

Liam's story

Growing up, it felt like it was either you hurt people or people hurt you.

I lived with my father from when I was four until I was nine. My father – he is an abuser, and he is a pig and a paedophile. And he beat me for many, many years of my life. I never really got to feel safe or relax. I was always on edge. That just became normal.



When I was nine, I moved to my grandparents' house. Me and my grandparents, we always had our difficulties and we still do, but we work on them.

But one day I lost my temper because I have severe anger issues. I just fired out and I started breaking things and I couldn't control myself. I hit my grandma and then my grandfather threw me across the room.



My grandparent's called the police, which I understand – in that moment I had no idea what I was doing, I was a nine-year-old kid in a rage.

That day, I was removed from my grandparent's care and put into foster care. The place they took me was five hours away – away from all my family and the people I

knew. I lived in foster care from the age of 9 to 11. And I had so many different placements in that time.

After being in a place for like a couple of months, I would feel too comfortable and I wouldn't like it. I've never liked being comfortable, I've always had to move. I guess with my father, because he bashed me and all that, I was never comfortable and I never got to, like, relax properly.



And so if I started to relax in foster care, I would panic, and then I would start losing my shit again and losing my mind, so I would get moved into another unstable place until I got stable and comfortable, and then it would happen all over again. And I continued to do that to the age of 11.

When I was 11, I went back to live with my mum. She was with her partner and her three kids at that time. Before that, my mum didn't believe in hitting. That changed when she met her partner.

One day, just after my 12th birthday, they backhanded her nine-year-old daughter across the face, knuckles and everything. It was hard. She ran to me screaming and I stood up for her. I couldn't stand there and do nothing.

After that, Mum and I left. We were living in motels for a while. My mum has been in and out of prison for a lot of her life. There were times I couldn't see her. Times I didn't know where she was. My mum is my world, so that's always been hard.

School wasn't safe either. I was getting bashed a lot. People jumped me. One day, two people came at me with knives and tried to stab me.

After that, I stopped going most of the time. I just didn't feel safe there. On multiple different occasions, I had my head punched in. I have been hospitalised a few times because of being bashed.



My first real interaction with police was when I was nine. When they arrived at my grandparents' house, they treated me like I was a horrible person. Like what I'd done was the worst thing imaginable. They didn't see a nine-year-old kid who had lost control and made a mistake. They just saw a bad kid.

They made it seem worse too. My grandma bruises easily because she's on blood thinners, so her arm looked really bad. The photos made it look even worse. She told them she was okay, but it didn't matter. From that day on, I had no respect for police.

I think if they had treated me differently, I would've seen them differently. But instead, I was labelled as the problem. The bad kid. The abuser. No one wondered why I reacted like that, why I was so angry. No one looked at all the shit that had happened to me before that.

Later on, when I was in residential care, my interactions with police got worse. The police who come into resi already have an idea about you. They treat you like you're trouble before you even say anything. Like you don't matter. May as well charge a kid the day they move into resi, just to get it done with, not wait for the kid to do damage, or get caught up in other shit with the other kids living there.

Looking back, I think things could have been different if I'd had the right support earlier. When I was nine, after everything that had happened, I should've had therapy. Anger management. Someone to actually help me

deal with what I'd been through. I was just left to deal with all the shit I copped from my dad as a young kid. But anyway, they did no such thing. Instead, I was moved around and left to deal with it on my own.



Even now, at 15, I'm still fighting to get proper support. It's hard just to get a few hours of therapy a month. It's therapy, for fuck's sake. Like, it's meant to help me. I've started doing equine therapy. I love animals. Always have. I'd never hurt an animal. Being around them helps. I just wish I'd had that earlier.

I also think diversion can be a good thing. It gives young people another chance. But only if you actually engage with it. It has to mean something.



For me, what makes the biggest difference is when people actually communicate and follow through. Like, if a worker says they're going to organise an appointment and they don't, it's no skin off their nose, but that affects my entire life. When someone says they're going to do something, it matters that they do it. Otherwise, it just feels like no one's really listening.

If I'd had the right support at the right time, things might've turned out different.