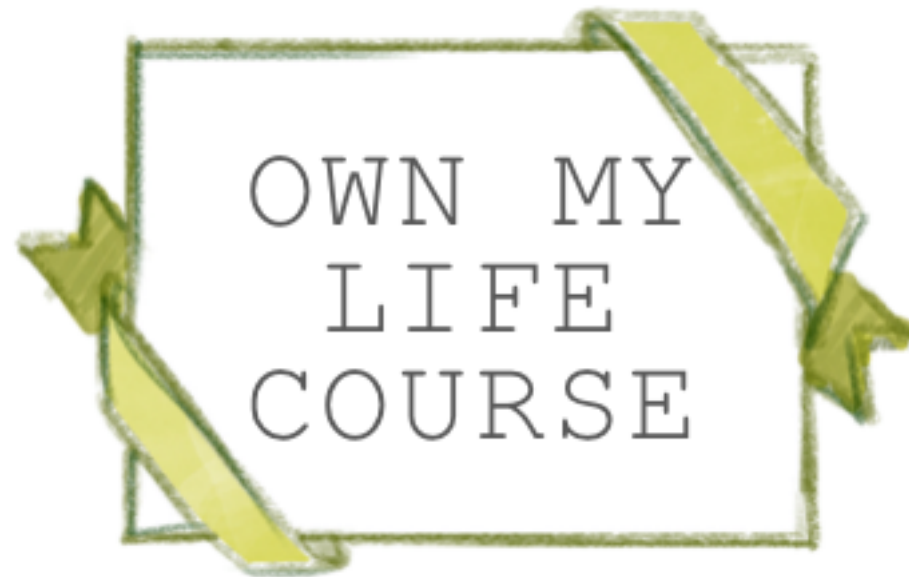


# DRAFT EVALUATION REPORT



The data and outcomes in this report are correct, but the report does not contain all the data from the Zoom Training in 2020 (as a result of COVID-19). These will be added in June 2020 (after our 3rd Zoom training event).

April 2020

The Women's Liberation Collective CIO (registered charity no. 1184411) provides governance for the Own My Life course.

[www.ownmylifecourse.org](http://www.ownmylifecourse.org) | [www.ownmylifecourse.org/wlc](http://www.ownmylifecourse.org/wlc) | [natalie@ownmylifecourse.org](mailto:natalie@ownmylifecourse.org)

The Own My Life course and all materials were funded by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust, and we are extremely grateful for their support. The views expressed within the course and materials are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Trust.

We are so thankful to the organisations who were willing to partner with us in piloting the Own My Life course. Thank you to all the practitioners who trained to be Own My Life facilitators, a huge thank you to all the women who participated in the pilot courses and shared their lives and experiences with us.

Report author: Natalie Collins

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*30% of women in the UK will be abused by a partner. (ONS)*



THIS IS A FRESH, EXCITING AND UP TO DATE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL COURSE FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO DOMESTIC ABUSE.

THIS COURSE WAS SO GOOD IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I ATTENDED A TRAINING THAT HAS HELD ME "CAPTIVE" & HAS INSPIRED ME SO MUCH. THANK YOU.

I'VE REALISED THAT SELF-LOVE DOESN'T MAKE ME SELFISH. I REALLY NEGLECTED MYSELF SO MUCH, BECAUSE I WAS MADE TO FEEL WORTHLESS, THIS COURSE GOT ME BACK ON TRACK AND HELPED ME LEARN TO LIKE MYSELF.

AFTER WATCHING THE UNDERSTANDING THE BRAIN VIDEO I BEGAN TO SHIFT THE TRAUMA AROUND IN MY HEAD, I COULD FEEL IT MOVING AROUND MY HEAD, I WOULD GET A BAD HEADACHE IN THE PART IT WAS IN, AND I WAS ABLE TO MOVE IT TO THE RIGHT PART AFTER A FEW WEEKS. NOW I FEEL MUCH BETTER.

BRILLIANTLY WRITTEN AND PUT TOGETHER. GREAT TRAINING, WELL THOUGHT OUT. FRESH AND SUCH A GREAT INNOVATION AND TOOL.

THIS COURSE IS BANG IN YOUR FACE. IT'S NEW, IT'S RELEVANT, IT'S EXCITING.

EVERYONE HAS SEEN A MASSIVE, LIFE CHANGING IMPROVEMENT IN ME. I WAS READY TO GIVE UP AND END IT AS I COULDN'T COPE. THIS COURSE HELPS SAVE LIVES!!

YOU'VE GOT ALL THESE PEOPLE WHO THINK YOU'RE SILLY FOR GOING BACK OR STAYING WITH HIM AND THIS COURSE HELPS YOU TO KNOW WHY, AND KNOW THAT YOU'RE NORMAL.

I THOUGHT THIS COURSE WAS GOING TO BE A PILE OF SH\*T BECAUSE I THOUGHT I KNEW EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT ABUSE, BUT NOW I TELL EVERYONE I KNOW ABOUT IT AND THEY ALL WANT TO DO THE COURSE.



# What is the Own My Life course?

- Jan 2010 - DAY Programme established
- Mar 2014 - Began writing the course
- Oct 2017 - Secured funding from Sir Halley Stewart Trust
- Dec 2018 - Finished writing course
- Feb 2019 - Start training pilot organisations to run the course.
- Jul 2019 - The Women's Liberation Collective registered as a charity to governance the Own My Life course
- Feb 2020 - Finished Own My Life course pilots
- April 2020 - Subsidised training events start

The Own My Life course is based on the latest research on trauma and male violence and is an innovative, creative, and educational 12-week course for women who have been subjected to male violence. The course enables organisations to support women in regaining ownership of their lives after they have been in a relationship with an abuser.

After attending three-day Own My Life Facilitator Training, practitioners can deliver the course to women. Upon completion of the Facilitator Training, practitioners are provided with all the resources to run the course with up to 10 women. Resources for further groups can be ordered.

The Own My Life course uses multi-media content to explain trauma and show messages within popular culture that reinforce or perpetuate sexism, rape culture, violence, disrespect in relationships and abusive behaviour. The 22 Own My Life course videos explain complex concepts in easy to understand terms, with the Own My Story journal providing participants with all the ideas, key concepts and content from the course with space for reflection and notes. At the end of the course, if it is safe to do so,

participants can take their journal away to continue their learning and reflection.

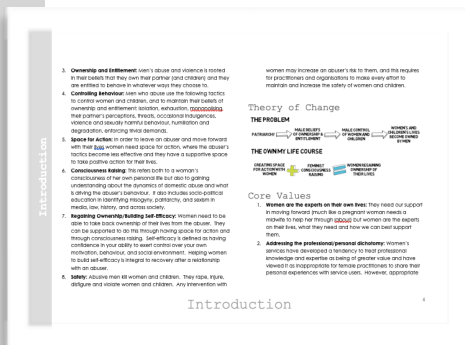
The format for each session includes six key elements: Own My Mind, Own My Body, Own My Choices, Own My Relationships, Own My World, Own My Feelings.

The first session introduces women to the course and its values. The final week is the Own My Future session and includes opportunity for participants to create an action plan for developing a self-organised group (the Own My Group course).

The Own My Life is under the governance of The Women's Liberation Collective CIO (registered charity no. 1184411). The course was created by Natalie Collins and was funded by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust. Natalie first delivered programmes for women in 2010. After creating the DAY Programme and training hundreds of practitioners to deliver the DAY Programme to young people in schools, youth groups, youth offending services, youth housing services and more.

*"I was a police officer for more than 25 years and I regard domestic violence as terrorism on an epic scale. It's a disease of pandemic proportions, it's the single greatest cause of harm in society." Police Chief Superintendent John Sutherland*





# Why is the Own My Life course needed?

- 30% of women across England and Wales will be abused by a partner or ex (ONS, 2014).
- In England and Wales, 92% of defendants in domestic abuse related crime are male (ONS, 2014).
- 750,000 children a year witness a parent being abusive to a partner (Women's Aid).
- In 2018, 147 women were killed by men in the UK (Counting Dead Women).
- Domestic violence perpetration costs the UK approximately £5.7 billion (Walby, 2009).

The rates at which men are harming women is horrifying. This impacts women and their children dramatically and in long-lasting ways. The Own My Life course helps women to make sense of what has been done to them and gives them the skills to move forward. This course not only gives women information about what abuse is and why their partner or ex would choose to be abusive, it also explores the science of trauma and stress, sexism and misogyny in wider society, safety planning, and motherhood and abuse. It provides high quality videos to articulate complicated concepts in easy to understand ways, and enables women to discover what their strengths are and how they can move forward with their lives.

## Course Aims

- To educate and empower women who have been subjected to abuse to regain ownership of their own lives.
- To equip and resource practitioners with the most up to date research and understanding about male violence.
- To provide a replicable, easy to use resource for working with women.

## Course Objectives

- Complete 12 sessions of the Own My Life course.
- Complete 6 Own My Group sessions.
- Enable participants to recognise abusive and non-abusive behaviours.
- Raise consciousness with participants (and facilitators) about a feminist understanding of male violence, patriarchy, misogyny and sexism.
- Build participant (and facilitator) literacy about trauma.



