

In 1985 I met a man who I believed would take me out of a bad situation! Instead I was subjected to intimidation, threats and physical violence. It happened slowly to start with and when I fell pregnant the beatings started on a more regular basis. I tried calling the police for help but was told that they did not attend domestic violence cases and I would have to sort it out myself. During my pregnancy I was subjected to numerous beatings which finally resulted in a miscarriage [REDACTED] but when I went to hospital with the injuries they were told by my partner that it was self-inflicted and I was subjected to humiliation and torment by the nurses. My daughter was born with spinal fractures due to the physical abuse that was never identified until recently.

When I finally decided I could take no more (after receiving a black eye and other injuries) I reported the abuse to the police. They photographed my injuries and I made a statement. I was then told by the police that because this man was currently on a good behaviour bond for violence they thought it a good idea not to prosecute as they would have no way of protecting me when he was released from prison.

He then found out that I was planning on leaving and took my daughter (who was a few weeks old at the time) and told me that I could leave but was not to take the baby. While taking the matter to the family law court to get my daughter back I was subjected to numerous other threats and intimidation by him, his family and friends.

After the family law court awarded custody of my daughter to me I was told I could go to the place which I was living with him to collect my daughter and a few of my personal belongings. The police attended with me but waited outside while I collected her. I was then subjected to more violence while the police stood outside!

Over the last [REDACTED] years I have had several restraining orders placed on this man and have needed to hide my identity and 'go on the run' from him. He was also granted access to his daughter and would always find out where I was living. He would hire private detectives, telecommunications listings and electoral rolls (even when I registered with a silent vote). I have recently been granted a protection order that is indefinite.

The same man has also abused his daughter for the past [REDACTED] years. She visited him in [REDACTED] after giving birth to her daughter. She was living in [REDACTED] at the time and travelled to [REDACTED] to see him. While she was there he abused her again (both physically and sexually) and forced her into signing the baby over to him. My daughter tried to stay in [REDACTED] to remain with her daughter but was threatened and abused to the extent where she felt she needed to leave. She was unable to take the baby with her and had to leave her in [REDACTED] and return to [REDACTED]. We have been pleading with Child protection, the police, legal aid and the family law courts for the last [REDACTED] years to have the child returned to my daughters care. This still has not happened.

Even though over the past [REDACTED] years I have seen a lot change in attitudes when it comes to domestic violence, the cycle is still continuing. I have spent years writing to politicians and police commissioners hoping to see change.

I am happy to share my experience and suggestions to see further change and can hope that educating our young generation on the importance of self-respect as well as respect for others will help generate a violence free society. My experience includes problems with child protection

agencies, police, family law courts and lawyers (including legal aid both in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]) and the lack of support from them. (My experience spans [REDACTED] years and is still ongoing). I have also had experience in obtaining a protection order (very recently) that was not as supportive as I would have hoped.

Listed below are just some of the problems and lack of support I have experienced as well as some possible solutions to these.

1. Child needed to be left in another state while mother fled domestic abuse from her father. Was not able to get legal aid as this is state funded. (Mother was in [REDACTED] and needed to apply for aid in the state the child lived in. Was not granted aid in [REDACTED] as mother was not residing in [REDACTED].)

Possible solution: Have some federal funding for cases like this.

2. Child protection not investigation child abuse allegations. We were told that it was a family law court issue and "just because he had abused you does not mean he will abuse her!"

Possible solution: educate child protection workers on the importance of acting in domestic violence and sexual assault cases when the parent is making the allegations.

3. Protection interim orders not being granted

Experience: The first order was not granted but upon returning to court and having a different judge (who wanted to hear the history rather than 'what has he done in the last 3 months') I was able to be granted a protection order.

4. Unable to find suitable housing to flee a domestic violent situation due to lack of crisis accommodation.

Possible solution: To have some real estate agents who are willing to help in these cases with private rental accommodation. (I have just experienced this with my daughter and have found some real estate's very understanding and co-operative).

5. Victim blaming and low self-esteem!!

This goes to the cycle of domestic violence and is one that needs education and support systems. I suffered with post-traumatic stress disorder for [REDACTED] years and was unable to break the cycle of abuse. This resulted in alcohol and drug abuse for many years as I did not know how to process or deal with the violence I had suffered. I remained a victim for many years until I received counselling and became abstinent from drugs and alcohol.