

NOT IN OUR COMMUNITY

Protecting us and our friends against
sexual exploitation.

Sharron's Story

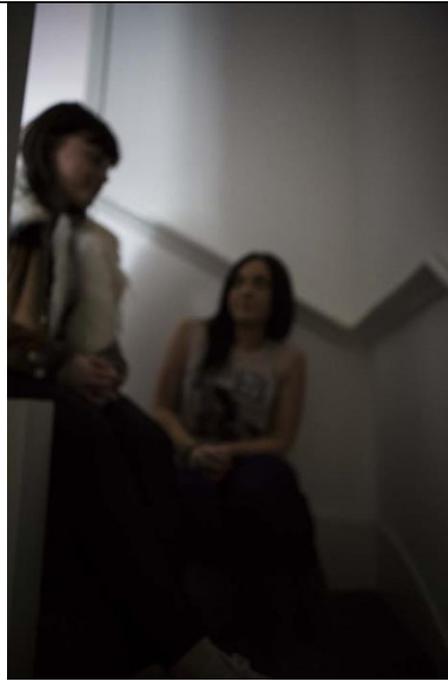
Sharron thought it was cool to have an older friend, though her "friend" had other things in mind.

Names and other details have been changed to protect identities.

It's not okay for someone to manipulate you into doing sexual things for their own or someone else's benefit. If you're under 18, this is called child sexual exploitation and it is against the law.

Grooming takes many forms and many abusers will gain the trust of their victims over time.

Do not ignore the warning signs if you or a friend are at risk of sexual exploitation. See <http://notinourcommunity.org/get-help/> to understand the options for help.



1. At the age of twelve I'd met this girl older than me and started hanging out with her, it was so cool that she wanted to be my friend but what I hadn't realised was that she'd been abused when she was younger.



2. Once I'd met her I started going missing from home because she'd take me to parties all the time, where I was given drugs and alcohol.



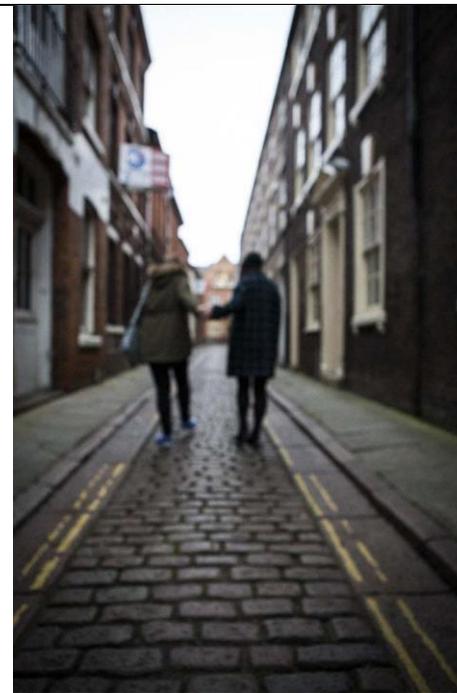
3. I didn't even realise what was going on. When I was out of my head they'd just have sex with me whether I was conscious or not, or if I tried to resist they just put their hands over their face and carried on; I wasn't strong enough physically or emotionally to stop them.



4. When I was fourteen I was referred to a project which was helping me get back on track. I stopped going missing, stopped the alcohol and drugs, and was no longer forced to have sex.



5. All I wanted was a normal life. But my 'friend' kept contacting me, it got to the point of I had to change my number, Facebook profile and move into a care home away from my family. I started to feel really alone, I'd lost a lot of contact with everyone I'd cared about and so I began going missing again so that I could see the friends I missed.



6. After a while I got back to having a 'normal life', wanted to go back home, going back to school, started a youth club and meeting real friends, my own age. But then I saw her.



7. She was really nice to me and convinced me to go back with her that she'd pay for my bus. But then when I arrived at the house I was plied with alcohol and drugs.



8. That's when I got raped. Two older men. I won't go through all of this again.



9. I am determined to get my life back on track. I've got people who support me and help me move forward. My name's Sharon and this is my story. I hope it helps others see how abusers operate and that help is out there.

Exploitation is never the victim's fault.

If you have concerns about sexual exploitation, whether it's regarding a young person who may be at risk, or a suspected offender, you can call the local police on 101.

If you think that a young person is in immediate danger please dial 999.

Alternatively, you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

If you are young person who needs help, you can contact the following national charities:

Childline on 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk

Samaritans at 08457 90 90 90 or www.samaritans.org

Or you can contact Hull-based charity Cornerhouse (Yorkshire) on 01482 327044