

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

25th November to 10th December 2020



When I first started going out with him, everything was 'hunky dory' for the first 9 months.

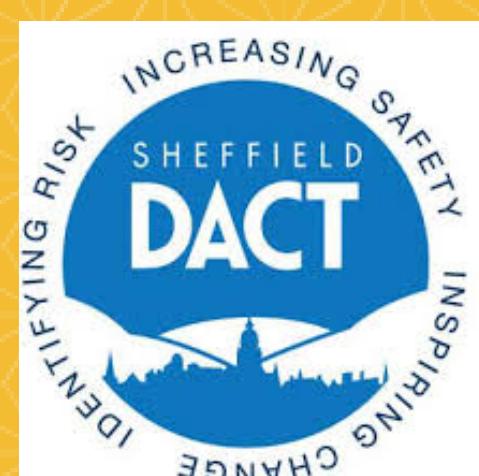
Red flags that I now recognise:

- Saying he was going to work away
- He had trouble with money etc
- Slimy attitude – very manipulative, really cock sure of himself
 - Really slimy, jack the lad
- Telling me he had a nice car, nice apartment etc but further down the line, I have never seen them. 100% he was making stuff up to draw me in. If I am talking to someone now, I can see straight away when it is BS, there was a lot of BS with him
- Lending him money – he always had a wad in his pocket so why did he ask to borrow it?
- Looking back I was so excited about getting a pub, he blamed me for losing it but it was me who lost a huge amount of money, and because of what I had experienced with my ex I was excited about a new life
 - Moving in with me really quickly
- Texting constantly, checking where I am, who with? If I was talking to someone, he would say I shouldn't be talking to them, he would also alienate them
 - Getting other people to bully me
 - Prey on younger people, I am the 'big lad'
 - Belittling

I fell for him, he was telling me he had split with his missis but they still worked together and he stayed there in the pub they ran, telling me he was sleeping on the settee. I 100% believed him!!

At the beginning we were going out, partying and stuff, I used to stop over on certain nights at the pub and I just believed everything he was telling me. Out of the blue he needed some money to pay for a large bill and then started going on about working away as he needed extra money, it didn't make sense as the pub seemed to be running well and I was so upset that I wouldn't see him for months at a time and that he usually paid for everything when we went out and always had plenty of cash on him, I wasn't worried and so I lent him the money.

#notallviolenceisphysicalorvisible



#notallviolenceisphysicalvisible

When I look back; I now see that I was vulnerable due to a previous DA relationship and he spoke of having an apartment and had a car, so he was doing well.

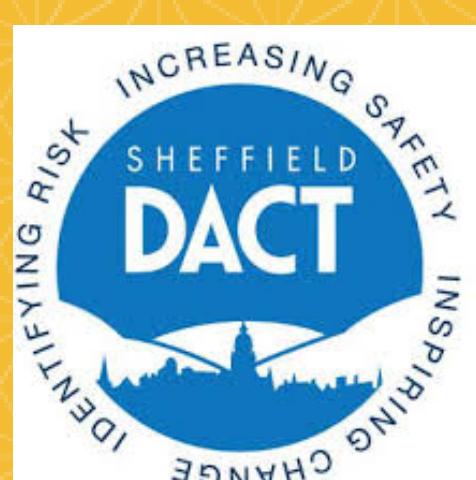
I just believed everything he said but then he lost his pub business and turned up at mine and moved in; I hadn't asked him to do that. He came with just a bag of clothes, he had lost everything. The relationship was alright for a little bit, and it was quite exciting at the time. We started doing DJ jobs and Karaoke as money was short. Once he'd had a drink, it started, he started changing and by the end of the night, he would start arguing, it was as if a red mist had appeared. Sometimes, he would disappear, saying he was going to stop with his daughter, I found it really strange, and it was horrible. It went on and on and then his ex and family members started turning up and abusing me, they were all threatening me; Police attended at one point and dispersed them. It always seemed to be fine during the week but then would kick off on a Saturday. He was always disappearing especially after he was kicking off and I didn't know where he was going, also he would borrow my car so I was stuck at home waiting for him, his car never materialised and eventually I found out that was a lie, like the apartment.

