

CASE STUDY

From Victim to Volunteer



The first time I saw him hit my mum really scared me. I remember mum asked him what he wanted for tea and he said sausage and mash. When she put it on the table he flipped, said he wanted chips. He threw the plate at my mum. When it missed he punched her. I remember wanting to get up and stop him, but being too scared. My mum asked him to stop, and was crying. I hated him for doing this to my mum but I also thought my mum was stupid for letting him do it to her, but this was a daily ritual in my home for the next 6 months. He hit her and she let him. Eventually he left the family home, I resented mum. I couldn't understand why she let it happen, so I did the only thing I knew, I hit her. In all this time she never reacted, that made it worse. I threatened to kill myself, my mum stopped me, but there was no feeling from her.

Then one day my mum must have had enough, she went to the health visitor and said she had had enough, and if she didn't get some help she was going to lose it. We got a volunteer from Home-Start to support us. We went to therapy and talked through what had happened. In one visit with our volunteer my mum said she was scared of her kids and she didn't know how to be our mum. I was nearly 12 years old. I asked questions such as why did you let me hit you? Was it my fault? My mum felt uncomfortable, but having a friend, her volunteer, made it easier to work these things out. My mum told me that she hadn't let him hit her, but that she didn't know how to stop him. I also found out that this had been a pattern for as long as my mum could remember.

Our volunteer spent 3 years with us. She helped me see that my mum was scared of being a mum and that she felt guilty about that. I had to decide whether I was going to be angry all my life because if I was, he would still be hurting me and destroying my life. I decided that I was never going to let him win and that he may have hurt us but I wanted to have a life with my family, but without the support we received from Home-Start I don't think we would have survived. I now know that my mum wasn't a bad mum, she had just shut off all her feelings. I remember a day when mum held me and told me she loved me. When she said it, this time I not only heard the words but I felt them. I will never forget that day. That was the day we became a true family.

I am 14 years old now and doing really well in school. I play football in a girl's football team and I am just like any other teenager. I will always feel bad for the way I treated my mum, but I know she understands. I now have a brilliant relationship with her.

"My mum is now training to be a Home-Start volunteer and I am really proud of her. I wrote my story so that people will see that Home-Start is here to support families with children under five, but they can work wonders for the whole family. I also wrote this story to thank my volunteer, but most of all I wrote this to thank everyone at Home-Start who touches peoples' lives everyday and makes them feel safe, because a little smile and a bit of understanding can make a big difference."

