

RESPECT, DVIP, and voluntary domestic abuser courses. BBC Radio Northampton. Nov 06

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Neil Blacklock is the director of DVIP (The Domestic Violence Intervention Project in London which runs Duluth type courses). At the time of the recording November 2006 Neil was standing in for Jo Todd (Director of Respect) who was on maternity leave.

RESPECT does not run courses for abusers; it is a membership organisation. Some of the members of RESPECT do run courses for abusers. DVIP, is one of those organisations. Although RESPECT might have 100 organisations that are members, only about 25 of them run perpetrators courses that are functioning. More have done so in the past, but all of these have closed, probably because of poor funding and also because of the horrendous drop-out rates, which do not encourage funders that they are having any success. Of these 25 projects about 9 at least are in the mould of DVIP, in a version co-written by Jo Todd.

IDAP, the Probation Service version of Duluth is very similar indeed and consequently likely to experience exactly the same problems, although when DVIP were running "mandated" courses only 56% dropped out.

The following is the content of an interview recorded from BBC Radio Northampton and transcribed with times into the interview below (with reference times included intermittently). Neil wears both hats.

The underlying cause of all domestic violence as seen by RESPECT is one of Patriarchy. Only men are capable of being abusers, and only women are capable of being victims, despite 14.9% of abusers being female. Patriarchy, seen as the root cause, effectively denies the existence of violence, female to male, and in same sex relationships.

Bernie: Hi Neil.

Neil Blacklock Good morning Bernie.

Do you think Jason Isaacs is right that people don't know much about the perpetrators? Don't care? They are all scum? And therefore we push them all to one side?

NB: I think it is very easy too .. (distance?)... ourselves from perpetrators of domestic violence and see them as somehow different from the rest of us. Whereas in fact domestic violence is one of the most widespread violent crimes. And most of us probably know, somewhere somebody in our lives who is using violence in a relationship. These are not people who are separate from the rest of us.

(16.16) Bernie: You have spoken to many- why do they do it?

NB: The issue that binds all these men together is an issue about control. And violence is used as a way of getting what you want. And it's a very easy and quick way to do that. Of course there are terrible consequences from that in their lives And its also a very easy way of stopping someone from doing something that you don't like. So if you are in an argument and you feel that you are losing that argument and you and violence will put an end to that happening and it's a very straight forward way of doing that. And people learn that in the early stages of their life.

B: So people start young do they?

NB: I think that family is one of the influences of how people behave in their later lives, but also there is other situations in terms of their social conditions as well..

B: So its what they've seen that influences the way they behave?

NB: If you have grown up in a If your peer groups and people you hang about withhave attitudes

towards women, *that* will have an affect on you. If the magazines and the things you see on TV are very objectifying of women then *that* will also have an effect on you. ... all these things come together.

B: So how do you break that chain of violence? What do your programmes aim to do and how do they do it?

NB: Well one of the things we aim to do is to get men to sit and to think about the messages that they have got... about their As men, about their attitudes to womenand about who they want to be and then get them to analyse that, rather than just having to have taken these things in and not having thought about them and being critical about them.

B: But don't they just want to be in control? You said that that was why they wanted to do it.

(18.14) NB: They do want to be in control. However they also want to be liked, respected and loved. And one of the things they damage by having control is all those things, all those things that make relationships worth having. And so there are some real pay-offs for these men. In changing this behaviour. Many of them are fathers as well and they want to be respected by their sons and their daughters Not despised and distant from them.

B: So how do you get them to come on a programme?

NB: Well we have, er, we are an organisation that covers the whole of the UK and we are men can self refer themselves to our organisations and ..

18.53 B: How many do that Neil?

NB: Well. Oooh! That's a very good question! We have a helpline, a phone line and we get 200 calls per week to that number.

B: What do you think, Denise?

Denise: I think it is very useful that there is a helpline there. It is interesting though that what you say Neil that you get 200 calls a week and that you cover the UK. It would be interesting to understand just how many of those calls commute into people attending courses and to how many people complete those courses and whereabouts those courses are actually available.

B: Isn't it asking a lot of them to attend those courses, the courses run over how (19.34) many weeks?

NB: Oh, on average they are about between 24 and 30 weeks.

B: (19.42) And people stay the course, do they?

NB: 19.53 Depending on how much leverage they are and how committed they are to do the programme. **You will get quite a lot of drop-out on these programmes: about a quarter of the men will make it through.**

19.58B: That's not very high is it?

NB: That's not very high but what you are asking people to do is to engage in quite a long process that involves changing their lives. And when you think about other types of behaviour change like people giving up using alcohol or dugs they are also hard. It is a difficult thing to change how you are. And you would expect to have a (20.21)degree of failure on these courses.

B: Are you able to keep track of that 1 in four that completes the course to know if they have changes for the good.

NB: One of the things we are very heartened by is the outcomes on these programmes is that the men that complete the programme, for the men that get through the programme the vast majority of them stop using physically abusive behaviour and we do see other forms of abuse go down because this isn't just an issue about physical (20.44) abuse it is also about emotional abuse and control and other types of abuse

B: And do they talk through it? Do they talk to people that they have abused? How does it work?

NB: One of the things that one of your earlier contributors was saying was the issue about understanding the impact of their behaviour can have on others. And the developing that sense of empathy and change their behaviour, they do have to be encouraged to change and they do have to understand what leads up to that behaviour as well and I think it is important to pay attention to the emotions they are experiencing. It is not just about changing their behaviour it is also about helping them to have an understanding and cognition about how they have arrived at where they are and the emotions that are involved. And I think that it is also important at this point to say that if we don't work with the perpetrator, we don't give the perpetrator something to do all we are doing is perpetuating a cycle of domestic violence. And how they damage their relationships with their friends, their and helping them feel the consequences of that. (21.26)

B: (22.07) Where are the programmes, Neil? Do you have any around this part of the world?

NB: Ahm, you would need to contact the, our phone line. To do that and find out where they are.

B: Do you have the number for us?

NB: I'm afraid I don't have that with me. understanding and helping them feel the consequences of that.

B: It is difficult to get the consequences through to somebody who has got a fist or an iron bar, isn't it Denise?

D: Yes it is and I think that what Neil has been saying there is that it is very difficult to get people to c