This situation continued for some time, we were cleaning the flat one day and I don't know what set him off but he assaulted me and that gave me a black eye; he hadn't been drinking.

Around this time, we had been trying to get into the pub business together and had succeeded; I was too committed to the relationship at this point to do anything about the abuse. However, I had some reservations because I was due some money from a divorce settlement and I always had it in the back of my mind that he was after the money.

The first night in a new pub that we jointly ran, he gave me the worst beating yet. We had worked hard for a week to get the place ready; it was a long day but still exciting. He wanted to do 'after bird' and was up until 6 in the morning with two of the customers. We still had a lot of work to do so I told him it was ridiculous staying up until that time. He erupted and severely assaulted me. I was covered in bruises; he'd pin me down and would cover my nose and mouth so I couldn't breathe, strangle me, punch, kick and stop me from leaving. After that he disappeared for 3 days.

I can't remember if I told anyone about what happened that first night but was emotionally distraught, I felt that I'd been conned into the pub business, I had sold my car and invested £16,000, what do you do? I had no money left, I felt very stuck at this point. I had already written a letter to the council to quit my flat, but didn't send it as the flat was mine. He came back and promised it would never happen again, so I stayed but it continued to happen every week and became more frequent. He always blamed me, saying it was something I had said or done.



#notallviolenceisphysicalvisible

At this time he had other people under his control which he used also to bully me and control what I did, everything looked good in the public eye but behind the scenes I was constantly walking on eggshells and being held captive. If I tried to leave, I'd be held in locked in rooms being assaulted told that I was going to be buried on the moors and he knew people that would do it. You start to believe it. Even if I locked myself in a room he would get a crowbar or Knife and break it down to get to me. He would phone his ex missis while assaulting me and I'd be screaming, crying for help and she would be saying just F----g kill her. It got so bad that I was constantly phoning the police which made things even worse, I was so isolated and mentally drained and that's just a glimpse of what it was like.

The pub was being refurbished and I was so covered in bruises so I hid away and he spent what money there was for stock and bills on his ex and so called mates partying. The beatings carried on and the mental torture and the coercive behaviour to get other family and friends to do it as well which also ended up in assaults from some of them throughout the relationship. I've counted over ten of them over the years.

As another serious assault happened, I escaped half-naked into the street and some kind people took me to hospital, after x-rays the staff wouldn't let me leave until I had someone who could look after me. My body from head-to-toe was absolutely covered in bruises, I couldn't walk and was emotionally broken.

I stayed with a friend for a while to recover, then moved back home to my flat and he began to stalk me. He wanted me back and wouldn't leave me alone - knocking on the window, phoning, texting, emails you name it.

Then my Nan was really ill who is my rock, whilst I was still in recovery from the assault which I hid from her as she was dying. I was absolutely devastated at her loss and he got his way, back with me, I'm at rock bottom and two months later I was diagnosed with breast cancer which spread under my arm. I had four procedures in two separate operations and again the violence still continued and the consultant saw all the bruises and cuts in between the operations and would not let me out of hospital into his care.

I was so low, isolated to what was happening, the operations and all the treatments and he was back, but again the violence erupted and he smashed up my car, ripped up my clothes and smashed up my belongings then turned on me and while I was trying to run away. He punched me so hard in the face that I thought my nose was broken, he was then arrested and released on bail but would not leave me alone. The stalking was horrendous through other people and him, I was so frightened of the threats on my life, I caved in. Then there were fresh promises to new beginnings of moving away and a new start.

We moved away to another pub and the court case came up and I'm too afraid to go so he got away with it, but the verbal abuse and violence was getting worse by the week. No one sees what's going on; I'm more isolated than ever now.



He assaults me so badly that I smashed a window with my fist and cut all my arm and shout for help but nobody hears my screams, so I jumped from a second storey building and lay for hours half naked in agony with my back, he just shut the window and left me in the freezing snowy weather.

