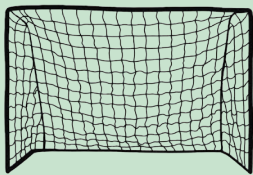


SOMETIMES
IT
HURTS



ALFIE'S STORY



ALFIE'S
HOME



CHANGING RELATIONS

Foreword

“

Growing up, we had heard of what domestic abuse looked like, but we did not know what it felt like. Often, to really understand something, we need stories, not statistics.

We always thought we were experiencing something different, something more complicated – we labelled it ‘family problems’. We thought that the only pain that counted was physical pain and so we ignored the rest. We believed that our emotional pain meant that we were weak kids, rather than that something was wrong in our home. Often, we felt that we should have been able to cope with what was happening at home, and that it wasn’t dramatic enough to bother others with. We needed to hear others’ stories of domestic abuse before we could begin to make sense of our own.

We are confident that **Sometimes It Hurts** will encourage young people to recognise the many forms of hurt that domestic abuse causes. As we have learned, sometimes hearing another’s story is all the validation that’s needed to begin to acknowledge our own experiences. This awareness will certainly spark conversations that help young people connect the dots, see the patterns, and get the help they need and deserve.

Luke and Ryan Hart

Brothers Luke and Ryan Hart are award-winning domestic abuse advocates, authors and international keynote speakers. In their book, **Remembered Forever**, and their work, they share their family’s story of coercive control and domestic homicide. So far, their work has taken them to over 13 countries and they have trained tens of thousands of professionals in identifying, understanding, and ending domestic abuse.

About SOMETIMES IT HURTS

Sometimes It Hurts aims to give a voice to young people and a language to themes that are difficult and sensitive to approach, such as poverty, neglect, divorce, domestic abuse and unhealthy, controlling behaviours, both within families and within young people’s own romantic relationships. With the stories – and the resources we have developed around them – we hope to help both adults and young people to recognise what is healthy and unhealthy, develop empathy for self and others, and seek and offer better ongoing support.

This series of books was produced by arts education company Changing Relations, who commissioned writer Bridget Hamilton to work with a group of young people and tell the stories they felt needed to be told. Here is what Bridget had to say:

“

The six stories you are about to read have been written with the help of a group of young writers, some of whom have experienced domestic abuse. The young people decided on the names of the characters, the situations the characters have found themselves in, and how the stories ended. Some of the stories also contain direct quotes and experiences from the young people, which they were comfortable to share with you.

Some of the characters live with their parents and some don’t. Some have older siblings, some have younger siblings, and some don’t have any brothers and sisters at all. They are all different ages, races and sexualities. Every situation is unique, just like in real life – but they are all experiencing something at home that hurts them, and that is what the stories will explore.

Bridget Hamilton

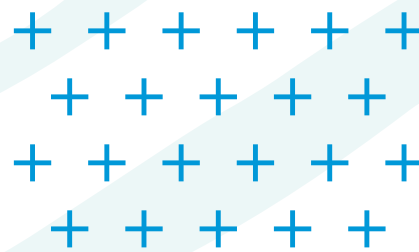


Alfie's Story

Summary

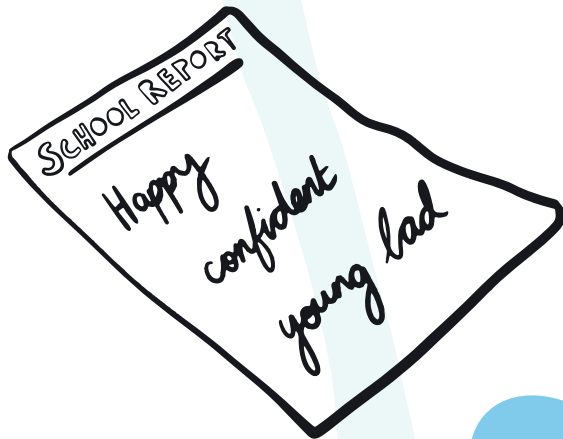
The character of Alfie is 11 years old and his story explores parental neglect and poverty within the family home. Alfie puts on a brave face at school, but at home things are very different. There is rarely anyone at home to greet him when he gets in. There isn't any food in the fridge, and sometimes there isn't even electricity. At the end of Alfie's story, he goes with his parents to the food bank on the edge of town. He can see how embarrassed his mum and dad are at having to ask for help, even though the volunteers are really friendly.

If this feels like a story that would be interesting or helpful for you to read, read on! If you're not sure, why not have a read of the summaries of the other stories in the **Sometimes it Hurts** series to choose one that feels more relevant for you.



