

CARER'S case study

I am a grandparent and I want to tell you my story, about what happened to my grandchild and how it has affected us all.

Our main worries for our grand-daughter started when she was hanging around with another young person that we were concerned about. She started to go missing from school and no one could stop her. On one occasion the school called us to let us know that she was missing. We went out looking for her and when we eventually found her, she was with lots of older people who started giving us abuse. We would always try and go out looking for her. We were warned about her attendance by the school. The teachers liked her, they supported her but they couldn't stop her from leaving. This happened all the way between years 7 until year 11. She became violent, on one occasion throwing the contents of her bedroom down the stairs. She even did this when the police came over once and we all had to duck to avoid getting hit!

Firstly, I need to say that I still love her. We used to go on long walks in the country, just me and her. My wife and I show our love in what we do for people. But the impact of all this has been that we find it hard to believe her when she is saying that she is going somewhere. I find it hard to believe what she is telling me. I would ask her to tell me the truth. I would tell her that it was so important to tell me the truth so that if someone asked me where she was and if she was safe I could let them know. But running off became a part of her and she was being pulled by other people who were forcing her.

My wife and I have each other for support, but we also have a lot on and have other children to care for as well. Our friends and neighbours support us a lot and have helped us to find her when she goes missing. She comes across as street wise, she does understand some things but not everything. She is too trusting of people.

We received a lot of support from the police and social services. They advised us to report her as missing. We were reporting her as missing every day. This was hard on our relationship with her though as I don't think she liked us doing this. We used to make notes of what she was wearing before she left to go out so that we could give the information to the police. She has a contraceptive implant in her arm, to regulate her cycle however I think that this has also helped to prevent pregnancy. Also, it's not nice to think of but if there are times when she is ever unable to give consent she has that to protect her. We have had social workers come to see the family, we have had the Children's Society doing work with her, taking her out and supporting her. We used to have a support worker that would come in and take all the kids out for dinner to give us a break. We had people come into our house and they would play games with us to try and help us build our family relationships. Social Care did speak to us about respite but at the time we were too busy with everything that was going on with her.

As grandparents we tried everything that we could do. We did what Social Care and the Police advised us to do, which was difficult at times. We know that we are not to blame and welcomed as much support as possible from agencies. It affects the parents as well as the children. It is important to keep her looking at positive things

for her future; she has spoken about driving lessons so it would be good to help her with this. Support is so important; they need help to stay in education, especially when they are in college.