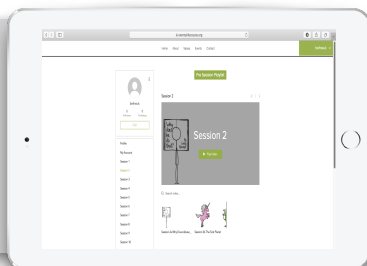
## Course materials



The WoManual includes session plans, forms & a full copy of the Own My Story journal. Each facilitator needs a copy of the WoManual.



The Own My Story journal includes scripts of all the videos, the course quizzes and other activities, and a way for women to record their journey on the course. Each course participant needs a journal.



The e-Hub includes the 22 course videos, additional video content, course playlists, forms, evaluation spreadsheet and more. Each facilitator is provided with a login for the e-Hub.



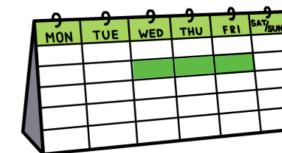
The other course materials include traffic light laminates & pens for the weekly Own My Choices activity, string for a Session 2 activity, the evaluation ballot box & emojis. Each organisation needs one set.



## Facilitator training

Own My Life course training is for practitioners within women's services and other organisations working to respond to domestic abuse and sexual violence. The Women's Liberation Collective partners with organisations, local authorities and individuals to deliver Own My Life course training.

A partner organisation provides a venue and training participants. The training takes place over three consecutive days; normally running from 9.30am - 5.30pm. As a result of the Corona virus, we have developed an online training course and are developing a WoManual for online course delivery.



### Training includes:

- Full instruction in running the Own My Life course.
- Comprehensive domestic abuse education.
- Building literacy in the physiology of trauma.
- The course WoManual.
- 10x Own My Story journals for running the course.
- Other course materials.
- Access to the Own My Life e-Hub.

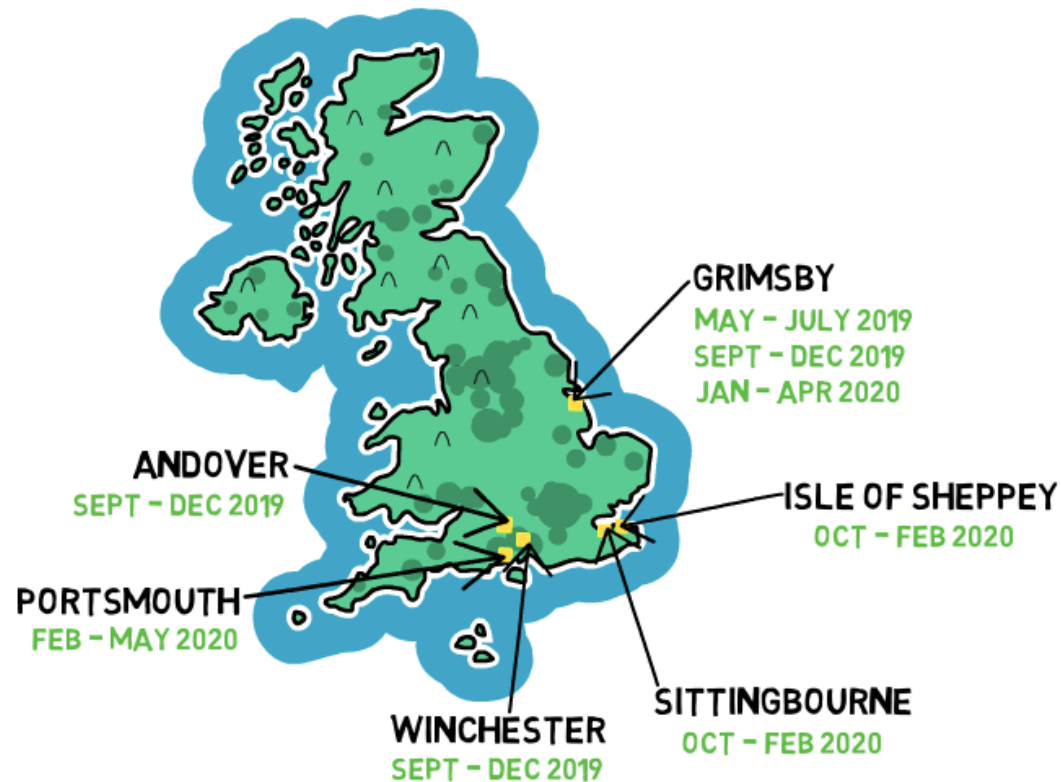
	Own My Self	Own My Mind	Own My Body	Break	Own My Choices	Own My Relationships	Own My World	Own My Feelings
Time	15 mins	15 mins	15 mins	15 mins	15 mins	15 mins	15 mins	10 mins
Type	My favourite	Flipchart	Video		Traffic lights	Quiz	Video	Writing
Session 1	Introduction	Group rules	Own my story journal		The Holiday			
Session 2	Place	What is abuse?	Why does abuse exist?		Fixing things	Relationships	The Sick Planet	
Session 3	Song	Why can't we leave?	The Seven Steps of a Break Up		Leaving	Communication	Women's Rights Timeline	
Session 4	Food	Cycle of abuse	The Five Fs		Resistance	Relationship myths/truths	Victim blaming	
Session 5	Film	Neural Pathways	Understanding the Brain		Moving on	Collusion	The Soundtrack of Our Lives	
Session 6	Animal	Safety planning	Online Safety		Living safer	Stranger Danger	Intersectionality	
Session 7	Book	DASH	Power Play		Leaving safer	Decision Inhibitors	Formal/Informal Reinforcements	
Session 8	Activity	Values	Traumatic Attachment		Personal integrity	Singleness	Adverts Hurt	
Session 9	Clothing	The Holiday for Children	The Power Threat Meaning Framework		Dealing with child contact	Children's Roles	Body Modification	
Session 10	Number	Needs	Sexual Control		Attachment Seeking Children	Assertiveness	Rape Prevention	
Session 11	Fairy tale	New partner values	The Stress Cycle		Love Bombing	Dating Calendar	I Am Whole	
Session 12	Cake	Reflect	Discuss		Kind words	What next?	Evaluations and certificates	

Course timetable

## Own My Life course pilots

Across 2018/19 there were three facilitator training events piloted across England and 32 practitioners trained as Own My Life course facilitators. Six pilot courses have been delivered across England, run by three domestic abuse services in their outreach services, and one women's refuge. The pilot organisations, Andover Crisis and Support, North East Lincolnshire Women's Aid, SATEDA and Stop Domestic Abuse were recruited through existing relationships with domestic abuse services.

<b>3</b>	Pilot facilitator training events	<b>32</b>	Practitioners trained
<b>58</b>	Women started pilot courses	<b>48</b>	Women completed pilot courses
<b>5</b>	Courses run in outreach services	<b>1</b>	Course run in a refuge



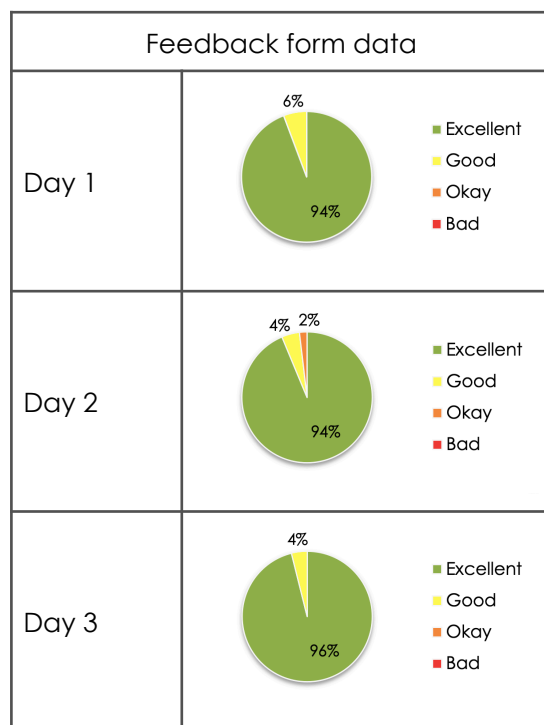
Map and dates of pilot courses, the Portsmouth and 3rd Grimsby pilot are not included in the evaluation data.



Photos from pilot facilitator training.



# What did practitioners say about the pilot training?



AMAZING PROGRAMME. THE MISSING LINK WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR, FOR YEARS!!! GOING TO HAVE A HUGE IMPACT (POSITIVE!) ON WOMEN'S LIVES.

SUCH AN INSPIRING COURSE. THE TRAINER WAS AMAZING. CAN'T WAIT TO TRIAL THE PROGRAMME.

BRILLIANT. EVERYTHING ABOUT THE TRAINING MADE SENSE. FLOWED GREAT & WAS DELIVERED WELL. WHAT AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE.

3 DAYS OF EXCELLENT TRAINING. I CAN SEE HOW THIS WILL HELP WOMEN MOVE ON TO FURTHER INDEPENDENCE.

THIS COURSE WAS SO GOOD IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I ATTENDED A TRAINING THAT HAS HELD ME "CAPTIVE" & HAS INSPIRED ME SO MUCH. THANK YOU.

THIS IS A FRESH, EXCITING AND UP TO DATE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL COURSE FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO DOMESTIC ABUSE.