“

My name is Alfie, I'm 9 years old and everyone would say I have a pretty normal life. In my last school report, my teachers wrote that I was a 'happy, confident young lad'. I have lots of friends, I do well in most subjects, and I don't get wronged half as much as some of the other kids do. But the thing is, those teachers would never guess how I really feel inside. It's funny how you never know what's going on inside a person's head.



“

Most days, after school, I go home with my mate Harry. We both love Newcastle United, and he has this huge bedroom full of Magpies' merchandise. There are shirts, signed footballs, posters, the lot. If it's not raining, Harry's Dad drives us to Saltwell Park and we kick a football about together, or the three of us go down to the Quayside where you can see the giant shadow of St. James's Park in the distance. When it gets dark, Harry and his Dad sometimes invite me to get fish and chips with them. I love the hot chips doused in vinegar, so tangy they make my eyes screw up. But sometimes they don't get fish and chips – maybe Harry's mam is cooking something nice for them back home – and I have to say goodbye. I walk home slowly, dragging my feet and taking the longest route that I can think of.

I've never actually invited Harry round to my house. I live with my mam and dad in a flat in Gateshead, but they aren't actually around that much. Since Mam lost her job, they both prefer going down the road to the pub, or spending the night at their friends' houses.





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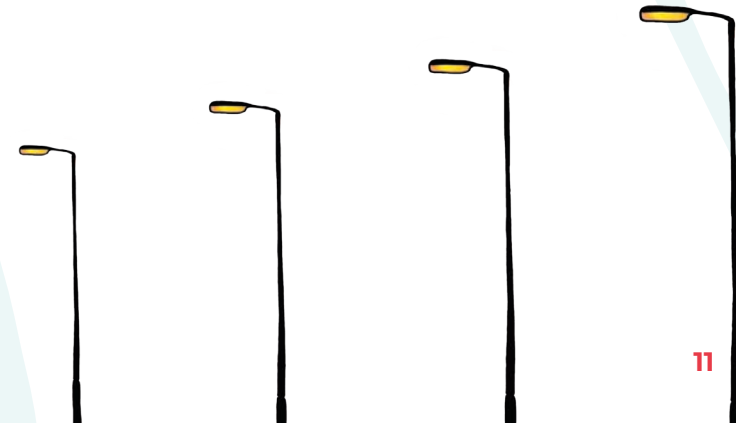
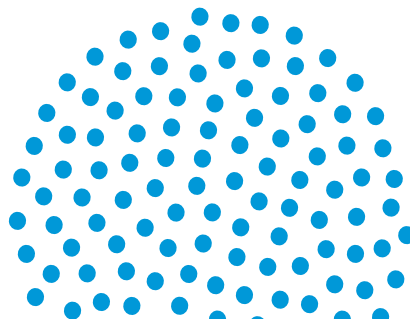
When I get in, the house is normally empty and dark. It's so freezing that sometimes I don't even take off my coat. Our electricity has had to be cut off because we can't afford to pay the bill, so there's no light that turns on when I open the door to our empty fridge. Mam hates it when I tell her there's no food in the house – it makes her really angry – so I keep quiet and try not to think about my empty belly.

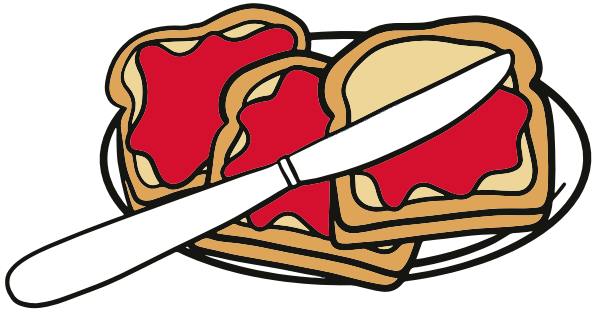
There is a streetlight outside my bedroom window, so I get into bed really early and use the glowing orange light to do my homework or write stories. In my stories, I imagine that Harry and I have been called up to play for the Toon. It would never happen – people from round here never grow up to do exciting things like being footballers – but when I think about the possibility, my heart swells with pride.

“

When I wake up the next morning, the streetlight has gone off and my notepad has fallen down the side of my bed and onto the floor. My mam is asleep on the sofa downstairs, and she doesn't wake up while I get into my uniform and slip out of the front door. It makes me a bit sad when she doesn't say good morning to me or even notice that I'm there, as if she couldn't care less whether I went to school or not.

