**LIGHT group annual review**

Light group was set up for survivors of domestic abuse across Torbay two years ago.

There have been a total of 108 people referred into the group since it started.

There are now two groups running, one in Torquay and one in Brixham.

There are new members who have said they would like to attend but have not done so yet, though they have been in contact.

Majority of referrals have come from TDAS, however there are some people who self referred after hearing about the group from friends, some who have been referred by children’s services, health visitors, mental health and substance misuse agencies.

The age of the group members is approximately between 19 and 65 years.

There are 2 male members and a third due to attend his first session this week.

The perpetrators of the members include ex partners, parents and adult children.

Some have alcohol and drug issues, mental health, particularly depression and anxiety, learning difficulties. Members with alcohol issues do not attend if they are in drink and any who return to their perpetrators choose to take absence from the group as they understand the ‘rules’ for membership.

 The group continues with its secret Facebook group which has around 40 members. This is supportive but not a support group. They share local information for example activities being held in Torbay and also arrange extra meetings/ activities.

The group has an allotment in Paignton. There are now several members who regularly go there often with their children. There is quite a bit of work still to do but progress has been made. They have plans to build a greenhouse by recycling plastic bottles and to have a wildlife corner and pond. One member has organised weekly sessions there during the school summer holidays with a picnic for the children. They have activities planned themselves for 3 weeks of the summer holidays too.

Other activities this year have included;

* Trips to Paignton Zoo
* Jewellery making
* Keyring making
* Christmas decorations
* Car boot sales to raise funds for the group
* ‘How to say no’ session
* Flower arranging
* Knitting
* Input for commissioners on what a domestic abuse services needs

During the last year there has been less need for planned activities at meetings as the group has grown and they now enjoy chatting and socialising with one another.

Members now meet outside the formal meetings. Two are going on holiday together with their children in August, several go for spa days together, some meet to take their children swimming and some meet for a coffee or days out.

They offer each other advice on parenting, share recipes and offer local knowledge e.g. where to buy a belt for a tumble drier.

Members have said they feel less isolated, have made friends, feel more confident and feel they are not ‘mad’. The latter being very important in realising the abusive behaviour was the perpetrator’s responsibility and they were not to blame.

There are times when some members have issues and they can discuss these on a one to one basis with the TDAS worker attending.

The group continues to be self funding with no monies used from TDAS budget. Funds have been raised by the group at car boot sales, selling their own items on Ebay, asking their work colleagues to have the LIGHT group as their Christmas charity (donating money instead of sending cards) and by people who have heard about the group donating funds directly.