BRILLIANTLY WRITTEN AND PUT TOGETHER. GREAT TRAINING, WELL THOUGHT OUT. FRESH AND SUCH A GREAT INNOVATION AND TOOL.

IT IS INVALUABLE. EVERYONE SHOULD COMPLETE THE TRAINING AND THE COURSE - LIFE CHANGING!

THIS IS A GREAT PROJECT THAT CAN REALLY HELP VULNERABLE WOMEN INCREASE THEIR SELF-VALUE, WORTH & CONTROL OF THEIR LIFE.

## Feedback from practitioners about the WoManual and other course resources.

THE JOURNAL IS BRILLIANT. SUCH A BEAUTIFUL RESOURCE FOR PEOPLE TO KEEP.

THE E-HUB IS AMAZING! GREAT TO HAVE ALL INFO IN ONE PLACE, ACCESSIBLE TO ALL.

VERY WELL SET OUT, GREAT CONTENT, LOOKS FABULOUS; LOVE THE STRUCTURE.

FOOL PROOF. VERY USER FRIENDLY

AMAZING - LOVE THE WAY THE COURSE IS FULLY LAID OUT IN THE WOMANUAL.

ONCE I FOUND MY WAY AROUND IT, IT WAS EASIER TO USE AND UNDERSTAND.

ABSOLUTELY LOVE IT!

# What did we learn from the pilot preparation and training?

It is possible to deliver the training over four 5-hour days

The training for the Sittingbourne/Isle of Sheppey pilots was attended by practitioners with child-care responsibilities. This meant they could not commit to three consecutive 9.30am - 5.30pm training days. We delivered this training over two sets of two short days (9.30am - 2.30pm), one week apart. This worked well for the trainees, and is something we could offer for future groups.

## THE PROS:

- More accessible for women with children.
- Trainees said they liked the week's break as it helped with processing the content.

## THE CONS:

- Trainer travel and accommodation costs are increased
- Teaching time is reduced by 3 hours.

## Feminism Session

There was originally no intention to include a training session on feminism, however the Grimsby participants requested it. It has now become a core part of the training as it is helpful to locate the course within the wider values and history of the women's movement. Some trainees found the session quite intense, so over the three training events it has developed and become more effective.

## Storage costs

As we progress we will need to incorporate resource storage costs into budgets, as it is more cost effective to bulk-buy materials, but they then take up a lot of space.

## Typos and editing

Although all the material had been copy edited, there were still some typos in the material. Trainees were willing to report these to us and became part of our editing team.

## Demonstrating the e-Hub throughout

At first, during training we used the course videos embedded within the PowerPoint presentation, but realised it was better to access the videos on the online e-Hub, to consistently demonstrate how it is accessed and used. However, this is only possible if the training venue has wifi or other internet access facilities.

## Cost of resources

Originally, the course resources and training materials budget was £1000. However, the total cost came to £3377.66. As the project progressed, the size of the Own My Story journal and the WoManual increased, other resources were needed and printing costs were higher than anticipated. These costs were recouped as we didn't need content and copy editing for the training materials. This has created a challenge in taking the course forward, as each woman will need an Own My Story journal which costs £10 each, facilitators need a £40 WoManual and the additional course materials cost £60. In order to ensure the course is affordable to women's services, we are working to secure grant funding and build a longer term sustainability plan.

## Pilot training cancellation

One pilot organisation cancelled the training at last minute and withdrew from the pilot, with trainer accommodation costs unable to be recouped. This has led us to include a commitment to pay and attend the training as part of the application process.

## Equal Opportunities Data

We hadn't initially intended to collect data on participant ethnicity, class, disability etc, but chose to after starting the pilot courses.

# Pilot Courses Start and End of Course Evaluations

## How did we collect evaluation data?

- Each trainee completed a training evaluation form.
- Each course participant completed start and end of course evaluation forms. The facilitators entered the data from these into the Own My Life course evaluation spreadsheet (downloaded from the e-Hub). After the course finished, they sent the spreadsheet to us.
- On Session 6 and Session 12 (or a session close to this) we met with each pilot group (except Grimsby 2) and invited their feedback. We also had a separate meeting each time with the pilot facilitators.
- We had a phone call with the course facilitators after the Own My Life Group course

## What does the data show us?

- In every category, course participants report significant progress.
- Participants from all pilot groups consistently describe the course as life-changing.
- Facilitators across all pilots consistently say that the course is changing women's lives and that the course is a pleasure to facilitate.
- Facilitators take the learning from the Own My Life course into other areas of their lives and role.

	Before Own My Life course	After Own My Life course
I feel like I am in control of my life and my future.	<p> <span>■ Definitely</span>  <span>■ Mostly</span>  <span>■ Sometimes</span>  <span>■ Never</span> </p>	<p> <span>■ Definitely</span>  <span>■ Mostly</span>  <span>■ Sometimes</span>  <span>■ Never</span> </p>
I can make sense of my life.	<p> <span>■ Definitely</span>  <span>■ Mostly</span>  <span>■ Sometimes</span>  <span>■ Never</span> </p>	<p> <span>■ Definitely</span>  <span>■ Mostly</span>  <span>■ Sometimes</span>  <span>■ Never</span> </p>
Overall, I feel good about my life.	<p> <span>■ Definitely</span>  <span>■ Mostly</span>  <span>■ Sometimes</span>  <span>■ Never</span> </p>	<p> <span>■ Definitely</span>  <span>■ Mostly</span>  <span>■ Sometimes</span>  <span>■ Never</span> </p>

# Pilot Courses Start and End of Course Evaluations

	Before Own My Life course	After Own My Life course
I have family and/or friends that love and support me.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
I know where to go if I need help with difficulties in my life (e.g. money, health, job, education).	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
I like and feel safe in my neighbourhood and/or community.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
I am as healthy as I can be.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
I feel safe.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>

92% of defendants in domestic abuse related crime are male. (ONS)





# Pilot Courses Start and End of Course Evaluations

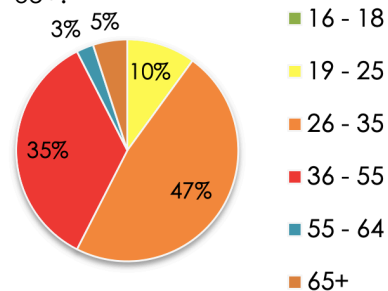
	Before Own My Life course	After Own My Life course
I know what domestic abuse is.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
I think that the things I see and hear in songs, newspapers, TV programmes, magazines, and adverts affect how I see myself and my life.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
I feel in control of my finances/money.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
If I am a parent and am in contact with my children, I feel able to meet their needs.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
If I am a parent, I am confident that my children know that I love them.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>

# Who Attended the Own My Life course pilots?

Pilot organisations invited women within their services to join the Own My Life course, this was on a "first come first served" basis. Most women had previously attended other courses run by the pilot organisations, usually the Freedom Programme. Some had also completed (or were in the process of completing) the Power To Change. Some of the women were still with an abusive partner, but most had already left him and were seeking to move on with their lives. Many, but not all of the women had children, most still had their children in their care (or their children were adults).

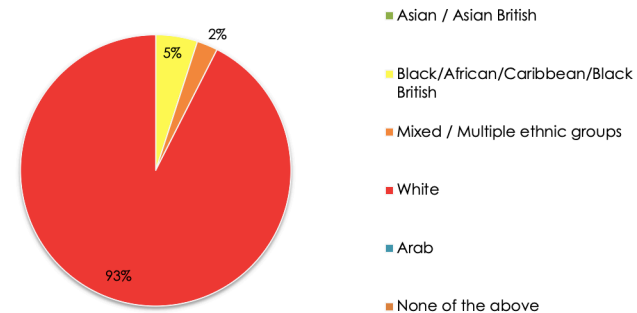
## Age

Participants were aged between 19 - 65+.



## Ethnicity

93% of participants were white. 5% were black and 2% were white/asian.



## Class

Women were invited to self-define their class. Of the 40 who completed this part of the evaluation:

- 12 x working class
- 2 x middle class
- 1 x poor
- 2 x upper working class
- 1 x "I'm just class!!"

## Sexuality

Women were invited to self-define their sexuality. Of the 40 who provided details:

- 21 x straight
- 1 x Lesbian.
- 1 x Non-sexual/asexual.

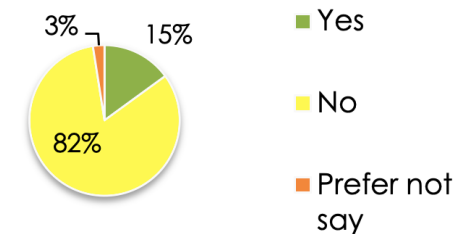
## Religion

Women were asked to self-define their faith or religion. Of the 40 who completed this part:

- 19 x none.
- 8 x Christian.
- 3 x Catholic.
- 3 x Church of England.
- 1 x Muslim.
- 1 x "love church and the community, but unsure about God".

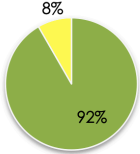
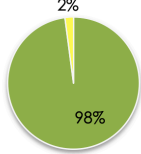
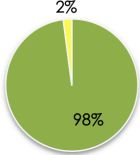
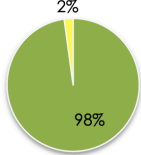
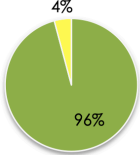

## Disability

15% of women described themselves as having a disability.



