



## DIONNE'S STORY

### CARE EXPERIENCE & DISCLOSURE

#### A CASE STUDY



#### BACKGROUND

Dionne is a care leaver. Growing up, she felt **very unsettled** due to frequently moving between her parents and her Gran. Dionne's Dad was her hero, she idolised him. However, he was often in trouble with the police due to his drug addiction and use of physical violence.

Before moving into kinship care with her Gran permanently at the age of 9, the police had already **played a big role** in Dionne's life. Her first encounter with the police was when she was just aged 5. During this incident, Dionne watched her father being **violently removed** from her Gran's house by two police men. The police men were shouting and being very aggressive towards her Dad, handcuffing him within minutes of entering the house. Dionne, a young girl, could only stand and watch as her **hero was taken away** from her. This encounter went on to shape her attitude and opinion towards the police into adult life.



I can honestly say from that day, I never liked, trusted or respected the Police. That day influenced my view of the police for the next 16+ years.

Dionne's behaviour fell into a downwards spiral when her father passed away and she was physically and sexually assaulted by a member of her family. Anger and frustration caused Dionne to hit out, she wanted help **but did not know how to communicate** this to anyone.

As a result of her behaviour, Dionne was moved from her Gran's house into a residential unit at the age of 13. On her third day in residential care, Dionne witnessed three members of **staff restraining an 11 year old girl**. Dionne had never experienced this before so felt she felt needed to step in and help. The police were called, and Dionne herself was restrained on the floor. Dionne felt **powerless, mentally and physically**, which caused her behaviour to escalate. She was then taken to a cell where she stayed overnight.

In residential care, Dionne had **contact with the police every 2-3 days** for incidents which **would not have received police attention in a private household**. On one occasion, Dionne sat down for dinner with other young people and staff in her residential unit and decided that, for a joke, she would flick a **boiled baby carrot** at a member of staff. The staff member proceeded to call the police and Dionne was charged with assault. Every time the police were involved in an incident, Dionne was **arrested and charged** with breach of the peace, resisting arrest or assault. **Nobody ever stopped to ask** Dionne why she was acting out or why physical restraint was a trigger for her.





Initially I was brought into care for my own safety, but instead I was brought into a system that criminalised me.

## OUTCOMES

After leaving care, Dionne was keen to pursue a career in social care and began a course through her local college. In order to successfully complete the course, Dionne needed to gain experience in several different care settings, for which she needed an up to date disclosure check.

When applying for her disclosure, Dionne had to cite **each address** where she had lived whilst growing up and the time frames in which she had stayed there. This was a difficult task as she had **moved several times** between family and in residential units. Dionne became **frustrated and disillusioned** when the disclosure form was sent back to her each time the information was slightly incorrect. In the end, Dionne had to wait an **extra 4 weeks** longer than her peers to complete her placement.

Dionne was the only person on her course who had to go through a **panel style interview process** with the Head of Services to complete her placements. In the interview, Dionne was asked numerous questions about the charges which came up on her disclosure, having to **justify herself** and **explain the circumstances** around the charges. This was a **daunting** process for Dionne.

Dionne is now 27 years old and **to this day has charges** on her disclosure from when she was in care at 16 years old. Dionne has successfully passed her first block at college and is determination to succeed in life, not become a statistic and give her own children the life they deserve.

## ACTION POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **See the person and not the report.** Remember how powerful a charge can look on a piece of paper without the context.
- **Be Yourself.** The uniform doesn't have to separate us.
- If you come into contact with care experienced young people, **don't judge them.** Remember they have **suffered severe trauma and neglect** in their lives and **may not be able to communicate 'normally'**.

