

## Teenage Parent Peer Educator Case Study

### Straight Talking Peer Educator Case Study

My childhood started out really good and normal. I was brought up in a traveller family although we had settled. My problems started when I hit 13 years old and was expelled from school around the same time my mother had a mental breakdown and sectioned under the mental health act. My Mum was absent from home for months on end and my Dad could not cope with looking after me and my younger brother.

I joined a gang at the age of 14 and ended up getting into lots of trouble with the police and authorities. I ended up having to attend probation and had many suspended sentences from prison. When I joined the gang my friends within the gang became like my family, we stuck together and looked after each other, I felt secure. By the age of 15 I was very well known for my gang affiliation and my mother was released from hospital, for the sake of her health I was asked to leave the family home. I was moved into temporary accommodation and this was a very hard time for me. I was very young and didn't really know how to take the emotional difficulties I was facing, I started to drink alcohol and stay up all night and sleep during the day, I couldn't really see a way out.

Luckily I moved to a secure unit in a hostel where the staff were very helpful and tried their best to guide me, unfortunately I was way too involved with the gang by now and there was no changing my life style at that time. I moved out of the hostel unit into a 1-bedroom flat at the top of a high-rise block. I lived on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor and would have to step over drug addicts sleeping in the stair way every day and people constantly ringing the intercom to gain entry to the block.

I eventually got a job at the age of 17 and I also attended college to complete a plumbing course, I also got a new boyfriend who had nothing to do with my gang life. I thought he was so nice and mostly kept my distance from the gang.

I ended up getting pregnant and my new boyfriend, the baby's father, started to hit me and it became more frequent and aggressive. I continued with my pregnancy and had my son but the violence continued. By this stage I had completely left the gang I was affiliated with and felt like I had no one.

3 months after giving birth to my son, my little brother died in a car crash and my life became an emotional roller coaster. I developed extreme depression and eventually moved from the high rise to a 2-bedroom house along with the child's father who continued to abuse me. After I called the police 13 times I found the strength to send him to prison

My depression peaked and I asked for a home help, just someone to talk to and help me to look at options to better my life. I was told about Straight Talking and applied for a job as a peer educator. When I started I was really nervous and had no confidence but Straight Talking as a whole supported me and encouraged me to develop confidence that I so desperately needed. I really enjoy working for Straight Talking and have developed many skills not only for work but for life as well. I was very grateful for the opportunity they gave me. I have now been promoted to the office as a Local Scheme Coordinator. My life has improved massively and I am a much better and stronger person. And I now know my worth and that in life I can achieve almost anything I want to. I enjoy being me. Me and my son have an amazing life."