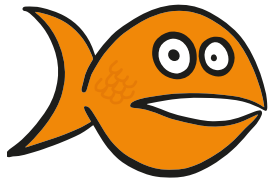
I know I act confident and chatty, but I definitely think some of my teachers know that things aren't okay at home. When I don't turn in my homework, because we needed to use a computer to finish it, or the light outside was too dim to work, they don't ever ask why, they just shake their heads or tell me to bring it tomorrow. It's as if they're scared to ask about it because they wouldn't want to have to deal with my answer. Maybe they're hoping that another teacher asks me first. I wish someone would teach my teachers what to do when they see somebody struggling.





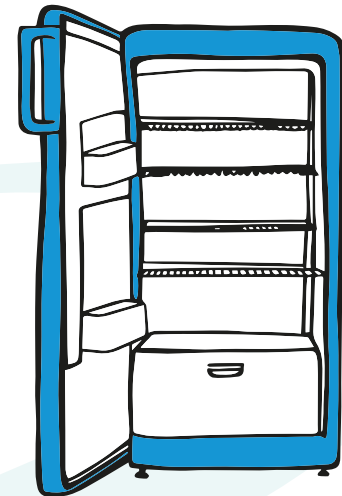
“

When I arrive at school in the morning, I head for the breakfast club, wolfing down three slices of toast with butter and jam and two glasses of orange juice. One of the teachers on duty jokes that I must be growing fast. He looks like he might ask me if I'm alright, but his mouth just opens and closes again like a fish in a big fish tank.



“

At the weekend, I go with my mam and dad to the food bank on the edge of town. The people there are really nice, and they give you bags of food when you can't afford to go to the supermarket. We stock up on tins and bread and biscuits and juice, and one of the ladies gives us some advice about getting our electricity turned back on so we can have milk and cheese and butter next time, too. I think my parents feel embarrassed about having to go there instead of to the shops like everybody else. We don't talk at all on the way home and by the time I come back from playing out with Harry, the house is dark and empty again.



What Support Is Available

Information About Domestic Abuse

If you or someone you know may be experiencing domestic abuse, both **Women's Aid** and **Refuge** have websites with comprehensive advice and can support you to hide your internet search history to cover your tracks.

Together they run the **National Domestic Abuse hotline**, a 24-hour freephone service – **0808 2000 247**.

Emergency

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call the **police** – **999**.

Local

Your local **Onepoint** centre offers advice and practical support across all aspects of family life, helping young people up to the age of 19 with a wide range of issues, including health, bullying and what activities are available in your local area.

Young people

The Mix is the UK's leading support service for young people under 25. They are here to help you take on any challenge you're facing - from mental health to money, from homelessness to finding a job, from break-ups to drugs. Talk to them via their online community, on social, through their free, confidential helpline or counselling service **themix.org.uk** – **0808 808 4994**.

For children experiencing or affected by domestic abuse, including witnessing abuse within the home, there is information on the **Childline** and **NSPCC** websites. There is also a **Freephone Helpline** – **0800 1111**.

Sexual Abuse

There is often an overlap between domestic abuse and sexual violence. The national **Rape Crisis** website has a lot of information, including where to find local support services. They also run a **Freephone Helpline** – **0808 802 9999**.

At School

When you are at school, the school is responsible for keeping you safe from harm and abuse. If you are worried about life at home or have any concerns about someone else, speak to a trusted teacher, tutor or learning manager, or, if you know who they are, ask to speak to your school's **Designated Safeguarding Lead**.

If you are an adult and have a concern about a child or young person's welfare who lives in County Durham, call **First Contact** on **03000 267 979**. First Contact brings together children's services staff with partners such as Durham Constabulary and health services.

Stalking

Stalking can be an aspect of domestic abuse and is sometimes experienced after survivors have left an abusive relationship. The **Suzy Lamplugh** website has information, advice and guidance for victims of stalking. They also run a **Freephone Stalking Helpline** – **0808 802 0300**.

LGBTQIA

For specialist support for those who identify as LGBT+, go to the **Galop** website, or call their **National Helpline** – **0800 999 5428**.

Men

Specific information for male victims of domestic abuse, or to seek more information about supporting men is available on the **Men's Advice Line** website. You can also call their **Freephone Helpline** – **0808 801 0327**. There is information for male victims of sexual violence on the **Safeline** website or you can call the **National Male Survivor's Helpline** – **0808 800 5005**.

Abusers

If you are concerned about your behaviour in a relationship, or that of a friend or family member, the **Respect Phoneline** website has information and guidance. They also run a **Freephone Perpetrator Helpline** – **0808 802 4040**.