Of those with a disability, 50% had mental health problems, 33% had a mobility impairment and 17% had a hearing impairment.

## Women's experiences of the course

I enjoyed the Own My Life Course.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	The course facilitators were helpful and supported my learning.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
I learned a lot through the course.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	I like the Own My Story journal.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>
The course has helped me to understand my life better.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>	I would recommend the course to other women.	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Definitely</li> <li>Mostly</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Never</li> </ul>

### Dawn

"When you do therapeutic work, it's like you're digging dirt out of a pot. Through the course I was able to face talking about stuff I've never been able to talk about before. I got to the end of my pot! I got all the dirt out."

### Yvonne

Yvonne's abusive ex-partner has custody of their children. Through the course, Yvonne now feels strong enough to go back to court to seek custody of her children.

### Hannah

Before coming on the Own My Life course, Hannah couldn't leave her home without support. As a result of attending the course, she has joined a local support group and is able to travel to the group on her own.



## Women's experiences of the course



### Sarah's Story

Before starting the Own My Life course, Sarah had attended other domestic abuse programmes and was still with her abusive husband. She says, "This course has definitely helped me to get to a place where I can leave my husband. It has helped me understand why I feel the way I do and that it's normal to feel like this." Sarah explains, "I've realised that all my needs are dependent on my husband. But now I know there's a way past that, which is what the course has helped me to see."



### Lara's Story

Lara had been in a relationship with Toby for decades. She knew that if she cried, Toby would always hurt her more, so she learned to only cry when she was in the shower. After leaving him, she says she wanted to focus on being happy, moving forward and ignoring the past. Through the Own My Feelings activity, Lara began to realise it was okay to feel sad, she had a dream where she was crying and woke up still crying. She says that she realises that she needs to deal with the past in order to move forward, and is now able to cry if she needs to.



### Abigail's Story

Abigail explained that the Neural Pathways activity made her realise she had become obsessed with ensuring that the car and TV volume controls were on even numbers. She had convinced herself that if they were on an odd number, something bad would happen. Through the activity she identified that she did this to feel a sense of control. Over the following week she chose to have the volume control on odd numbers, and nothing bad happened! She said that doing this has really helped her.



### Karen's Story

Karen has ADHD and has never really engaged with domestic abuse services. She only attended the course because her friend invited her. She says, "I thought this course was going to be a pile of sh\*t because I thought I knew everything I needed to know about abuse, but now I tell everyone I know about it and they all want to do the course." Facilitators say that, "Karen has loved the course so much." Karen says "It's like the course has been designed especially for people like me with ADHD".

## Women's experiences of the course

### Judith

"I've used the course materials to help my friend, I've been able to help her through abuse. I can't wait to show her the journal!"

### Marie

"I was admitted to hospital one week because of a health problem and I was crying on the ward, not because of my health, but because I couldn't do the course. I was in my bed crying and saying, 'I wanna go to the course!'"

### Katy

"Every time I've spoken to refuge or domestic abuse workers or whatever and I say I don't want a new relationship, they all tell me that I will and they sort of say that until I do I haven't really recovered. That's all I've had from services, like the goal of my life is to have a new relationship. This is the first time I've felt like I'm being told it's okay that I want to be on my own."

### Tara

Tara had been offered counselling a number of times, but didn't feel she needed it. As a result of being on the Own My Life course, she has begun counselling and finds it really helpful.

### Hayley

Hayley had begun dating a guy after starting the course. She was concerned about his behaviour and told the group. They confirmed her worries and as a group they constructed a breakup text message to him. Hayley says she's relieved she realised early enough and had that validated by the group



# What did participants say about the Own My Life course?





# How did running the course in a refuge work?

## The Context

The refuge provides bedrooms, rather than self-contained flats for women and their children. They had previously run courses for residents, but had found that the complexities of living together and sharing personal information in a group had not worked. However, after two of the refuge staff attended facilitator training, they were keen to try running the course with a group of women. Limiting the course to 10 places, residents were all invited to attend on a "first come first served" basis. The course was made up of 8 refuge residents and 2 "civilians" who were engaged with the service's outreach provision.

## The challenges

- Not all the women were able to complete the course because they moved out of the refuge before the last session.
- There are no childcare facilities onsite.
- If women get jobs or have appointments related to being in the refuge, this can prevent or diminish their ability to attend.
- There can be fallings out when women are living together which create tension during the course, however the facilitators said this was not a big issue during the pilot course.
- It was impossible to run the 6-week "Own My Group" follow-on course because participants either moved on from refuge or had other appointments or commitments.

I ENCOURAGED THE GROUP TO BE MORE ASSERTIVE IN REFUGE, LIKE WHEN ANOTHER RESIDENT ASKS THEM TO BABYSIT, THEY SHOULD SAY NO IF THEY DON'T WANT TO. ALL WEEK LONG THE WOMEN HAVE BEEN TELLING ME HOW IT'S WORKED. AND EVEN RESIDENTS WHO AREN'T ON THE COURSE ARE PRACTICING BEING ASSERTIVE.

I JOINED THE COURSE BECAUSE IT'S IN MY REFUGE AND MY KEY WORKER IS RUNNING THE COURSE, I WOULDN'T HAVE GONE IF I HAD TO DO IT WITH STRANGERS.

## The benefits

- Some residents were deeply traumatised and said they would never have joined a course that was not provided within the refuge building. One woman said that just leaving the course room and going back to her bedroom within the refuge could be challenging.
- Participants felt really safe doing the course in the refuge, knowing that no abusers "can get in" to where the course is running.
- Each week, content from the group would be shared across the refuge, including with women who were not on the course. One facilitator said, "I can hear women in the garden, they're talking about the group all day."



# How did it work to run the course in partnership?

## The Context

One of the pilot courses was run as a partnership between a domestic abuse service and a local Salvation Army church. The church's minister was trained and she provided the venue for the course, and the domestic abuse service provided the primary facilitator, the course participants and a volunteer to support the course delivery. This partnership emerged after three Salvation Army church ministers attended pilot facilitator training.

**THE WOMEN ARE JOINING  
THE DOTS ABOUT DIFFERENT  
SUPPORT THEY CAN GET IN  
THE COMMUNITY.**

**LYNNE HAS BEEN BRILLIANT;  
SO OPEN AND NICE. FAITH  
ISN'T RAMMED DOWN  
PEOPLE'S THROATS.**

## The challenges

- This could have been a challenging partnership, however the facilitators, the church and the domestic abuse service were respectful of one another, with the church minister deferring to the specialist knowledge of the domestic abuse service.
- There were no challenges involved in this partnership, the domestic abuse service facilitator says, "The emphasis was about helping the community, not faith."

## The benefits

- The church was able to provide resources (a facilitator and a venue) which reduced the cost to the domestic abuse service of running the course.
- Two course participants have begun taking their children to the weekly toddler group run by the church, and facilitators say it is through attending the course that the women have felt enabled to make use of this community resource.
- It has helped with signposting women to a broader range of local services.
- One of the activities explores the ways different people may collude with the abuser, including religious leaders. The facilitators noted that it was helpful to have a religious leader present during this activity.



# Does the course work as a standalone resource?

## How was the Own My Life course designed to work?

Although designed to be a standalone course, the majority of women who participated in pilot courses had previously been part of other courses. This was because:

1. The organisations who were willing to pilot the course are already invested in group work, with staff members who are experienced in group facilitation.
2. It was safer to run the course with a majority of women who had already begun their journey towards recovery.
3. As the course covers a lot of moving-on resources, pilot organisations wanted to use it with women who had already begun that journey.

In light of this, it was important to consider whether or not the Own My Life course can be used as a standalone resources or whether it needs to follow other courses. Participants and facilitators were asked their thoughts about this.

## What courses had women participated in?

- Freedom Programme: A 12-week course that enables women to recognise and understand abusive behaviour.
- Power To Change: A 10 - 12 week course which aims to: change patterns of behaviour, accept responsibility to change and challenge beliefs about experiences; raise awareness of women's basic rights; build self esteem, self determination, confidence and empowerment.
- Other: Some organisations have developed in-house courses for women which seek to build self-esteem and/or employability skills.

## Yes it can be standalone

Participants said:

- "I want things that move me forward...In Freedom I just go back to being frozen whereas with this course I feel relaxed."
- Own My Life is "more modern" and "more real" than Freedom.

Facilitators said:

- "I thought doing this course straight off could be like throwing them into a fire pit, but it wasn't like that."
- "I think this course could answer the questions that Freedom also seeks to ask."
- "If women are accessing the course in an area where Freedom didn't run, it would be fine for them to enter straight onto the Own My Life course."
- "It suits the younger generation better than Freedom."
- "It wouldn't make any difference without the Freedom Programme."
- "It's different enough to Power To Change; in the Power To Change we're teaching people, in the OML course they're learning it for themselves."
- "Previous Own My Life course participants have told new refuge residents how good the course is with new residents saying they'll wait until we run Own My Life again, rather than start Freedom."

## Maybe it can be standalone

Participants said:

- "You'll get more out of the Own My Life course if you've done Freedom."
- "This course is really good when you're out of the situation."

