



Spotlight 3: Episode 8

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 Kyla, the parent of young survivor of domestic abuse. Kyla talks about her daughter's experience of repeated domestic abuse, teenage pregnancy and, ultimately, the help and support she received from a specialist young person's service. Please note, names have been changed to protect identities.

D: So do you want to start out by telling me about yourself? What your name is, where you live, something interesting about yourself, kind of why you're here today.

K: You've put us on the spot now. My name's [removed] I work full time so I look after the, I'm the main bread winner for the house. And I'm just here to help support my daughter.

D: Who has a nine-week old baby now.

K: Yeah, ten weeks.

D: Wow, who you've been helping look after as well.

K: He's lovely. He's no bother.

K: I think little lads are much easier than what lasses are.

K: My son was... I had a little bit of hassle with him but not as much as what I did with her.

D: What did you have with her?

K: Lying, drinking. She'd go out and say she was sleeping at a friend's and she'd be out on the streets all night, which I didn't know because I'd ring the parents. Oh yeah, she's sleeping here. But then later on during the night they would turn round and say, oh well we're sleeping at such and such's house, and it would all get intertwined.

D: How old was she when that started?

K: Fourteen.

D: Wow. And how did that make you feel?

K: I didn't know a lot at the time. I didn't know about how much she was drinking, which was a fair bit, a fair bit from what I can gather now, what she's coming out now with. But to me it got to the point where it was like her norm. So like her attitude was her normal attitude. She got more to the point where it was more boys, more her friends, more than her schooling which she liked school when she was younger but as you hit your teens, nobody likes school when they hit their teenage years. Well I thought we were plodding on quite nice. So I know she had her problems and stuff like that, but I didn't think it was as bad as what it was. It was mainly the boys.

D: And what made you realise that it was getting worse? Did she tell you or did you start to get, I don't know, clues that things were worsening?

K: There was little clues here and there, a little bit more. She would turn round and say she was going to a friend's for like a session, is what they call it, just where it was like a group of lads and lasses in a house having a drink. And I would turn round and say, right, well don't drink too much, and she'd come in, she'd look fine. And then other days I'd get phone calls from the police, can you come and pick her up, she's drunk and disorderly. So it was like hitting me seeing how she was. Sometimes she'd be good, sometimes she didn't. I tried grounding her, that didn't work. I tried taking things off her, that didn't work, not much. We took her to school. We picked her up from school, but she wasn't at school. So as we were dropping her off she was absconding.

D: When did you find out that she wasn't at school during the day?

K: Not very often. I'd get the odd phone call from the school, which it was literally an odd phone call from the school saying she wasn't in lessons, and then we'd be like trying to find her, find out where she was. You'd better get back home, you're in trouble. It didn't work.

D: Sounds like you felt quite powerless to...

K: I was, because me and her used to be at each other's throat constantly. And I was trying to keep the peace because her dad suffers from mental health issues. So anything that was like getting him wound up, I was trying to keep him on like a decent level, but trying to pull her into line as well. So it was an awkward situation.

D: So there's a lot of drinking going on, a lot of absconding from school, lying.

K: Boys.

D: Boys, not telling you the truth, not responding to kind of discipline, which obviously what you're saying makes you feel quite disempowered. When did that shift into kind of violence maybe?

K: There wasn't violence in the household. It was a boyfriend. She got in with this lad and it was to the point where he was manipulative. I knew he was. At first she says he's too nice. I says give him a chance. I says how do you know what nice is. I says you haven't really been out with many boys. I says give him a chance, he might be nice. And then it was like certain signs that she wasn't allowed to go out with her mates. He was checking her phone all the time, even when they were here. Because I'd prefer her to be in the house because I knew she wasn't drinking in the house, so I would allow him to come over here, but I wouldn't allow them upstairs. So he used to come over and he'd sit, and at first it was like his head down, and I thought I don't like that. He's been coming long enough to be able to like talk to us, you know what I mean. Say hello, what not. But then it was to the point where it got... it was quite like

verbally abusive, they were like shouting at each other and... And I stopped that. I told them off for that.

D: So it would happen in the house in front of you.

K: In the house but it was worse when it was out with her friends.

D: Okay. And how did you know that? Would she come back and tell you or were you just kind of figuring it out?

