

## David's Story

I met my wife in 2007.

She moved from her bedsit into my apartment and six months later we used the equity in my property to buy a house together.

We got engaged, married and a few years later had our twins. Everything seemed to be idyllic.

Later that year, a few days before Christmas in fact, our house flooded. We had to move over half a dozen to times in a few months with two young children. It was incredibly stressful, and our relationship changed dramatically for the worse, and the aggression and abuse started.

I thought she was suffering from Post Natal Depression. Each time she laid into me she later apologised and promises that when we get our house back she would change again. We moved back to the newly refurbished home, but she was as angry as ever, and the abuse (physical and emotional) escalated. I begged her to stop before she broke up our family.

She started to make threats about taking our twins to Ireland, where she is originally from. Despite doing the majority of the shopping, cooking, and raising the children, nothing was ever good enough, and the verbal abuse escalated, even in front of her friends and family, who I was really close to. I would be berated if her dinner was late, or if she thought the quality of household tasks she had set were 'unacceptable'.

I wanted to talk to someone about this but felt disloyal, so I started a diary instead.

As well as the kicking, punching, scratching etc., she would lock me out of the house or in the garden, or confiscate and hide my keys. I contacted the Police for advice, but there was little they could do without me pressing charges.

I tolerated this behaviour for a few years, before I confided in a friend, who suggested that I record the abuse.

I was still reluctant to report the abuse, for the sake of the twins, and made the mistake of sending her a recorded message in the hope that it might trigger regret or an acknowledgement that the behaviour was wrong and shocking. She flew into a rage, snatched my phone (with the recording) ran to the shed screaming hysterically, smashed the phone up with a hammer and threw it over a wall.

I called the Police, but still couldn't bring myself to press charges but they took me through a domestic abuse questionnaire.

I sought legal advice, and was advised to leave the toxic relationship, but I couldn't risk losing the children I had raised. I had already been banished to the spare room, so I gradually accumulated the bare necessities, in two suitcases, to start a new home for the girls. We moved into a 1-bed and I slept on a sofa-bed for a year. Over three years after our separation, I am still trying to rebuild a decent life for me and the girls but at least we are safe and away from the abuse.

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