Facilitators said:

- "The course feels like a bigger commitment than Freedom, and so having done Freedom means that women know that they're able to commit to the whole course."
- "Freedom can be passive, the Own My Life course isn't, so it needs a readiness to fully take part."
- "It should be after doing Freedom, as then they won't be hiding stuff because they've already started to open up about what's gone on for them."





A word cloud:  
when asked for  
their words to  
describe their  
experience of the  
course, women  
used these words.  
The sizing  
correlates to how  
many women used  
the word.

# Engaging women with complex needs

## Culture and religion

The pilot organisations tended to be in predominantly white, working class areas and while efforts were made to organise pilot courses in more diverse areas, the priority was organisational commitment to the course. Facilitators in two pilot groups reported that the course had enabled women (both originally from West Africa) to open up about harmful and misogynistic elements of their culture, alongside white British women in every pilot identifying and speaking about harm and misogynistic elements of British culture. One of the activities is about intersectionality and women said of this:

- "I liked that the course touched on other inequalities and culture and religion. It opens people's minds that we are all human."
- "As women we're discriminated against, but other people are as well."
- One facilitator said, "It allowed us to challenge things, like how people can be homophobic or racist."

**I WAS WORRIED THAT THE COURSE WOULD BE TOO MUCH FOR WOMEN WITH COMPLEX NEEDS, HOWEVER IT IS MANAGEABLE AND POSITIVE, NOT ONLY FOR WOMEN THEMSELVES BUT BECAUSE WOMEN WITH COMPLEX NEEDS CAN SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE WITH THE GROUP.**

**I'M DYSLEXIC AND I LIKE THE PICTURES AND VIDEOS AND THE JOURNAL. IT TAKES ME A BIT LONGER TO PROCESS BUT IT'S SO EASY. IT'S NOT TOO MUCH WRITING, NOT TOO MUCH READING.**

## Literacy challenges

While the Own My Story journal does require some reading and writing, it is designed to be accessible. It has spaces for drawing and dyslexia-friendly fonts have been used throughout. Also the videos provide a way of engaging that requires very little literacy. I asked participants and facilitators about whether they felt the course was accessible for those with literacy challenges:

- One participant said her literacy issues didn't stop her from participating fully in the course.
- Another participant said she had dyslexia and had been able to engage fine.
- One woman said, "I'm not good at writing", but said that she had joined in fully and that it hadn't been a barrier to being part of the course.

## Neurodiversity

The course has lots of different types of engagement, and does acknowledge neurodiversity in an activity about decision inhibitors. One participant described herself as having severe Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and she was hugely enthusiastic about the course. She said that "what is good is that it chops and changes and that has kept me engaged."

## Disability

One participant particularly said she had found the safety planning activity and weekly traffic light exercises helpful, "Because I've got disabilities."

## Emotional needs

All women who have been subjected to abuse have complex emotional needs. Some specific reflections from facilitators and participants included:

- One facilitator was a keyworker for some of the participants and this has been really helpful in continuing conversations about course content.
- Another facilitator said, "One woman leaves mid-session and comes back when she feels able to. The rest of the group are supportive of her; she has a lot of additional needs."
- One participant said, "I'm going through a police investigation at the moment and the course is helping me to cope with that."

# What exercises were particularly valuable to women?

## String Activity (Session 3)

The activity aims to help women identify why it is so difficult to leave an abusive partner. Women said:

- "It made you think and was very clever. It was quite emotional."
- "It makes you think again and breaks down barriers because it makes everyone say something."
- "When we were in the web, people don't understand how hard it is to get out, but now we do."

## The Sick Planet

(Session 2)

This video helps participants to identify the impact of patriarchy on their lives and society, many participants said this was really helpful to them.

## Understanding trauma (Session 3 & 4)

All participants agreed that the videos and activities that helped them understand trauma were invaluable. Women said:

- "Learning about the Rewind Technique really helped me, because I struggle with intrusive thoughts, and now I have started to treat the memories as if they happened to a different person and I don't have them as much now."
- "I found out I was the sixth woman who had reported him. The video triggered me, but it did help. I had blamed myself a lot, but the video helped me not to."

## Why Does Abuse Exist? (Session 2)

Challenging the myths about abuse, this video explains why men choose to be abusive. Many participants said it had been helpful to them, with one saying:

- "This video was so helpful to me, I drew the diagram of the tree from the video and stuck it on my bedroom wall."

## Relationship Quiz 1 (Session 2)

This explores healthy and unhealthy attitudes in relationships. Participants said about it:

- "This was really important for me, I hadn't considered the early stages of the relationship and what could be abusive or not."
- "It was quite healing."
- "It makes you think, as do the other quizzes. It makes you realise that what you believed isn't actually right."

## The Island (Session 1)

Introducing women to the course, this activity looks at the ways an abuser develops and maintains control and how women resist abusive behaviour. Facilitators said:

- "The women loved the Island exercise and the format of it. They really got into the story".

## Soundtrack of our Lives (Session 5)

This video explores the impact of music and song lyrics on our lives. Participants said this exercise had changed their approach to music they liked:

- "I live for my music and when it's put down with the words, it really made me think about lyrics, and what I put on around my children."
- "It ruined songs for me."
- "It opened my eyes."
- "When I listen to music now, I take notice of the words. It's like the songs are brainwashing you."

## Bilateral Movement (Session 1)

This exercise helps women to understand ways to manage triggers during the sessions. Participants agreed it was really helpful and facilitators said:

- "This has been one of the most helpful things about the course and I use it a lot, even when I'm not at the course"

## The Mountain (Session 5)

Explaining how neural pathways works, this session helps women to recognise that they can change their lives. Participants and facilitators said how important this activity had been.



# What exercises were particularly valuable to women?

## Safety Plan (Session 6)

Participants are encouraged to complete a safety plan, whether they are still with an abuser or not. They said of the activity:

- "It helped me, I never thought there were other ways, I thought once he stopped me, that was it. I would never have thought to take documents etc."
- "It's important to know how to leave."
- "It gave me a bit more of an insight, there is more than one way to escape."
- "It felt intrusive, but it needs to be to get through."

## Adverts Hurt (Session 8)

This video explores sexualisation and objectification in popular culture. Participants said:

- "It was really interesting, it shows how your morals and values are so influenced."
- "You don't realise how much women are naked on adverts, it's normal."
- "You notice sexual adverts more, after seeing the video."

## Power Threat Meaning Framework (Session 9)

Enabling women to understand how circumstance, deliberate harm and systemic oppression cause them to struggle, participants said this video helped them to understand their situation better and not blame themselves. Facilitators also said this activity had hugely benefitted their wider practice.

## Traumatic Attachment (Session 7)

This video explains traumatic attachment and helps women understand why it can be so difficult to leave an abuser. Participants said about this:

- "I was able to relate to this."
- "The traumatic attachment video was really helpful."
- "I used to think I was ret\*rded for going back, but the video helped me see why I did. I really want my mum to read the Journal to understand too."

## The Holiday with Children (Session 9)

This activity helps participants to understand how children are harmed by an abuser. Participants said that:

- "I thought I'd struggle with this, but it was handled well."
- "There was a lot of conversation in this activity, everyone was more open and opened up a lot."
- "It takes you back to your own childhood which helps everything else make sense."
- "It was a really good session."
- "It lifted the mood."
- "I cried in the Freedom Programme session on the effects on children, this one was more gentle."
- "It gives more background."

## DASH (Session 7)

Helping women to understand risk and the harm done to them, this activity uses the DASH Risk Checklist. Participants said:

- "I didn't realise the gravity of what he was doing until I did the DASH activity in the course."
- "The DASH questions were really hard hitting, I could see how far I've come."

## Seven Steps of a Breakup (Session 9)

This video helps women understand the challenges of leaving an abuser, participants said about it:

- "I've realised my steps to leaving him are much bigger than other people's."
- "I couldn't relate to the bargaining bit, but can see how it would be helpful for some people, I could relate to the rest of it."

## Lovebombing (Session 11)

This activity looks at the tactics a new or potential partner might use to increase control. One pilot group all agreed this activity was really eye opening and new to them and that they recognised the behaviours in previous relationships.

# What did women find helpful about the course?

## Own My Feelings

Each week women document their emotions and feelings using charts. Participants say about this:

- "It makes you realise how you're feeling because sometimes you don't know, then you see a word and know that's how you're feeling."
- "It's nice to have that quiet time to reflect on what's happened."

## What am I grateful for?

At the beginning of each session, participants are invited to share something they are grateful for. Facilitators of two pilot groups said this was helpful for their group:

- "Saying what they're thankful for was initially difficult, however over the weeks they've begun to think during the week and come with ideas of what they're thankful for."
- "At first, they struggled with having anything to be thankful for, but now they rush into the group to tell me what they're thankful for."

## Case studies

The course uses many case studies and stories throughout the activities. We use "old-fashioned" names for the case studies characters to allow distance and reduce the risk of participants identifying their partner/ex/children in the case studies. Participants said this had been helpful to them:

- "The scenarios are helpful, they feel relevant but at a distance."
- "I like the names of the characters."

## Traffic Lights

This weekly activity helps women to identify what the abuser will do to try to prevent them having space for action in their lives. One participant said:

- "When he stops us, we stop. Whereas now the traffic lights activity makes us think more, and not have to stop."