K: She would come back and she says I've been arguing with him again. Well what have you been arguing about? So she'd come out with different things, and I turned round and I says, you don't need him. I says, get rid of him. And for two and half years I kept trying to tell her to get rid of him, left, right and centre. And it wasn't until she ended up falling pregnant and she was 14 years old at the time and I turned round... she wanted to keep it and I had a good talk with her and I says, look, I says he's like this with you now, I says not being awful, you're 14 years old, you're in no predicament to look after a child. I says, and the longer, I says if you keep it, I says you'll never get rid of him, you'll never. And it was to the point where we did sit down as a family and decide the best thing for her at the time was to have a termination, which didn't help her mental health either. To be honest I should have allowed her to keep it, because it made her go from one point to worse. Does that make sense?

D: That makes sense.

K: So we went through a little bit with that, and it was to the point where he did lift his hands to her. She went to my sister's because she was nearer my sister's at the time. And then she came home, because she was with her friend so she ended up coming home and she told us about that. And I just hit the nail on the head in the end and I turned round, I went, right, you're not seeing him no more. I ended up arguing on the phone with him because he turned... when she had the termination she wasn't very well. So she didn't tell him that, she just said that she'd lost her baby. I says it's no good telling him that you've done that because it's just going to get more wound up. So she just turned round and said she'd lost the baby and he was being really abusive on the phone, and I took the phone off her in the end and I went, you phone her once more, I says, and I'll hit the roof. I says, she's not very well. I says, leave her alone, she's in the house. And his whole attitude, his whole attitude, even shouting at me on the phone, and I went, just don't ring back no more. And I hit the nail on the head and I says, right, that's it, you don't see him no more. And it was a couple of times she would sneak out because she was grounded then and I mean grounded big style, and she would sneak out to see him. And she got caught twice off her dad and it wasn't worth it. She says it's just not worth it, she says, because I know what it's like.

So she did get away from it eventually. But the schools didn't help. I went down and explained everything at school. They didn't help. They were supposed to be putting, giving her mentors, because I was going to take her out of school then. And they were giving her mentors, they were supporting her, they were doing this, they were doing that, they promised her the earth. She went back to school and they just nothing. She was stuck back in the middle of it with him.

D: He was at school as well.

K: He was at school, at the same school but he was a year older. So he left but then I still had the same hassle with the school and I took her out of there. It was her last year. She was going, she went back the first day at school for the last year and it was all about her uniform. And her uniform was fine, it was fine. And they were kicking off

about that and her dad just lost his temper. He went, right, he says I'm taking her out, she's not coming back, and we just took her out of school then.

D: Sounds like it was the least of her problems.

K: Yeah. And they weren't supporting her big problems, and all they wanted her to do was get the uniform right. No. They're not supporting her and I knew with her mental health needs that she needed help. And I'd put into the council for like the council has to see her, and I kept getting letters saying they'll get back to her, they'll get back to her, and I ended up sending her to a private counsellor. They were subsidised, it was charity based. And she done okay with her but then she signed her off and she just stayed in the house and just things got worse. Then she went to the opposite. She'd start going back out with her mates again and it was like the full circle over again and with not having the baby, I think it just made her worse. That's why when she fell pregnant this time she says I want to keep it, mum. So that's where we're at now.

D: And how did all of that make you feel?

K: Helpless. Helpless. We plodded on, I plodded on as best I could but like, as I say, I tried to get in touch... I was taking her down to the doctor, they were fobbing it off as hormonal. Then when she was pregnant they fobbed it off as her hormones again. And I knew there was a lot more to it than that. She ended up getting in with [name removed].

D: Is that the dad?

K: The dad of the baby. And it was the same. She was arguing and I thought, I says to him, at the end of the day all these arguments aren't good for you. I says it's not a healthy relationship when you're arguing constantly. I know, but we're fine. I says, but you're not because you're arguing. I says it's not right. And the arguments are just getting out of hand. I says, you're back to square one, what it was like with [first partner]. She says, I know but he's not like that. I says, well I can't say that because when he's coming round he's doing the same thing. He's sitting there with his head in his hands or his hood up, and he just doesn't want to know. And then when she had [baby], they finished when she was pregnant because he didn't really want to know. He says the baby wasn't his. It was his. The drinking, she's settled down a little bit more but that's because of the help with Jamilla, and because with her being, when she was pregnant the midwife got in touch.

