

THE INVISIBLE KIDS

PANORAMA

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SUSAN:

I'd wake up in the morning and I would think I wonder if they've got money to get drugs today. Because if they haven't, they'd be in total bad moods, but if they did, then they'd be happy and cheery.

***This film is about children whose parents are drug addicts.
These are their stories told by actors.***

SUSAN

There were a lot of people coming in saying: "Do you want this, do you want that?" and you know there's different names for it and then it just clicked, it must be drugs they're taking. I'm 14 now, I was about ten then. You can't do nothing about it. You can't go and leave or nothing. You can't be saying that's not right, you can't be doing that. I'm not for any of that, cos... like a 10 year old saying that? Just wouldn't say it because I'd of been the child. It wouldn't have been my place to say that. It just bottles up inside you and you don't know what to do. They used to say: "Go and ask..." like the neighbours and that "if we can get a loan of a fiver for food and that. Just say it's for a power cut." I used to be affronted going to ask like every day. Sometimes it was going on food when we needed food. But then sometimes it was going on my mum's speed, and sometimes my mum would give my dad £50 and he'd go and spend it at the dogs and come back up with nothing. My mum started selling the Christmas stuff that we'd got, like my CD player and my wee brother's play station. I thought if they're doing this, why are they doing it? I mean I knew it was for drugs but they used to tell me that it was for stuff that we needed, food and that. I didn't want to say nothing in front of them, so I used to go away and cry, sit by myself. I knew they loved me but they just didn't care that I was there and that I needed stuff as well.

**These stories are from Glasgow but they could have come from anywhere in the UK
There are between 250,000 and 350,000 children of drug addicted parents in the UK.**

ANDY

My mum was always dead sleepy. I can remember one time when she was falling asleep and I tried to wake her up but she wouldn't wake up. So I went in and I got my walkman and I put it in her ears and I turned it up full blast and then she jumped up. Like all the boys in the street used to shout out to her: "Junkie, junkie" and all that, and then I realised she must be taking drugs. I felt sad. It was heroin and that made her sleepy. Then there was these other drugs, what was a tablet or something. Then she would wake up dead high. She couldn't sit down. She was always tidying up and doing stuff. Like when my dad came in, I was always waking her up and that, because my dad didn't know she was on drugs, and if I told him that I knew it would just make things worse. So I was always waking her up and making sure she wasn't sleeping. When I was 11 we moved six times. Then when I was 12 we stayed in a refuge, because my mum wanted to get away from my dad. He used to hit her, batter her, and I used to have to go and grab him off her. I just used to get angry, just sit in my room. I've got all these toys, but just used to knock them down, my mum had just fetched them, but she'd have to come and fetch them again, and I used to knock them down again.

DAN

I've walked in on them once when I was a wee boy, and I saw them, my mum, my aunt and my uncle taking stuff, and there was other people in the house taking it as well, taking drugs like on tin foil and that, tooting. That was the first time I saw them and they just... they just started doing it in front of me. They didn't hide it then. I've caught them taking it with a needle a few times, when I was younger. My mum was quite angry, shouting at me and that, telling me to get out, and I ran away. I used to run away all the time when I was younger. I didn't come back for hours. Broke into a few places for shelter and that. Well, with my mum and that shouting at me all the time, I just didn't like getting shouted at much. Still don't like getting shouted at sometimes. These guys, they used to buy stuff off of my uncle. They all burst in and they were holding knives right up to our throats asking for the drugs and the money. And they were saying that they would cut our throats if we didn't give them it. They took the money but we got that sorted out. And see the guys that burst in.. well.. the dealer's name that they were using, my ma knew him and she got on alright with him. So the dealer pure battered them. They were holding a knife right up to my uncle's neck. They were just.. just mental.

LEONI

My ma was taking stuff and the social work didn't really know, and I'd be left with my wee sister to take care of her and all that. When she was taking stuff she couldn't even blooming boil a kettle or anything to make her milk. She was on one at the time so it was easy, just to give a bottle of milk. And my mates would come up for me but I wouldn't go out to play because I was scared for my wee sister, scared about what would happen if she dropped a fag, because she nearly set the house alight with her fags I don't know how many times. She keeps falling asleep and then she wakes up and the couch is on fire or something.