Facilitators said:

- "We use these in lots of different ways to talk about strategies for overcoming life challenges."
- "In key work sessions with women who are doing the course, I tell them to 'green light that' when they face an obstacle they need to overcome, even if that obstacle is their own negative thinking."
- "Each week during the traffic lights exercise, one woman has a mantra of 'block and delete' (the abuser), which is both funny and helpful."

**I FEEL LIKE A COMMUNITY  
NOW, LIKE A FAMILY,  
BECAUSE WE'VE ALL DONE  
THE COURSE TOGETHER.**

**WE KNOW ALL THE SAME STUFF,  
IT'S LIKE WE'RE PART OF A GIRL  
CLUB, WE DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN  
STUFF TO EACH OTHER. OTHER  
PEOPLE WHO HAVEN'T DONE THE  
COURSE DON'T GET IT.**

## Own My Story Journal

All the participants agreed that they love the journal and found it really helpful. Some said:

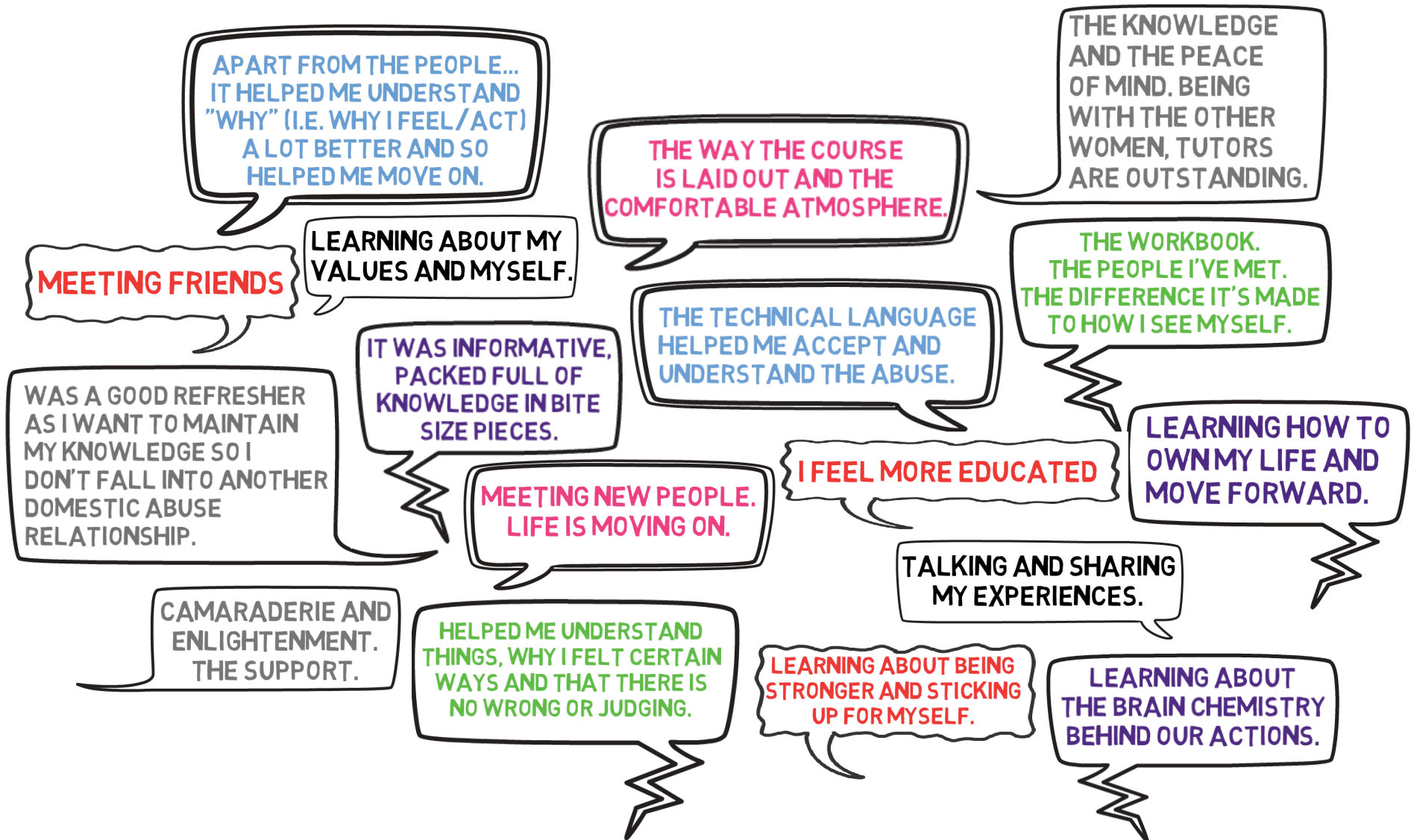
- "I'm a giant nerd and I will keep going back through the journal every few months, and it will remind me that I'm not broken by choice and I am healing."
- "I don't know if I can say this, but the journal is idiot proof."
- "It's such a nice book. You can look back on what we've done."

## Videos

Each session has two videos and all participants and facilitators found the videos helpful:

- "I like the simplicity of it; the diagrams and videos. They hit home."
- "I was engrossed by each video, but then there is the script to read through afterwards."
- "The videos are amazing and it's very helpful to have a visual to help understand."

What did women enjoy most about the course?



# What did women dislike about the course?

## Sexual Control (Session 10)

This video is quite sexually explicit and covers a traumatic and challenging topic, which is reflected in some participants disliking it. They said:

- "It's a taboo to talk about the bedroom."
- "I read through it, but didn't discuss it."
- "Week 10 was a lot easier than I thought it would be. I was dreading the 'rape' talk but it was a lot gentler than I expected."
- "I didn't realise that some of these things in the video were sexual abuse."

## The Blame Game (Session 4)

One pilot group particularly found this video about victim blaming attitudes difficult. They felt it should be shown earlier in the session, rather than at the end so that participants didn't have it playing on their minds after leaving the session. One of their facilitators said:

- "The group had a lot of experience of the sexual stuff, so that made the Blame Game video harder to deal with."

## Presentation

One of the pilots added a presentation activity to the course, requiring each participant to do a short presentation (as an employability skill). While some participants appreciated the opportunity, some said they did not like doing it. One participant said:

- "I didn't like the presentation, but only coz I lack confidence and when I did it I felt great."

## Formal/Informal Reinforcements (Session 7)

This video used photographs of real people in it (the rest are solely whiteboard animations), and one pilot group stated that this was too difficult for them.

## Nothing

On their evaluation forms most participants said there was nothing on the course that they would change or that they did not like.

## Emotionally Difficult

Most participants found the course emotionally difficult in places, and reported that this made the course challenging, but not too challenging. Participants said:

- "Sometimes it was hard because it's what you have been through and you do think you are the only one."
- "Sometimes it was very difficult to think about things...I felt totally drained."
- "Some topics were hard."
- "Sometimes hard to take on board but I understand it's necessary."

**IT WAS HARD HAVING TO  
FACE THE DAMAGE THAT  
HAS BEEN DONE TO  
MYSELF AND THE CHILDREN.**

**EVERYTHING THAT WASN'T  
HELPFUL WAS BECAUSE I  
ALREADY KNEW IT, NOT  
BECAUSE IT SHOULDN'T  
BE IN THE COURSE.**

**IT WAS DIFFICULT  
THAT THERE WAS  
NO CHILDCARE  
PROVIDED.**

## Timing

There is a lot of content in each session, and some participants struggled with this, though they felt the Own My Group follow-on course would help with covering missed content. Participants said:

- "There's too much in each session."
- "There is not enough of it!!! I wish I could come all year."
- "There's a bit too much sometimes in some segments."
- "The sessions are too short and it doesn't accommodate how everyone feels."



# How has the Own My Group follow-on course worked?

The Own My Group follow-on course is a 6-week group that runs immediately after the 12-week Own My Life course finishes. The facilitator works with the women to plan the sessions. This will include any missed content from the course and material participants want to repeat. The Own My Group course is designed to help women move to a self-organised model, in which they gradually take the lead with the facilitator's support.

There are Start and End of Group forms, which were developed through researching unions and other self-organised groups.

## Empowers women

One facilitator said she had been worried that the Own My Group would lead to participants having greater dependency on the facilitator or the course, but the opposite happened. The course ended because women chose to stop coming, rather than because they were made to finish. She said:

- "It's nice they've decided they don't need it, rather than us saying that."

## Reassured participants

As there is so much material in the course and participants were reassured to know that they weren't going to miss material as it would be covered during the Own My Group course. Participants said:

- "I think having the 6-week catch up will be good."
- "The 6-week follow on group will be good to do the stuff that the group has missed out."

## Didn't work in refuge

Due to the transient nature of refuge accommodation, women were unable to commit to another 6-weeks in addition to the course, even though they were keen to keep meeting.

## Doesn't fit with the school term

Each academic year has three 12-week terms, this works brilliantly for 12-week courses, as an organisation can run three consecutive 12-week courses in a year, however with Own My Group, the Own My Life course is 18-weeks long, which prevents it fitting alongside the academic term, and only two courses can be run consecutively within a year, unless an organisation has enough rooms and facilitators to have two courses running simultaneously.

## Zoe

Zoe had been attending group sessions for many months, but refused to accept that she needed outreach support, stating that other people needed it more than her. As a result of the Own My Group course, she requested and began receiving outreach support.

