

A Parent's Story 10:

Emily's Story



The first time my father of my children was arrested and charged was when he tried to bribe a policeman in a nightclub. This had followed a five-year period of domestic abuse, in which he would continually be arrested and then released without charge. It got to the point where I didn't want to report him, because when he inevitably came back the threats and violence would escalate.

He is father to my two children, James and Jemima. When I became pregnant with my first, he left me for another woman, though returned on the day she was born. Things improved for a while. He was kind to us and I believed he could be the father that my child deserved. This lasted for the whole of two months. The controlling behaviour began again. I remember a time where I had gone out for dinner with my friend. He began texting me, telling me he would deposit large sums of money in my bank account if I came home straight away. I told him that I didn't need the money. He responded by threatening my friend, threatening me. He eventually managed to find my location, arrived and stole the car keys of my friend, refusing to give them back until I got in the car with him. I did so. He then kicked me out by the side of the motorway on the way home and left me there.

He was manipulative to other people in my life too. For example, while I was desperately trying to make my way home from the side of the motorway in the middle of the night and he was home safe and sound, he acted to others as if he had no idea where I was; implying I was being irresponsible and late home to see my children. He would do things like that all the time. Make me look bad when I was dealing with the fall out and damage of his abuse.

He had no respect for me, my body or my children. When I was pregnant, he demanded an abortion. I declined, pregnant with twins and intent on keeping them. He told me that if I went through with the pregnancy, he would chop off their heads and post them through my mother's letterbox. I was so frightened and traumatised that I felt that I had to go through with the abortion, which I later did.

When things this horrific happen to you, it really twists your sense of reality. It felt so unbelievably wicked and implausible for someone to behave this way, yet they were, so I felt constantly confused and disoriented. Looking back, I can see it for what it was, but at the time I was at such an extreme of emotion and fear that I couldn't make any sense of much.

He knew how to play the system also. He would back off as soon as he sensed social services were about to become involved, for long enough to not be seen as a threat, and then return. He would always find a way back in. Over the course of our involvement, I had a miscarriage. He didn't seem to care at the time, left me to deal with

it and I had to bury her on my own. When he wanted to reassert himself in our lives several months later, he used this as an excuse, demanding I needed to contact him to tell him where his baby was buried. Refusing to be told over the phone, claiming he needed me to show him in person, he made me go in the car with him to the grave. I don't think he really cared; it was just a way in.

It never felt like I could ever escape. Even when I went to Spain to stay with my family for a month, three days into the trip he arrived at the airport, demanding to know where I was. When he arrived at my families' villa he dropped a location pin on his phone, labelling it 'Emily's Runaway'.

When I became pregnant with my second child, I was so worn down I became desperate. I filed for a non-molestation order, something I hadn't done before because I was sure he would contest it and this would fuel further aggression to me. He did initially argue against this, but as I was armed with evidence of his behaviour through text messages (that directly undermined his supporting character reference) it was allowed. This kept him away for a year, until it expired.

On expiry, he demanded paternity tests for our two children. They came back as indisputably his. This didn't seem to matter to him, and with vague intentions of paying maintenance he completely disappeared. I've applied for maintenance payments, but he just ignores them and calls me 'a nit in (his) hair'.

When he was released on bail, he absconded, and was on the run for around three weeks. The police turned up at my house, demanded to know where he was and spoke about him and his offences in front of the children. The children had no real understanding up until this point. The police had absolutely no regard for them. I hadn't told my children that their father was in prison and this is the first time they were really hearing about him from other people. I've now had to explain to them about who their father is, creating a figure for them to miss that didn't exist to them before. Because of this, I have had to give them pictures of him, that they hang in their bedrooms, forcing me to see a photograph of my abuser every day.

It's outrageous that not only the police blindly inflicted this level of information and trauma on my children, but felt no responsibility for the aftermath. There was no aftercare. No involvement by social services prompted by his imprisonment to help them understand or cope. We were just damaged, again, by his actions. There seems to be no thought about the impact on children.

A friend of the founder of Children Heard and Seen (CHAS) referred us to CHAS. It was amazing to be in a place where we weren't judged and we were offered consistent, long-term support. Most other agencies just leave when they think the immediate danger is gone, but I know that CHAS support is there for me whenever I need it. The children have been given mentors and so have I. All of whom have been extremely helpful. I've also found the groups really useful in providing a supportive, safe space.