

# Falkirk Practitioner Forum

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## Young People's Voices on Domestic Abuse

- I want someone to talk to, who I can trust, who will listen to me and provide reassurance and confidentiality. (Joseph Rowntree research)
- *Most kids who are being bashed have a very low self confidence, esteem and all that so they will not go looking for help. They'll wait for it to come to them which it never will.*(Irwin et al- Ben, 15yrs)
- Being safe and having someone to listen to me are the two main things.(Withscotland- Sharp and Jones)
- I felt branded, judged and stigmatised by professionals and have not had the support I needed. (WithScotland- Sharp and Jones)
- I liked the end bit of the group, when they told us what we did well during that group. That helped 'cos it made us feel good ... it gave us an idea of what's good about us. (Cedar – Alan 15yrs)
- *I did not know what to do. I had no-one to talk to. All my feelings just crammed up inside me, and sometimes they got the better of me. I do not know what I would do if I did not have a support worker. 'Mags'(age 14)*
- I learnt with the volcano not to be angry ... I liked the way it exploded and needed to think before you explode.  
(Cedar -Shona, aged 7 years)
- They don't push you to talk about it. You don't have to talk about your experience, you can just sit and listen to others. But most of us did. You just felt comfortable as well ... I think that actually the group was the most help I could get.  
(Cedar - Heather, aged 16 years)
- I feel more happier when I talk about it, than keeping it inside. It helps because my friends know what I've been through and they know what me mum's been through and it helps a lot." (McGee- Kara, age 10,)
- I want information to help me understand what is going on in my family. "Grown-ups think they should hide it and shouldn't tell us, but we want to know. We want to be involved and we want our mums to talk with us about what they are going to do – we could help make decisions."  
(Mullender et al., op. cit.)
- We just talk about things... they really helped me, telling me what we had to do and what things were like and about feeling uncomfortable...and about domestic violence" (S in Stalford et al., )
- I think they should listen because an adults point of view isn't always a child's perspective, so they should listen just to get a child's point of view. Houghton- J, female, aged 15

- Sometimes kids will open up if they trust someone. But if no one's talking to them and no one's saying that they're here for you, they're not going to say anything. No-one told me that they would listen.

I'm sure some of the teachers knew what was going on. They'd have to, they'd be stupid not to. They kind of didn't want to know about it. It's easier to pretend something's not happening.

If a kid comes up and says they're being hurt then they've got to do something  
. (Irwin et al- Tara, 18 )

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## Other Quotes:

- I want help to think through problems, without necessarily taking full responsibility for decisions. (Joseph Rowntree research)
- It felt like a constant battle. Right up until recently, the past two years is really when they'll actually start taking you seriously, you know, and listening to actually what I say and think that perhaps 'well, maybe she does know what she's talking about'. But for years, I mean I was told by consultants and people, you know, 'you're only a little girl, what do you know?' Sort of at the age of 15 I was told this. You know it is so frustrating when you're trying to say 'I live with my mother, I see it.' (Aldridge and Becker, op. cit.) Retrospective account
- People tend to protect children and young people. For me, this translated into ignoring my need to be informed and involved. My life was affected anyway and if I had guidance it might have made the experience more positive. I needed good, age-specific information about my situation. And I needed someone to talk to who would listen in confidence and help me to express and explore the complex feelings and situations I was dealing with (Marlowe, J). Retrospective account
- It was good to have a break away from home, have some fun and to get to know other children experiencing the same problems. (Joseph Rowntree research)
- I got help to see that it was not my fault and I was not alone in how I was feeling (Cedar)
- I was taught how to understand my feelings and deal with my anger (Cedar)
- I liked the end bit of the group, when they told us what we did well during that group. That helped 'cos it made us feel good ... it gave us an idea of what's good about us. (Cedar – Alan 15yrs)
- I think it was really good because the group was quite relaxed and it didn't feel like there was any pressure on you to join in, but it felt safe if you did say something, then you know that they wouldn't go and tell anybody and that they were going to look after you.  
(Cedar- Katy, aged 14 years)

- We once done this activity like - it was iceberg and like at the top it's quite small, but then under the sea it goes big ... so like, if somebody feels quite, quite angry, then, they've got a lot more feeling underneath."  
(Cedar- Rhona, aged 12 years)
- I think I still need to put into practice like what to do when you ... like one of the things was count to ten. Count to twenty. Walk away. Go upstairs to your bedroom and punch your bed, like punch your pillow and that's all I can remember about that ... but I've not really practiced that. I just need to put it into practice.  
(Cedar- Rory, aged 10 years)
- Trust and confidentiality are very important to me.(WithScotland- Sharp and Jones)
- School is the best place to get help; I wanted the chance to talk to teachers, and specialist workers and to be able to drop-in as well as be offered individual and group work services.(WithScotland- Sharp and Jones)
- J: I think they should listen because an adults point of view isn't always a child's perspective, so they should listen just to get a child's point of view.  
M: Yeah, getting the view from a child is probably more clearly than getting it from an adult as well, cos the child knows.  
J: Knows it directly, not like from a parent that's sort of taken it for what they think that the child would think.  
M: That way you're getting the child's feelings as well about it all."  
(Houghton- J, female, aged 15 and M, male, aged 17)
- You need to try to get rid of all your feelings by writing or talking about your feelings or doing other stuff that fills your mind and distracts you and is a way of escaping - like school, being with friends, doing sport, partying with friends, going to a park  
(Houghton, forthcoming; Mullender *et al.*, 2002; Barron, 2007; Irwin *et al.*, 2002)
- I think feeling safe is being able to be relaxed at all times. You wouldn't have things running through your mind like am I moving soon or should I expect to be treated aggressively today. Also I would feel safe if there is somebody for me to talk to if I have a concern about something. (*Marcus, 17yrs, in Barron*),
- *It's about getting it out, let people know that the help is there, and it can be accessed through schools and other organisations. Not a lot of children and young people that go through domestic abuse know where the help is and how to access it, and you need to let them know. Some that don't go through domestic abuse but know someone that is going through it might want to seek help so that they could help their friend so therefore they could get as much information as possible and so they could pass it on.* (Houghton- M, male, 17yrs)

## Bibliography:

- We thought they didn't see Cedar in Scotland- Children & Mothers Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery June 2011, Research for Real
- Understanding what children say about living with Domestic Violence, Parental Substance Misuse and Parental Health Problems, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, jrf.org.uk
- Children's Needs- Parenting Capacity 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Hedy Cleaver, Ira Unell, Jane Aldgate , TSO 2011
- Children Living with Domestic Abuse, Cathy Sharp & Jocelyn Jones, Oct 2012

## Music:

### Daisy by Karine Polwart

Karine Polwart was brought up in Banknock and attended Denny High School. She spent six years working for the Scottish Women's Aid movement on issues such as domestic and child abuse and young people's rights and these experiences have influenced her songwriting.

She has been most recognised for her solo career, winning three awards at the BBC Folk Awards in 2005, and was previously a member of Malinky and Battlefield Band.

