



Spotlight 3: Episode 5

Podcast transcript

Spotlights is a series of online events and publications, focusing on a particular group of victim/survivors who are often hidden from services. As a part of SafeLives Spotlight on domestic abuse and young people, this week my colleague Deidre has met with Natasha, a young survivor of domestic abuse. Natasha talks about her experience of being abused by her boyfriend, leaving school and becoming a single mum and, ultimately, receiving help and support from Hollie, a Ypva working with 13-17 years olds. We hope you find this interview as inspirational we did.

Please note, names have been changed to protect identities.

D: Okay, can you start by telling me just a bit about yourself, like what your name is, how old you are.

N: My name's. I'm 18. I've got a little boy, he'll be two in March. Single mum. Live on my own. And I'm currently studying my Level 3 Health and Social Care at college.

D: Wow, how's that going?

N: It's going great. I've nearly finished it now and I'll be going on to my Level 4 and then I'll be going to university the year after.

D: Wow, sounds good. Cool. So can you tell me a bit about why you're talking to me today?

N: Just make people aware about domestic abuse and violence and how it's not, well, that you're not alone, you're not the only one who's been through it. And it's hard to talk about but it makes you feel better I think if you talk about it. Some people don't, some people do.

D: And can you tell me a bit about your story, what you've been through.

N: Well it started, I'd go back to *[unclear 00:01:15]*. It was around about 2011 when I first went into foster care when I met, and we lived in the same home together. It's kind of a mad story. But we were just like, we weren't really like, we never used to speak much or anything and we just acted like normal people and just, well I've got siblings so it didn't feel like we were brother and sister, so it was more like a friend thing. And then after a year we sort of like got closer and we started going out and I just think from there it started, we just liked each other and so we just thought, okay, we'll give it

a go. It was a bit awkward because obviously we lived in the same home and we didn't really know what like the consequences were going to be.

But anyway, not long after my 14th birthday obviously he got kicked out because they found out that we were together and obviously I was a lot younger than him. And then about six months after that I got put into another foster home. It was lovely. I still talk to them now. I love them so much. But I just felt like we were more free, like we could actually like tell everyone that we're a couple and we could like do more things and like make people aware that we were together and [unclear 00:02:42] bothered about what people thought. And everyone was fine. Obviously everyone knew us, because we were never away from each other, we loved each other obviously. And he was like the best thing ever really, like I loved him.

And then obviously he always had problems anyway. Like even when I got with him he took drugs and stuff and his mum never really used to speak to us. Well, she never spoke to us because I was younger than him and she always used to think that I was going to get like done for rape and that. But when I was coming up to 16 she started talking to us and it was a bit better because obviously I could meet more of his family and then more sort of accepting us more. And then obviously I fell pregnant when I left school, literally just as I left. So I had that to think about. But obviously like I never really, because I was like a push over, like I used to run around like I was his mum because his mum like didn't really do a lot for him. I think it's because she had problems with him when he was younger as well and used to like have temper outbursts and obviously he was on drugs, but I never thought he would be like that with me. I just thought like I could change him.

D: What was he like with you?

N: He was so like, he just like... I don't know, it's hard to explain. Like he wasn't like, I don't know how I can explain it. It's quite a hard one actually. He was just like the, like a role model to me. Like I just used to think he was amazing like and obviously we loved each other, but I just never ever thought that he would ever hurt me.

D: Did he hurt you?

N: Yeah, he did actually, yeah. It was obviously more emotional for me but it did sometimes was physical. But at first it was more like sort of play fight but then obviously it changed from then, and then obviously he used to like threaten to hit doors off us and it just got worse and worse. And then he started getting in debt with his eyeballs just before I had the baby. He never really cared about the baby, as I got on, never used to go to any ante natal appointments or anything. His mum didn't really bother either, if I'm honest. It was more like my sister and my nana who would bother.

D: So when did you start to think that maybe the way that he was acting towards you wasn't good?

N: I think I knew myself for a long time that it wasn't good because I was unhappy all the time and I felt like it was my fault, or was something that I was doing was wrong. And I used to sit and think every night what is it that I'm doing wrong, what is it that is making him unhappy because he never really used to like communicate with us, he used to just tell us to shut up. But I was like scared to tell, like, anyone because they might have just thought, oh, he's young will have arguments. Never used to think that they would like believe what I would say, like I was just scared for what would happen, so I just like obviously went along with it. And obviously I was used to that, it was like all I knew. Do you know what I mean?

D: For instance, what was the relationship like between your parents for instance? Was that good? Was that bad?

N: Well obviously my mum passed away and my dad lived abroad with his wife and I didn't really know my dad too well, because my mum and split when I was young. So it was like, on the parent side for me it was like quite nothing to be honest. But for his side, his dad lived in London and his mum she was okay, but like even still now sort of at this stage, she's always been like dead laid back. She doesn't really want to interfere with anything. The more I've, like the more know her, she's never, it's like she's never really come out of her shell, like she's scared to tell us things about him. Like she's starting to open up a little bit more now, but like our relationship's great, she helps sometimes. I'm not going to say she like does all the time because she doesn't. But his parents never really used to say anything either.