As weeks went by, it became worse and then he attacked me so badly and restrained me from leaving, I was stamped on which left foot prints on my face, strangled so hard you can see the hand marks, my mouth and nose were covered so I couldn't breathe. I was punched, kicked all over, I really did think he was going to kill me and he was arrested again.

After a few months I came back to Sheffield and the stalking continued and I was so vulnerable and isolated and he was so manipulative that I again moved away with him to another pub and the second court case comes up and he persuaded me not to go and he plead guilty as there was photo evidence. The repercussion was only a fine and two days later he attacks me that bad he splits my head open and rips all my clothes off and smashes me up that good again that I thought this is it. The verbal abuse was that bad that I tried and commit suicide, while I was in such a state pleading with him to stop he was taking photos of me covered in blood. Somehow I woke up the next day, in a pool of blood with most of my belongings smashed up.

This went on for a number of years, many times I tried to leave him, but he always talked me round. I was very vulnerable, I'd lost my Nan, had cancer, then my Dad suddenly died. We moved multiple times around the country to different pubs, each time it was supposed to be a fresh start.

The violent and verbal abuse continued; Police in different counties were contacted everywhere we went, but nothing was connected.

Throughout it all, his drinking and the attacks increased, while I was trying to work and keep the pubs going. Whenever we separated it was relentless, he wouldn't leave me alone, constantly stalking me. He would always promise he would never do it again.

The last time, it was one punch too much. We had a town centre pub, it had just closed and it started with verbal abuse you could see the rage in him so I was going to call the Police, but he grabbed my phone so I ran behind the bar to get the landline. He got hold of me on the bar, things got smashed up and the landline was pulled out of the socket, so I hit him with a pint pot and ran over all the broken bottles but as I got off the bar I was knocked on to a concrete floor when my head hit the floor with such force I was out of it. I woke up with him on top off me holding my hair banging my head onto the floor, I was screaming so he smothered and strangled me; I'm so dazed and was going to die with the pain. At some point it stopped and I don't know how but I managed to get hold of my phone and call a taxi which took me to A&E and they kept me in, I needed an urgent CT scan. I felt like I had been in a car crash. That was on a Friday, by the Sunday I couldn't even walk. Around this time, IDVAS phoned me and explained that my case had been heard at a MARAC meeting, I started putting more plans together. They have saved my life, if it wasn't for them I don't know....



#notallviolenceisphysicalorvisible

#notallviolenceisphysicalorvisible

After nearly 6 years of this, I finally managed to separate from him for good. When I look at the photos now, I see how far I have come. I was taking photos of my injuries and hiding them on my computer, my strength that I would escape came from the hope that my children would come back into my life as we were estranged. I still carry the suicide notes with me, I wrote so many, the life had gone out of me, I was a walking zombie.

When I left him for the final time, I was getting support from IDVAS and I did things 'properly' this time, so hiding belongings in my car etc. As I knew I was going to end up dead.

Going to hospital, having the MARAC meeting, putting things in place, it didn't just stop there sadly, it got worse as my Mum died. The stalking got worse and I was drinking all night and then sleeping in the day, I was so frightened.

I have been diagnosed with PTSD, I was hammering the drink because the stalking happened at night. I was constantly contacting the Police. I was in dread all the time, he was supposed to be on bail in Rotherham but was stopping with his ex-missis 5 minutes away and was always outside my house; I was on red alert from the police and just constantly phoning the Police making statements on him, his family and friends as they were threatening me.

IDVAS helped, making statements, taking it to court. I bumped into him in the court which helped me as he then pleaded guilty. He didn't even do a day in prison, he got a restraining order put on him for life to stay away from me and he could get up to five years if he breaches that.

If I punched you, strangled you, smothered you, I would be in the nick!

Advice I would give to others:

- Tell them things are moving too quick
- That it sounds like what I went through
- I would put questions in their heads
- Warn them about his FB profile, there is nothing really about him on there
- If they were vulnerable, I would get them to think about that

I hid a lot from my family; I thought I would be alright. I see domestic abuse everywhere now and I would always say something; I have got that barrier now but I have come a long way.

Not all violence is physical or visible; control and manipulation is abuse too.

