

Young People's Stories

All names have been changed to protect the identity of the family

Ellie's Story Haunted

"Are there parts of your past that still haunt you? Everyone has a secret, here is mine"

When they found out I had been conceived I was immediately put on the child protection register, at risk of neglect and abuse.

A question I always ask myself is "what is a normal upbringing?"

A "normal" upbringing usually consists of two loving parents, a roof over your head and three meals a day. What I had was slightly different. I didn't get to play with friends and stay at the same school from primary one to seven. My childhood consisted of moving from hostel to hostel, living in temporary council flats and staying with my grand parents. You may say "at least you were with you family for some time" but that's where the problems began.

It's the beginning of the year 2015 and I have decided now is the time. Its time to take the monster to court and make sure he gets what he deserves. I spent last Thursday afternoon in a police station interview room. I was escorted by a female officer and male officer. As I entered the cramped, plain harsh lit room, I was struck by the cold air and the overbearing sense of hostility. This wasn't the first police interview I have had. This isn't the first time I've tried to tell my story.

Young People's Stories

Ellie's Story (continued)

Growing up we are told that we can rely on our family, they are the people who are supposed keep us safe and secure. But at the end of the day who can you actually trust? Some of the worst cases of abuse happen in a family. I am a victim.

Growing up I thought my family was normal, being beaten was something I was used to. At a young age were you able to call 999 and explain what was happening? I used to watch my step-father grab a knife out of the drawer and hold it to my mum's throat. I remember running to the phone, I was listening to my mum shouting and crying telling me to call the police, I was so young, my heart felt like it was going to burst out my chest, I could hardly breath because of the fear. When I got to the phone it felt like the floor was moving this giant man towered over me, his eyes dark. Cold. I was like a deer in front of a headlight, I couldn't move. It felt like so much time went by but it was only a matter of seconds. I watched as a giant hand came down towards my face, dropped the phone and went to run but I was to late. The force of the slap sent me flying across the room, I was to shocked to cry, everything was beginning to go black, I was confused and my legs were covered with carpet burns. I lay still. I shut myself off, disconnected myself from the world. I was completely frozen in fear. You may read this and feel sad, shocked and outraged, but this isn't even the start.

I was asked by the female officer if I wanted my social worker and the male police officer to leave the room while she took some of the basic details and a statement. The statement that will kick start the case and begin the process to put the monster behind bars. This monster wasn't my step-father, this monster was my grandfather. A man who was supposed to love and care for me took advantage. He took every opportunity he had to abuse me. Threaten me. Traumatise me.

Young People's Stories

Ellie's Story (continued)

"I'm going to kill you, like dead meat" these words constantly reply in my head at night, I remember being a little girl lying in my bed with my big sister, she was asleep at the top and I was awake at the bottom. I heard his breathing, his footsteps; I knew he was coming into my room. I closed my eyes tight, praying he wouldn't come in the open door, praying that he wouldn't touch me. Bite me. Hurt me. He came closer to the bed, it was going to happen, it didn't matter if I closed my eyes and pretended I was asleep, there was no escaping it. This time he didn't touch me, he stood above my bed and whispered "I'm going to kill you, like dead meat." He was dressed all in black glaring down at me, I was shaking. I was just a child.

After 5 years of therapy he still haunts me. I'm still scared to go for a bath, I'm afraid of the dark, I cannot lie in bed at night with my feet uncovered, I'm terrified he will bite them. It's silly really, I know I'm safe, I know he can't get me now but I'm still afraid. He said he would get me if I told anyone what happened. I told people, there were people who knew it was happening, but they didn't protect me. They didn't stop it. Why? I don't know.

My biggest fear of all, the fear I try to hide from people is my fear of all old men. A couple of weeks ago I was on the bus going to my boyfriend's house, the bus was full of people, old men. I was cornered, there was a man next to me, he didn't touch me or try to hurt me. But I froze. I couldn't move, I felt so sick, so dizzy, I was trying so hard to mask my breathing. I could feel beads of sweat on the back of my neck, I was feeling so faint, and my body temperature felt like it had risen to 100 degrees. I was having a panic attack. Tears were streaming down my face. I felt bad. The man didn't do anything.

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Ellie's Story (continued)

People say how well I have done now; they seem surprised that I've made it through to the other end. Every day is a struggle. Every night when I fall asleep I relive the terrifying experiences. I have tried in the past to kill myself; I wanted to end the pain completely.

But I now have my family, my foster mother who has helped me through so much. I have my little brother and little sister who need me. Have you ever met a child who raised 2 children alone? It was my job to feed them, wash them, and make sure they went to bed. I was their mum. It was also my job to look after my mum. I looked after her. Thinking back she didn't deserve the title "mum" she wasn't there, she didn't protect us; she was and still is just a drug addict.

I had an unfortunate upbringing, I had to deal with things no child should have to, I seen things that no one should ever see. But in the long run I know I'll be okay. I know the people who hurt me will get what they deserve. I can't change the past but I can make sure I have a bright future. My aim is to become a lawyer; I want to put monsters like my grandfather behind bars. I want to dedicate my life to helping people; I don't want children to experience what I did.