D: So what made you, I guess, start to talk about it?

N: I think just because like everyone knew that I was, because I wasn't concentrating in school, I was coming out of school all the time. The teachers saw a dramatic change in us. My friends were like worried about us, my sister especially was worried about us. So everyone knew that there was something going on, and obviously when I had I lived in like supported accommodation. And I was like doing really well and were great, and then obviously they saw changes in us as well. And then one day like he just kicked us in the stomach and I couldn't take it any more. I just cried my eyes out and my support worker was asking what's the matter, and I just told her everything, and then that's when obviously I started getting support and stuff. Obviously had like social workers and that because of it, but they were really supportive. Like obviously I thought at the time that they were horrible and I was oh my god I'm going to get my baby taken away and what am I going to do. I just thought the worst obviously, as anyone would. And then obviously like he wouldn't... what they wanted to do was to do like a family plan for him to like get help with his mental health and come off the drugs and get help with his drink and his anger, but he never ever done anything with it. He would never, he would refuse to go, but obviously it just showed that he wasn't bothered about his son or me, so couldn't have loved us that much.

D: How did that make you feel?

N: I felt worthless, really. I felt like, I don't know... I was all to hell really because I felt like I had no one, because I was so used to him and I used to rely on him, even though I was the one running around after him. I felt like he was just like a massive impact on my life and I was just so in love with him I never saw what else was around us. It was horrible. I was just distraught really.

D: And how did the Young Persons Service help you?

N: I think they helped us because obviously I suffer anxiety due to it, and started like introducing us to like talking therapies. Because they were there 24/7 as well they would like take us out and like introduce us to young mums and try to get more friends, just to try and make us like keep going with myself, just push us and push us instead of us sitting in the house and hiding away because I had a little one. Obviously they had to make sure that I was looking after him and looking after myself. I think that's what helped. And then obviously I got... they started talking one day in the meeting about the [unclear 00:10:54] service. And then I had a chat with first and she was like I've been through it as well, you know, and I thought oh I'll give it go. I'd been offered loads of help and I kept saying no. And then obviously I met Hollie and she was like my worker and I didn't really know what I thought at first. I just thought, oh, more nebbly people and like I just felt like more people were like watching us and eyeballing us and wanting to like drag us down.

And I felt a bit like wary all the time because obviously at the time, like when obviously when they were first involved, was still hanging around and I was still having bother with him and he was still like trying to wheel us in and please come back, like I love you. And he used that he was going to kill himself so I would go running. But eventually when I got rid of like when I had the courage to actually cut him off and ring the police, then obviously like we were getting orders and stuff put in place him because he was threatening to kill us and like he was going to kill my friends. And luckily I got loads of evidence of him ringing and stuff and then I got an injunction put on him, which helped.

But he had a new, well he had a girlfriend even before I had the injunction on him. He was cheating on us with her, so made us feel a bit more crap.

D: Yeah, I can imagine. So where do you think you'd be now had you not had the YPVAs or maybe if you'd been supported by a service that's made for adult women, older women? How would that have made you feel?

N: If I didn't have the support I did, now looking back, even though I thought it was all evil, when really it's... especially when you've lost your mum and like my whole family just ripped apart. It was hard enough as it was and I didn't have much support. We had like two people in my life and obviously your baby. The best thing I done, and the best advice I got and just go, just do it. It's not even that they tell you what to do; they're opening options for you and they're showing you like a light at the end of the tunnel to get out. And it helps, it really worked for me.

D: And if you were to talk to another young person who's going through the same situation who maybe doesn't see the light at the end of the tunnel right now, what would your advice be to them?

N: Well, only advice I could probably was keep your friends close and just try to open up if you can. I know it's hard. But you will, you will come out of it. The more you talk and take full advantage of every support you can get.

D: And what would you say to the people who are offering that support, maybe the first person that a young person might talk about their experience, what's your advice to them?

N: To the worker?

D: Yeah.

N: I suppose just take time with them, patience is a virtue. They'll come out and tell you more and more when they feel more trusting with you, just like anyone really.

D: Yeah, makes sense.

N: That's probably all I would say about that.

D: And that makes sense. Thanks so much for sharing your story.

N: Oh, it's fine.

D: Sure it can't be easy after a long day, or in general. But hopefully it'll help practitioners to know how to respond to a young person and help young people feel like they can talk about what they've been through and get help, so thank you very much.

N: Hope so.

Thank you for listening. If you'd like to find out more about SafeLives Spotlight on young people and domestic abuse, please go to our website SafeLives.org.uk, where we will be uploading new content every week - each exploring a different aspect of young people and domestic abuse. If you'd like to participate in the discussion, you can go to our website to sign up for the webinar on March 3 between 1pm-2pm, and also join in the Twitter Q&A conversation on March 15th between 1pm-2pm-just go to [#SafeYoungLives](https://twitter.com/SafeYoungLives).