being accredited as giving some protection to the way we practice, because in this climate of shrinking budgets, we have already been under pressure to cut corners and deliver for less. So far I have been able to resist that because I can say that as an accredited programme we need to uphold the accreditation standards, which are there in the first place to promote best practice having been developed in consultation with members across the UK.

## **3) There are number accreditation standards that some organisations seem to find a real challenge can I ask you about a few of these:**

**Recording of groups - some services have found it difficult to introduce this to their service can you tell me how you managed this. At LWV, were there problems and how did you get through these?**

We set up recording of groups right in the beginning, as well as live observation, so this was not a problem. I think resistance can be overcome by talking through any fears the facilitators may have, along with being able to talk through with clients the importance of recording and its purpose (as well as having that clearly laid out in the initial contract). Some clients still complain about having a camera pointed at them, but we stand firm. (One of our groups has a portable camera in the room with the observer also in the room; interestingly, that is tolerated really well, better than the other group with the wall cameras and one way mirror, as it is more transparent.)

**How did you find the time to put everything in place?**

It was a challenge, as like most managers (and I'm both a programme and treatment manager) I'm pretty busy. It was especially challenging getting all the policies and procedures to be organised the way they are set out in Respect's standards/components. Our procedures had grown organically (some haphazardly) over time and were, frankly, all over the place. I eventually hired a consultant who knows our work well and is knowledgeable in DV work - he's excellent with fine-tuning procedures and he helped me pull the information together.

**How did you find the funding for this? Did you apply for grant – did it come from the council or donations?**

After our evaluation by Reassess with the recommendation to go for accreditation (the report was disseminated among key players in the city-wide DV partnership), we prioritised finding the funds to pay for accreditation. Fortunately there was an under-spend in the NDC grant that financial year so we were able to pay for the accreditation up front. Later I was able to find some additional funds for the consultant to help with the paperwork around policies and procedures.

**4) How long did it take to get the service ready for accreditation? What tips would you have for others?**

I think in all it took 9 months. My tip is to give it time, don't rush, and set clear timescales around what needs to be in place and who is best placed to help achieve that. Have an overall 'project manager' who can provide clear leadership but also delegate tasks so responsibility is shared along with ownership of the process. I think it is important to get support from Respect early on - a meeting or two right at the start would be good to discuss the process and help the planning ahead. For those who don't have the database Redamos yet, I would urge you to do that before you begin the accreditation process.

**5) What was the biggest accreditation related challenge for your Service?**

Happily, it's rapidly fading into the background, so it's hard to pick out one particular thing. But looking back, as I'm not as organised as I could be, I think it was getting all the policies and procedures in place and to fit in with the Respect criteria/categories. It was also challenging to make sure all the files were up to date with relevant information showing how risk is being managed - the big breakthrough for us was getting our information on the database Redamos; that really helped pull together all the information as well as make the necessary links between the perpetrator side of things with the survivors contact, while keeping the two services discrete.

#### **6) What was the assessment process like for you and other members of Staff?**

I think at times we all found it stressful, but I tried to carry the bulk of the stress to protect the rest of the team. However, because I became increasingly consumed by the process I was not as available or supportive as a manager. I think some staff members found it stressful to go through the interviews with the assessors (along with being viewed on tape); at the same time, they found it positive to have a voice and talk individually about how they see this work and their commitment to it.

To assist with the accreditation and to provide support, we set up a steering group consisting of representatives from key partnerships. This I found really helpful and it would have been even more useful if it had been set up right at the start.

As a team, we were concerned that going through accreditation could have a negative impact on our services while we were going through it. Fortunately, this was not the case and I think this was because we talked it through, and there was also a lot of co-operation within the team. So, all in all, we got through it OK and the service was able to continue without interruptions, and the better for it.

#### **7) Did you learn anything or did the service learn/change anything**

Lots - for example, it helped us to rethink the way we do case management as well as prompted us to make changes in the way we update/hold information in the client files. We definitely upgraded our service by getting the database. In working on the procedures, we strengthened our programme overall - giving us more clarity about our aims and objectives and how we implement them with clients, within the team, and referring agencies. It gave us a chance to look at what we do well, and have done from the beginning, but also revealed gaps (such as with our case management procedures, being clearer with referring agencies how we will work with them as partners, and some internal policies such as having in place a robust DV in the Workplace policy). The good thing was that we had to act swiftly on the gaps!

#### **8) What would you liked more of from Respect**

I think more direct and interactive support in the early stages - conversations, visits to help prioritise the work - along with clearer expectations about what is required would in hindsight have been useful.

**9) Has been accredited made any difference to your funding or the way people value the service?**

I think we are valued more across the city and I feel optimistic that it will help us secure ongoing funding. It certainly has given me more confidence in representing the programme. I think it was also good to have it as a target in the city's DV strategy because in a way it then became a city-wide partnership issue. I think there is the sense that the partnership 'invested' in our accreditation (even though we paid for it) so the programme must not be abandoned now that it is accredited.

As a team I believe it has added to the pride - in a good way! - we have in our programme.

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