

The insight component of [Insight Exchange](#) shares a person's lived experience of violence, highlighting a person's responses and resistance to violence and where 'social responses' were helpful or harmful. This reveals the roles that individuals, organisations and communities play in people's experience of violence.

The following 'My Insights Shared' is from a person with lived experience of domestic and family violence. It shares their insights of how violence has compromised their liberty and of the liberty of their children.

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## **His violence, threats and coercion have and continue to compromise my liberty and the liberty of my children.**

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We have had to leave our home several times and go into hiding. I had to move my bedroom after he had thrown a brick on the roof above my bed. My daughter could not go into the bedroom where she used to sleep without becoming hysterical. We all slept together in a small office as a bedroom.

Now I can't move as he would still find me, it's too disruptive for the children and I love the home I have made for us. I still have grab bags at the front door and in the boot of my car. I have had to change my mobile number; I have a panic button, sensor lights, CCTV, a dog and an alarm.

To get a good night sleep I go and stay with friends in the country or in a hotel. I can't take the children to the park on my own, I am constantly watching over my shoulder.

I do not use social media, tell anyone of my weekly commitments or tell people if we go away or where we go. I use indirect routes and change my travel patterns regularly. It is a challenge balancing working and caring for my children vs after school care and babysitters. I cannot justify spending money on myself. I often don't visit the doctor or the dentist etc when I should.

I have been too nervous to venture into the dating world in case he becomes violent. Friends explained they didn't invite me to dinner as it's too 'intense' if I talk about the violence. It ruins the atmosphere. I became the coffee friend and stopped talking about my situation. I just asked questions and kept smiling knowing if I stopped I would fall apart.

Socially people have shied away and feel embarrassed to talk about it; as if I am 'damaged goods'; I have been cut off; people have expressed their disbelief, I must have 'made it all up'. It's like a partner dying except it's much worse as they're still alive, stalking me, harassing me, frightening me, the violence is debilitating. No one wants to know, or hear about it. It's 'too terrible'

It's not just the terror, it's the ever present threat of violence which consistently undermines and constrains my liberty.

The number of friends I have has decreased considerably. However, those I have, believe me, defend me, and love me.

At the end of the day, I used to feel relieved myself and my children had survived it – I felt this every day and to an extent I still do.

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This piece is an excerpt from a 'Voices of Insight' narrative which is available in PDF copy at: <https://www.insightexchange.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Sally-My-Insight-Shared-Voices-of-Insight.pdf>

*"...The threats from his systematic brutalisation of all aspects of our lives were not just threats to my safety and to the kid's safety but equally threats to our liberty. The vast majority of responses we have had from service providers and from family and friends were from people who did not understand Domestic Violence. Their responses often minimised the violence.*

*I needed and still need the support of the system but the system has continually failed to adequately respond and support me. This has left me with the burden of responsibility to maintain our safety, wellbeing and liberty in the face of his continuing escalation of violence.*

*My fear is that he will hurt or kill me or the kids. He's still around."*

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### **Acknowledgement and thanks**

Domestic Violence Service Management would like to thank the person with lived experience of violence who has generously shared their insights for the benefit of others.

We acknowledge that no matter how accurate the representation of someone's experiences of violence and adversity, we can never fully understand all that the experiences mean to a person now or through their life. We understand that no one's life experience can ever be fully represented in language or any other form.

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### **Handle with dignity**

You have been reading an excerpt of a person's lived experience of violence and adversity. It is not simply another 'story', 'sample' or 'case study'. Whilst consent has been obtained to share this account we ask that as the custodian of this copy that you uphold the dignity of the person who shared this experience as you distribute and/or store it. Tips for handling with dignity:

- Keep the copies in an envelope distinct from paperwork and reports
- Explain the importance and value of these accounts before distributing them

Collect any copies left behind by delegates/participants after workshops

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Disclaimer: This resource is a carefully assembled excerpt of a person's lived experience of violence. Details of this person's identity have been altered to protect their safety. Whilst great care has been taken to do no harm and to contribute to improved understanding of and responses to violence and other adversities; DVSM assumes no responsibility for how the resource is used by other parties.

A PDF copy is available at <https://www.insightexchange.net/follow-my-lead/voices-of-reflection/>

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