Minority Ethnic Communities

For a comprehensive list of support services by, and for, those from black and minority ethnic communities, go the **Imkaan** website. For those affected by honour-based abuse and / or forced marriage, the **Karma Nirvana** website has information and guidance. They also run a **Freephone Honour-based Abuse Helpline** – **0800 599 9247**.

How We Created SOMETIMES IT HURTS

The original **Sometimes It Hurts** book was created by arts education company, **Changing Relations**, in 2021 through working with our creative associate, **Michelle Harland**, CEO of **Creative Youth Opportunities**. Together with writer, **Bridget Hamilton**, Michelle led a programme of weekly creative workshops with groups of young people, inviting discussion around ideas of family, relationships, hurt, trust and getting support, through a range of participatory creative discussions and activities. These were shaped by physical and digital scrapbooking to collect and log thoughts and ideas which would help our illustrator and animator create a visual landscape for the book and subsequent animation we produced.

Our then Artistic Director, **Pollyanna Turner**, managed the creative team, which additionally included illustrator **Tamsin Rees**, animator **Sheryl Jenkins**, and sound artist **Rupert Philbrick**, fostering the environment of co-production that is a central part of our approach at **Changing Relations**. A project steering group completed the team with individuals from a range of backgrounds, including safeguarding, education, local councillors, together with professionals and individuals who publicly advocate domestic abuse awareness-raising, including **Luke and Ryan Hart** (CoCoAwareness), **Susie Hay** (Safelives), **Cllr Jeanette Stephenson** (Stanley AAP), **Rosa Walling-Weffelmeyer** & **Dr Stephen Burrell** (Durham University).

The book and stories within it were well received by children and young people as well as the adults who work with them. They felt the stories were a great way to talk about difficult issues children and young people might experience at home. Because the book was so popular, we decided to do some work to make sure more people could benefit from the stories in the original six-chapter book.

In this new phase of development, in 2023, we have created six individual books, one for each of the stories, with additional illustrations to make them more interesting and accessible for young people.

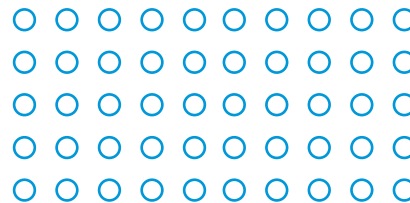
We worked with a creative action group of children and young people from primary and secondary schools in County Durham to develop a brief for our illustrator Tamsin and explore the places and spaces where the stories take place to develop ideas for a map which forms a key part of the new book series.

The creative action group tested out a set of creative activities for teachers and other supporting adults to use to help children and young people explore the themes raised in the stories and have supportive conversations about things which may be affecting them at home. Their feedback helped us understand what young people may enjoy and find useful, relevant and interesting. Young people are the ones who will be using them, so they know best!

We also worked with the creative action group to get ideas for our web developers to create a website to host the stories and resources in multimedia formats. The creative action group was made up of children and young people from **Copeland Road Primary School, Escomb Primary School, Greenfield Community College, King James I Academy** and **St John's Catholic School and Sixth Form**.

The creative action group sessions were delivered by artist and creative producer, **Sarah Stamp**, supported by youth workers from **Learning a New Way C.I.C.** and the delivery team worked closely with **Changing Relations'** Managing Director **Lisa Charlotte Davis** and academics **Dr Nikki Rutter** and **Dr Josie Phillips** at **Durham University** to develop the content for the sessions and ensure we were exploring the themes in the stories in a safe and supportive way.

This new phase of development brought back some of those involved in the initial project, such as graphic designers **Curious 12**, as well as involving new creatives professionals, **Vida Creative** who led on the associated web development.



Acknowledgements

The biggest thank you for making **Sometimes It Hurts** possible goes to the brave, funny and kind young people who entrusted us with their stories and worked so hard with our creative team to help other young people who may find themselves in a similar situation get the recognition and support they need.

We're also hugely grateful to the new group of young people who supported us to develop and test the creative activities and website that will be used as part of that mission to help young people who are experiencing difficult situations at home.

Thanks must go to each and every one of the team behind **Sometimes it Hurts** in both 2021 and 2023.

And of course, we're grateful to the funders who made this project possible.



Thank you all!

Lisa Charlotte Davis

Managing Director & Company Founder

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We're passionate about what we do and we'd love to hear from you.



SOMETIMES IT HURTS



"Being someone that has been that young person, it is spot on."

"It makes you feel like you're not the only one when you go through it."

"It could make a lot of people understand more and be more kind towards friends going through this."

Young people whose insight and experience was gathered to inform the writing of the book, responding to a reading of the first draft.



CHANGING RELATIONS

Creative methods. Challenging thinking.