# What have we learned from the pilot courses?

## Amazing results!

Overall, the course has been hugely successful. Participants, facilitators, and pilot organisations are excited and enthusiastic about the course, and this is reflected in 100% of participants saying they would recommend the course to other women. The feedback has been focussed on "tweaking" the material rather than suggesting there are huge gaps in it. Overall the impact of the course has greatly exceeded our already high expectations of it.

## Don't take journals home during the course

Although the guidance stated that participants were not allowed to take their Own My Story journals home, one pilot group allowed women the choice to take their books home, which they mostly did. Facilitators reported that this led to challenges, as participants were "one step ahead" of facilitators. They were also the only group that refused to do some of the exercises, which may have been due to them already having read the material in advance of the session. While recognising that the course seeks to empower women, the material has been designed to take women on a journey. Taking the journal home at the end of the course is part of that journey. Women in other pilot groups said they were happy to leave their journal with the facilitator until the end of the course, with some saying they preferred to do that.



## Own My Life Course Extra

Participants said that although they were happy to leave their journal with the course facilitator, they would like to have the option of additional content to complete at home. We have added a password protected "Own My Life Course Extra" section to the website. We will notify facilitators of the termly password change and they can inform participants. The Extra content includes:

- Further reading.
- An additional exercise.
- An extra video.

[www.ownmylifecourse.org/extra](http://www.ownmylifecourse.org/extra)

## Enhances wider facilitator practice

Facilitators reported that they had used the knowledge gained from the Own My Life course across their practice; including some of the course content in other aspects of their work. The said:

- "I now talk about ownership and entitlement underpinning abusive in my work and have taken this language into facilitating the Freedom Programme."
- "I've used the 'Why Does Abuse Exist?' video in the Freedom Programme with a group of women who couldn't understand why the abuser was abusive. They all grasped it and felt their question had been answered through the video."
- "The knowledge I gained has changed how our refuge handles referrals. Previously, if a woman was referred and had a mental health diagnosis we wouldn't be able to take her, but now we ask more questions; because we recognise the mental health diagnosis may not be an issue in refuge and may have been caused by the abuser."

## Increasing diversity

The pilot facilitator training events took place in predominantly white, working class areas, which meant pilot participants were generally white working class women. To increase diversity, we are ensuring a number of our 2020 training events are delivered in more diverse areas including; Birmingham, London and Edinburgh.



# What have we learned from the pilot courses?

## Men

When developing the course, it was understood that all facilitators and participants would be women, however no “hard and fast” rules had been made about men being present during the course. One pilot organisation had a male student working with them. As part of his placement, he attended some of the Own My Life course sessions. While the participants were invited to say if they would prefer him not to attend, we recognise that:

- Women are socialised to be polite and kind and would not necessarily feel able to be honest about not wanting a man in the group. This could be driven by a desire of not wanting to be perceived as “man-hating”
- Within a patriarchal society it can be difficult to recognise the ways that men being present in a space can change or reshape that space, and so not every participant would necessarily be fully aware about how the dynamics might shift or the other consequences of allowing a man into the group.

When meeting with the participants, it was impossible to ascertain their views on the male student being present in the group as he sat in on the meeting, however this was the only pilot group that refused to do the Sexual Control activity. In conversation with the male student, he said he had wondered whether participant reluctance to engage with this activity was because he, as a man, was present. As a result of this unplanned “experiment” in having a man join a pilot group, the course guidance now explicitly states that this is a women-only course. This also means men will not be able to train as Own My Life course facilitators. While this could be a cause for criticism, the priority of the course is women the needs of who have been subjected to abuse.

## Closed group

A student joining a pilot group for a few sessions also raised concerns about the importance of maintaining the Own My Life course as a “closed group”. The guidance does state that new participants cannot join after Session 2, however it has been updated to clarify that no new people can join the group (including volunteers, students, staff or others) after Session 2, and that they should intend to be part of the whole course, rather than just a few sessions. The course involves doing significant emotional work with women and therefore having new people present or only intending to join the group for a few sessions can negatively effect the group dynamics.

## Changed order

One pilot group was particularly keen to see an overhaul of the order of the course. This was not echoed in any other courses, so we have kept the order generally the same, however we have moved the Seven Steps of a Breakup video and activity (from Session 9 to Session 3), as it made sense for this to underpin more of the course. The general timetable has been slightly affected by this.

## Not measuring hard outcomes

After meeting with an expert in local commissioning, we had hoped to develop an evaluation for the “hard outcomes” of the course, this would have included seeking to prove reduced use of public services (GP, social worker, A&E, police, courts) and an increased contribution to the economy (training and education, employment, volunteering). However, after creating a method of evaluating these outcomes, feedback from pilot organisations led us to not pursue this. One pilot organisation said:

- “I think the outcomes do not reflect outcomes of people on the course...I think the course is amazing and really helps people to move on but the questions aren't relevant to the change.”

# What have we learned from the pilot courses?

## Video subtitles

Facilitator and participant feedback from women with hearing impairments informed us that although they had been able to fully participate in the course, it would be ideal for them if the course videos had subtitles. We are working towards accessing funding to enable us to do this as soon as possible.

## Providing participants with a support email

Facilitators of two pilot groups provided participants with an email address they could be reached on between sessions, and said this had been important to participants. We have incorporated this into the facilitator guidance to ensure participants have as much support as possible while doing the course.

## Material edit

Participants and facilitators were invited to be part of our "editing team" and during facilitator training and throughout the pilot groups, they reported back on typos and other edits needed within the course materials. One concern raised by participants about the Own My Story journal was that cover was difficult to write on due to it having a laminated coating. We have ensured that future versions of the journal are covered in a not laminate material.

## Added value

Pilot facilitators introduced additional content to the course based on what participants needed. For instance:

- After the Understanding the Brain video, a staff member of pilot organisation (who is a qualified counsellor) provided participants with a session to learn grounding skills, which was reportedly really helpful.
- As a result of learning about bilateral movement, one pilot organisation now offers a drumming workshop to women. Some course participants who previously wouldn't have attended, have done because they now understand the therapeutic benefits of drumming.

## Developed course content

Due to participant and facilitator feedback we have added additional guidance and amended some of the activities. This has included:

- Stating in the guidance that the session timings are advisory rather than fixed.
- We always provide fruit as well as biscuits in Own My Life facilitator training. Some facilitators did this within pilot courses, and feedback from participants was that all courses should have fruit available, so we added this to the facilitation guidance.
- Adding an additional section to the String activity in Session 3.
- Adding a full group "circle time" activity at the end of each session.
- Creating a resource leaflet that is available on the e-Hub for facilitators to download and either email or print out to give to participants before they are allowed to take their journal home.

## A key theme from the pilots

*"Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation. In her renewed connection with other people, the survivor re-creates the psychological facilities that were damaged or deformed by the traumatic experience. These faculties include the basic operations of trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy."*

*Judith Herman, Trauma Expert*

Through our meetings with pilot participants and facilitators, we identified a strong theme running through women's feedback about why the course is so effective.

Other resources and programmes run by the pilot organisations help women to recognise what abuse is and why someone chooses to be abusive. However, in speaking with facilitators and participants, it emerged that this leaves women feeling there must have been something wrong with them in that they didn't know it was abuse and were (or still are) unable to leave the abuser.

This feeling of "wrongness" interferes with women's whole lives, preventing them trusting themselves or believing they are capable of making good choices. This impedes women's recovery, making them doubt themselves and leaving them feeling fundamentally wrong and stupid.

Through giving women literacy about trauma, how their body works, how the abuser operates and how patriarchal society socialises women, the Own My Life course enables participants to truly understand that they are not the problem, that they are "normal" and that the decisions they made in relation to the abuser were generally rational, logical and understandable. As women realise this, they very quickly stop feeling bad, wrong or stupid and begin believing their instincts, feelings and decisions can be good, positive and healthy.

The Own My Life course method enables women to understand that they are rational, normal and capable. When women are no longer constantly having to overcome negative self-perceptions about having not recognised the abuse, this changes everything and enables them to take ownership of their lives and move forward at a much faster rate.

These comments from participants evidence this perspective:





What would participants say to other women considering doing the course?

I HAVE ALREADY RECOMMENDED THE GROUP TO OTHERS; I FEEL IT WOULD HELP ADDING: STICK WITH IT, EVEN IF YOU STRUGGLE AT THE START LIKE I DID.

DO IT!!! IT WILL TEACH YOU SO MUCH ABOUT YOURSELF AND HOW THE RELATIONSHIP HAS IMPACTED YOUR LIFE.

DO IT, YOU DON'T REALISE HOW MUCH IT WILL HELP YOU UNTIL YOU DO IT.

IT'S AMAZING AND MAKES YOU SEE THAT IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.

THIS COURSE IS EXTREMELY HELPFUL AND HAS CHANGED MY LIFE

BE AS OPEN AND HONEST AS POSSIBLE. IT IS WORTH IT. 😊

IT'S A GREAT COURSE. I LEARNT A LOT OF USEFUL INFORMATION AND FEEL MORE CONFIDENT IN MYSELF

GO FOR IT 100% AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE FOR THE BETTER.

DEFINITELY DO IT!! I HAVE BENEFITTED SO MUCH FROM IT AND SO HAVE THE OTHERS IN THE GROUP. IT'S LIFE CHANGING!!