That's when we were going with Jamilla and stuff like that, and she's learning to see the signs a lot better. She notices things. She says you and my dad don't argue like that, but me and him argue like that all the time. And she notices the signs so much more. But she notices with her friends as well and she's trying to convince her friends that they're not in healthy relationships.

D: As in her friends' relationships with their boyfriends or whoever, I see.

K: And she finds that a lot of them aren't in healthy relationships. And we were sat talking about it a couple of weeks ago, well a couple of months ago, about different things, and even she turned round and says, mum, this should be put in the schools, she says, because it would stop the lads and the lasses.

D: Yeah, because it's not just about the girls having to figure it out, they need to know.

K: Because what she was getting off him by checking her phone and everything, she was doing to [new partner]. So it was like follow suit because she didn't know any different. Does that make sense?

D: **Yeah, that makes complete sense. I mean it sounded like unless she'd gotten that help the same things could have been repeated because she might not have known any better. And you were telling her it wasn't right, but it's totally between what your parents tell you and...**

K: No, she wouldn't listen to me one iota, and I was saying it's not right. You know, a lad doesn't lift his hands. A lad doesn't shout at you. You shouldn't be arguing like that. It's not healthy. But it was just sort, well you know nothing, you don't know nothing about today.

D: **Yeah. So you couldn't help her understand that, somebody else needed to.**

K: No.

D: **And you think the schools should have been doing that for the girls and the boys,**

K: Yeah, I think it should... Well we were speaking about it and we think it should be put across the board at school. It's like all the kids should have to take it. Do you know what I mean? And it shows them the signs of a healthy relationship, what not to do, because she's seeing it more amongst her friends, and she's trying to tell them and they're not listening to her.

D: **Yeah. And you shouldn't have to go through all of that to understand...**

K: To understand what goes on.

D: **Yeah, that should be a basic thing to know before you get into a relationship.**

K: Because me and her dad, we've never... like, we've never argued. Bickered slightly, you know what I mean, but we never argued. We never do. We just get on well. We're sort of like if there's anything needs doing we sit down and we talk about it. We sit down and talk about if we would need to buy anything and stuff like that. So it's to us we work as a team and to me that's how a relationship should work. Do you know what I mean? It's like team work.

D: **So if you were to get a message across to policy makers, the ones who...**

K: I think it should be across the board. I think like what Jamilla does should be put across the board.

D: **To anybody.**

K: To everybody, all the kids, so it nips it in the bud before it gets...

D: **To this point. Dangerous.**

K: Because if she wasn't caught up because she was pregnant, she wouldn't have got to see Jamilla. So how would it have affected her life in the future?

D: **How would it have gotten worse? Yeah.**

K: And how she would have accepted anything and she would have ended up being the perpetrator as well, because she doesn't know no different.

D: You said she was picking up the behaviour from her first boyfriend and doing the same with the second. Yeah, it sounds like she went through a lot of abuse with two different guys. Terminated pregnancy, mental health needs, another pregnancy before somebody...

D: And it sounds like from what you're saying, a parent obviously can't do everything.

K: Well the kids don't listen. They all think that their parents are sort of, how can I put it? Spoiling their fun, you know what I mean? I turned round and I says, I've been there, I've worn the T shirt, I've done all of what you're doing.

D: So there might be other parents who might be going through a similar experience who might be feeling quite powerless or helpless. What kind of message do you want to give to them?

K: Fight, seek help. If you cannot do it on your own you need to seek help. Because I couldn't have got her to where she is now if it hadn't have been for the likes of Jamilla, because the schools they haven't got a clue. The schools haven't got a clue what goes on. All they think about is what needs to be done for teaching the kids.

D: For their education.

K: For their education and not what the kids' needs are.

D: Not a life education. Yeah, okay. So the message to parents, keep fighting.

K: Keep fighting, get help. It's hard but you get there eventually.

D: Yeah, and sounds like you have. Now you've got a beautiful baby boy.

K: Yeah, he's no bother. Just the daughter, as I say, but we're getting there. We're getting there in slow stages.

D: Yeah, cool. Thanks for talking to me.

K: That's Fine

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 join in the Twitter Q&A conversation on March 17th between 1pm-2pm - just go to #SafeYoungLives.