ELISE

When I was a wee lassie I knew my ma took heroin. I caught her hitting up in the kitchen. I clicked on, I knew. I don't know how I knew, I just knew. It didn't really bother me because I didn't know any better. She was never there for me but I used to cry a lot for my ma. My ma, she kind of took a drug overdose. I didn't know. I just thought she was sleeping, because I was only 6 or something. And when I was younger, I was like the ma of the family, always looking after everybody else. I was trying to keep my wee sister quiet, trying to waken my ma up, but I couldn't help her. I phoned up the office, they sent up the social workers. They took me into respite care to start with, but they were horrible. I used to cry at night for my ma, but I was a wee lassie, I needed my ma.

LEONI

My ma's tried to do herself in before a couple of times, like do her wrists and all that, and she's tried to take overdoses, like when she goes in the toilet for a while you're scared if she's going to walk out and I'd be shouting her, she doesn't answer you, and you're shouting her again, and sometimes I've heavy butted the door in, you know.. like kicked the door. And she'll say: "I can hear you, but I'm just ignoring you because you're always shouting at me." And I'll say: "What are you doing that for, cos I could be frightened to get in there, trying to commit suicide or something?"

KYLIE

Christmas morning, the year before last, got up to go to the toilet, I was pushing at the door and I couldn't get in. And I ran down and got my big sister, we both went up to the toilet and I eventually get in. My uncle was lying, face pure chalk white, his lips were blue. He had blood and sick all round his nose, with his needle lying beside him. He had just been out the jail a week. On Christmas eve he'd just bought his son clothes and that because he might be getting back with his wife. My dad was upset, because they two were like best pals. The rest of my family were like that: "Och, it's happened again!" do you know what I mean? Even though they were upset, another one will be. See the month before that my other uncle died.

Less than half of drug addicted parents in the UK live with their children

GIRL

I want her to stop using drugs. I can't say how much because it's the most in the whole world. You can't even put a number on it, can you.

BOY

I knew it was changing her, just every day it was changing her. I knew she was using drugs.

GIRL

I used to think how could this happen to me? It was just sad, all the time and I would get angry.

GIRL

She used to leave me in the house and all that, for hours and hours. I must have been about 9. I got abused as well, off one of my mum's ex boyfriends, through drugs. There was just hundreds of hurt.

BOY

I see my mother every week, but sometimes she doesn't turn up, she says she forgot. I tell her it makes me feel sad, she says "sorry son", that's it.

DAN

I used to stay up during the night and sleep during the day. I preferred it because that way I neversaw much. Well, a few times the police bust in and I was in my bed, I'd have to get up in front of them all with just my shorts on, standing in front of them all with just your boxers on, it was pure embarrassing.

SUSAN

When I went to school I thought, right, I'll not get shouted at, I'll not get hit, and I'll not see them taking drugs. At the same time you kind of think.. I'm thinking, what's going to happen today I'm not in the house? What's going to happen the today? kind of thing. If they'd have another fall out and I'd go home and one of them wasn't there....

LEONI

Once when I was in primary 4 my ma's boyfriend went and broke into a shop and stole a load of stuff, he hid it in my ma's room and school they were like that: "well if anybody knows anything about this, can put their hands up." I knew who it was, but I was only in primary 4, and I didn't want to say nothing. I felt like crying because of the way it was. I felt dead guilty and all that. And if I like told anybody, then they'd tell the teachers and he'd get taken away. I did love him as a dad, 'cos I thought he was, my ma told me and he told me that he was my da and I was calling him da. So I couldn't say nothing.

PART 2

Children in the families where drugs are abused are 7 times more likely than other children to start using illegal drugs

ANDY

Now my mum's off drugs, she's doing stuff now, like getting things sorted, getting a house and all kinds of stuff, just lots of things, she's like totally different now. She's always asking me where I'm going, when I'll be back... you know for the better. I like that better. You know like they're not doing drugs anymore, she's given up with that, you know what I mean.

DAN

I prefer it here with my Gran, 'cos when I go to my mum's, I don't like the people she hangs about with and that and my Gran, she doesn't hang about with anybody here. I just go out with my pals and that. I can say thing's to my mum, but not like feelings and that, I just say, "all right?" and that. I don't say anything about my feelings to really anybody. I've not got any time for her when she's into all that stuff.... any time at all.

SUSAN

When I was in care, I went to see them on a day visit. They were off the drugs and I saw they were getting everything done. They had like a new suite and the way they looked, they looked a lot different. Like my dad wasn't skinny and looked yellow.... And my mum's pure yellow in this picture she's got, and my dad's like chalk white and just dead skinny and then I saw them, when they walked in, they looked better... each time I saw them. But when they got this house, I thought, aye, they're really trying to make an effort.

***In the UK, parental addiction problems feature in one in four cases on the Child Protection Register
In some areas, the figure is three in four.***

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