IT IS A FORM OF THERAPY FOR PEOPLE THAT HAVE SUFFERED ABUSE AND HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND YOURSELF AND WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU.

DO IT, IT WILL HELP YOU OUT AND YOU WILL MAKE GOOD FRIENDS ON THE WAY.

DO IT! YOU WON'T REGRET IT! IT WILL BE THE BEST THING YOU EVER DID.

COME! IT IS A GAME CHANGER!!!

DEFINITELY DO IT, TO MAKE GOOD CHOICES.

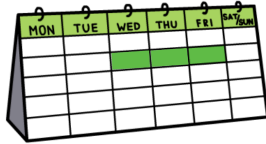




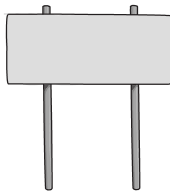

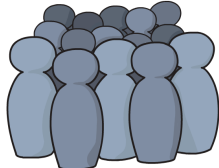
BE OPEN MINDED AND ALLOW YOURSELF TO PROCESS.

# How do I bring the Own My Life course to my area?

Due to existing funding, we have capacity to offer two extremely reduced cost training events for local women's charities. Beyond this we are keen to be commissioned by Local Authorities and others to deliver facilitator training in local areas. This includes one-off costs of £440 per training participant and £60 per organisation, and an ongoing cost of £10 per course participant. We are seeking funding to be able to subsidise the cost of the training for charities and social interest companies.

In order for us to bring the Own My Life course to your area you need:

- ✓ **At least five training participants experienced in group facilitation.**
- ✓ **A venue for course facilitator training. Or appropriate facilities for live online training.**
- ✓ **Either to be a specialist women's service or to have good connections with one.**
- ✓ **Groups of women who are interested in participating in the course.**
- ✓ **A safe space (with internet access) to deliver the course with women.**
- ✓ **Trained facilitators to have three hours availability per week to deliver the course.**
- ✓ **Appropriate supervision for trained facilitators delivering the course.**

Course resources	Quantity	Training costs
 <p>3 days training</p>	 <p>1 per trainee</p>	<p><b>£400</b></p>
 <p>WoManual and e-Hub access</p>	 <p>1 per trainee</p>	<p><b>£40</b></p>
 <p>Other resources</p>	 <p>1 per organisation</p>	<p><b>£60</b></p>
 <p>Own My Story journal</p>	 <p>10 per course</p>	<p><b>£100</b></p>

## What next?

### 2020 Training

The Sir Halley Stewart Trust has funded us to deliver five subsidised training events across 2020. We have already confirmed training events in:

- Birmingham
- London
- Edinburgh

Each training is hosted by a partner organisation, who provides a training venue and at least five training participants. Currently our training hosts are:

- Domestic abuse charity WE:ARE.
- Ella's Home who provide supported accommodation for women recovering from having been trafficked or sexually exploited.
- Scottish Women's Aid.

### Reaching more women

The course is designed to work with women who have been subjected to abuse and can be delivered by domestic abuse and other organisations that work with women. One of our 2020 training events will be hosted by an organisation working with women who have been trafficked or sexually exploited. We hope to continue training facilitators who work for organisations responding to domestic abuse issues, but would also like to find ways to train practitioners working with women in the following contexts:

- Women's prisons.
- Probation services.
- Women's centres.
- Children's centres.
- Mental health support services.

### New Training events

We envision increasing the number of training events we deliver across the UK:

- 5x training events in 2020
- 8x training events in 2021
- 12 x training events in 2022

### Online training

Our first 2020 training event was due to take place in early April, but due to the Corona virus, we have had to move to delivering the course via Zoom (an online video conferencing tool). This has created challenges for us, but does enable us to now offer both Zoom-based training (and the Own My Life course generally) online. We are working on this and hope to have a Zoom WoManual completed by the Summer.

### e-Learning platform

The course videos have proven to be hugely effective and we want to develop an e-Learning platform for two purposes:

- To provide accredited e-Learning courses about abuse, trauma and recovery for statutory and voluntary sector organisations.
- To enable those who will never need to train to run the Own My Life course to access the videos and show them to their clients or use them within training (e.g. counsellors, social workers, early help workers and male practitioners who would like access to the videos).

The e-Learning platform will be a subscription based service, with subscriptions used to fund the course training and delivery. We hope this will provide a sustainable model for funding the course and training in the long-term.





What do women want to say to those considering funding the course?

THIS COURSE IS  
INVALUABLE TO  
ITS MEMBERS.  
IT SAVES LIVES!

THIS IS A  
PROGRAMME  
THAT SHOULD  
BE ROLLED OUT  
NATIONWIDE  
AND EVERY  
ORGANISATION  
SHOULD GET  
INVOLVED.

IT'S A WAY FUNDERS COULD  
HELP CHANGE LIVES.

I THINK EVERY WOMAN  
SHOULD ATTEND THIS  
COURSE, IT GIVES  
SUPPORT, CONFIDENCE  
AND SELF-ESTEEM.

EVERYONE HAS  
SEEN A MASSIVE,  
LIFE CHANGING  
IMPROVEMENT IN ME.  
I WAS READY TO GIVE  
UP AND END IT AS  
I COULDN'T COPE.  
THIS COURSE HELPS  
SAVE LIVES!!

THIS COURSE HELPED  
ME TO FEEL MORE  
POSITIVE ABOUT THE  
FUTURE AND HAS HELPED  
ME TO PLAN MORE...  
IT'S LIFE CHANGING!

IT'S WELL WORTH IT  
AND CAN HELP  
WOMEN BLOSSOM  
INTO NEW WOMEN!

OH HELL YES,  
WOMEN NEED EMPOWERING.

THIS COURSE HELPED ME  
TO FEEL MORE POSITIVE  
ABOUT THE FUTURE AND  
HAS HELPED ME TO PLAN  
MORE...IT'S LIFE CHANGING!

IT HAS CHANGED MY  
LIFE AND MADE MORE  
POSSIBILITIES FOR MY  
FUTURE.

YOU CAN HELP  
LOTS OF WOMEN,  
HELP INCREASE  
THEIR CONFIDENCE.

THIS COURSE NEEDS  
TO BE AVAILABLE  
TO ANYONE IN NEED OF  
DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT,  
IT'S A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT!

PLEASE FUND IT,  
IT IS SUCH AN  
AMAZING COURSE  
AND CAN HELP SO  
MANY PEOPLE.

THIS COURSE  
IS ESSENTIAL  
FOR RECOVERY.

PLEASE FUND IT,  
IT IS SO HELPFUL  
WHEN YOU HAVE  
BEEN IN THIS  
SITUATION.

THIS COURSE CHANGES  
PEOPLE'S LIVES.

DO IT, AS IT REALLY OPENS  
THE EYES OF WOMEN  
TRAPPED IN THE CYCLE  
OF DOMESTIC ABUSE.

# What could funding help us to do?

## Training costs - £2425 per training

The training costs include:

- Trainer's time and expenses.
- Printing and stationery.
- Refreshments.
- Administration.

If we assume a minimum of 6 participants per 3-day training course, we can charge participants £400 each to cover these costs, however most domestic abuse services and other charities have a very low training budget and so this may be unaffordable. If we can find funding for training events, this will make it possible for those working with women to access the training.

## Training materials - £160 per organisation | £40 per trainee

In order to deliver the course, each trainee needs a WoManual, which includes all the training materials and enables them to deliver the course to women. Each organisation needs:

- 10x Own My Story journals - £100
- 1x other resources - £60

## Ongoing materials - £10 per participant

Each woman who participates in the Own My Life course needs an Own My Story journal which costs £10.

## Running costs - £55,000 per year

As a small charity, with no central office, we have few overheads and our running costs are quite low. While we are applying for grants to fund specific projects, we do need to cover staffing costs, charity running costs, administration, along with website and tech support costs.



# How can you help us to reach more women?

We are really excited about the potential of the Own My Life course and the way it is changing women's lives. We need funding to get this course out to more women and you can help us do that! Here are some ways to help:

## Donating online

We have a Paypal Giving Fund account. You can find us by [CLICKING HERE](#) or searching "The Women's Liberation Collective" on the Giving Fund website.



## Tell people about our work

Do you know individuals who sit on charitable trusts or people who might be interested in supporting our work? Take the time to call or email them about our work and let them know that they can support us. If you think they would like to be introduced to us, please email [info@ownmylifecourse.org](mailto:info@ownmylifecourse.org) and we can arrange a time to connect further.

## Regular giving

You can set up a standing order to the give regularly to our work. [CLICK HERE](#) or visit [www.ownmylifecourse.org/regular-giving](http://www.ownmylifecourse.org/regular-giving) for details of how to do this.

## Stay in touch

We have a mailing list that you can join to keep in touch with our work. You can sign up [HERE](#) or visit our website: [www.ownmylifecourse.org](http://www.ownmylifecourse.org) and click the green button at the bottom of the page to access the sign up form.

## Support from charitable trusts

If you are involved with a charitable trust and think that our work might be within trust's remit, please email [info@ownmylifecourse.org](mailto:info@ownmylifecourse.org) to let us know how we could apply to get funding.





To request further information about the Own My Life course, please contact:

The Women's Liberation Collective



Natalie Collins



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