

Safe! Case Studies

Three stories from 2022-2023

Names and some details changed to protect anonymity

Young Victim Service – Case Study

12-year-old Paul has his physical assault filmed and shared on social media. He was struggling with anxiety and anger and had very low self-esteem. His Mum said he had lost over 2 stone and it felt like ‘his light had gone out’. He had a diagnosis of ADHD and was very self-conscious about his multiple ticks which had recently become more prominent. Paul needed a lot of reassurance from his mum who he was texting over 20 times a day.

The SAFE! Project Worker encouraged Paul to make a personal shield to talk through his family, friends, hobbies and likes. He was particularly proud of being two belts away from black belt in Karate. He engaged well in the session and said that he would like support to control his anger, especially in arguments with his Mum.

The Project Worker used Protective Behaviours exercises to introduce psycho-social education and learning into the sessions. They explored the **Unwritten Rules** to think about the difference between fighting in Karate and in the street. They talked through the incident and broke down Paul’s **Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours** at different points. He mentioned that his mum had been in hospital at the time, adding to his anxiety. Sessions ended with a **Grounding Technique** to help him to move back into class positively.

Paul told the project worker that he had been messaging his mum constantly as a distraction to stop himself thinking about what had happened to him. He hadn’t told his mum why as he hadn’t wanted her to worry. The Project Worker encouraged him to talk to others as a way of helping him deal with worries.

At the final session Paul did a **restorative approach** exercise – identifying his feelings towards those who harmed him, and expressing what he would like to say to them. They looked at what had changed since the incident, positive and negative, and did a **positive self-talk exercise**. Paul reported feeling less angry and more confident – he said he found the support helpful as it ‘helped get my feelings out’. The school referrer wrote to SAFE! after the sessions had concluded saying *“within school we have definitely seen a calmer and more relaxed Paul, he seems to be able to understand when situations or decisions don’t go his way and he is able to discuss them”*.

DA/SV Specialist Team – Case Study

11-year-old Elana had witnessed Domestic Abuse at home over a number of years. When SAFE! met with her she was presenting with sleep issues, was scared, was not able to verbalise her thoughts and feelings and was struggling to understand what her relationship with her father might look like in the future.

At the time of the referral, the Elana's father was being held on remand whilst he awaited sentencing. For this reason, a ChIDSVA was allocated to support her to understand the criminal justice process that. The ChIDSVA met with Elana at home and explored possible sentencing outcomes. The ChIDSVA also explained what a court room looks like and what will happen on the day of sentencing.

Referrals were made to ensure Elana's mother could also access professional support to help her through the sentencing process. There were numerous delays to Dad's sentencing which Elana found difficult to process. Eventually the sentencing took place two months after the original date was set with a custodial sentence being imposed on the defendant.

Following the sentencing the ChIDSVA provided some emotional support sessions designed to help Elana reflect and understand what she had experienced. The ChIDSVA explained different types of trauma responses that can follow witnessing domestic abuse. This helped her understand herself better as a young victim, but she was still struggling to understand why the domestic abuse took place in the first place. The ChIDSVA suggested she join the next DAY Programme, an interactive multi-media course that explores healthy and unhealthy behaviours in relationships. Elana agreed to attend and the ChIDSVA worked with her to prepare her for the group support. Elana engaged well in all sessions which gave her a better understanding of the types of domestic abuse, healthy versus unhealthy relationships and how to maintain healthy boundaries.

Whilst this is an ongoing case Elana is already presenting as being in a much better place than when they were referred to SAFE! She has a better understanding of the actions of her father and what to look for in a healthy relationship. She enjoyed the group sessions, particularly meeting peers who had experienced something similar.

Building Respectful Families – Case Study

10-year-old Daniel was referred into BRF in March 2023 displaying extreme violence in the home towards his Mum, Step-Dad and younger siblings. There was a history of domestic abuse in the family from Daniel's biological father, which he had witnessed at an early age, and he had a difficult ongoing relationship with his father. Mum had since re-married and had 4 much younger children with her new partner, some of whom have special needs and spent periods of time in hospital. Mum had also experienced post-natal depression for several years following the birth of one of her younger children.

A BRF practitioner was assigned to the family and started to provide 121 sessions for Daniel in school. Over 8 individual sessions and 2 whole family sessions at home, they encouraged Daniel to talk about feelings using a worry monster, feelings jar and i-messaging. They explored Early Warning Signs and introduced the abuse and respect wheels. Support was also given through joint and individual sessions for Mum and Stepdad at home. These focussed on safety planning, communication, understanding the brain (why children respond in ways that challenge when scared or worried), as well as encouraging self-reflection in a trauma-informed way.

Over the course of the sessions the Practitioner used restorative dialogue to aid family recovery – she supported them to write letters to each other expressing how they felt, and their love for each other. The practitioner was able to convey to Mum that Daniel had felt he was to blame for some of the health issues of his younger siblings, he was supported to understand that he was not to blame. Mum sent Daniel a letter setting out her pride and love for him, and her hopes for the future. Work with the family is ongoing as post-intervention support to help them to embed the changes and really benefit from new communication strategies.

The Early Help worker who referred them into BRF wrote to the practitioner with the following feedback:

“I was finally able to catch up with the family yesterday they have reported a huge turnaround in the last four weeks with no violence in the family home. Mum was very upbeat during my call with her and thanked me and you for the work has been carried out.”