

Men from Bracknell and Berkshire East invited to help change their abusive behaviour.

Men who have been, or who are, currently violent or abusive towards their current or ex female partners are now able to access support in a programme set up locally to help change their behaviour.

Changing Ways, starts on Monday 14 May at a location in Bracknell and is open to any man aged over 18 years old living in Bracknell Forest, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough or Wokingham.

The programme is NOT an anger management or counselling group; it focuses on changing attitudes and behaviours. Changing Ways comprises 30 structured group sessions designed to help men understand their violent and abusive behaviour and learn new ways of behaving. Sessions last two hours and take place on Monday evenings. Men are given a 45 minute assessment interview before they are accepted onto the programme. They may attend as part of an agreement with any agency with which they are already involved, for example Social Services, or refer themselves directly to the programme.

Sophie Crowe, Domestic Violence Co-ordinator for Berkshire East and Co-ordinator for Changing Ways said: "We want to support men who acknowledge their abusive behaviour, and who want to change, to make the changes they need to ultimately protect their partner and children (if they have them). We would encourage any man who is currently abusive towards his current or ex partner, to think hard and face up honestly to the things they have done. Incidents may have only happened on a couple of occasions and it may not have yet involved physical violence, but in many cases a pattern of abusive behaviour will be emerging. By becoming more aware of your behaviours and by accepting responsibility, instead of blaming alcohol, drugs, or your partner for instance, it will become easier to make changes and stop".

For any man accepted onto the programme, Lakeside Consultants, providers of the programme, will contact the female partner/ex partner to give them information about the male's involvement in the programme.

Any man who wants to make a self referral, or any professional who wants to refer a man they are working with can call John Roberts on 07818 054563

The Changing Ways programme has been designed and provided by Lakeside Consultants for Thames Valley Police, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council.

If you are a woman who is suffering domestic violence, in an emergency call 999. In a non emergency call Thames Valley Police on 0845 8 505 505. If you would like to speak with someone in confidence, and to find out what help you can receive, call Berkshire Women's Aid (Bracknell, Wokingham) on 0118 9504003, or East Berkshire Women's Aid (Windsor, Maidenhead, Ascot, Slough) on 01753 549865 or 0800 085 2654.

Domestic violence is a serious crime and unacceptable. One in four women and one in six men will suffer domestic abuse in their lifetime. In 90% of domestic violence incidents, children are in the same or next room.