

Emma Jackson

Author of 'Exploited' and survivor of child sexual exploitation

Growing up Emma had, by her own admission, 'a perfect life'. She didn't want for anything, had a loving, stable family, did well in school and had an ambition to become a doctor – a dream that was completely achievable for someone with Emma's ability and aptitude.

When she was 13 she was out with friends and met some boys her own age. They got on well and started hanging out. It was a completely innocent friendship; they were her peers and there was nothing sinister about it. A while later they introduced Emma to some older boys who had cars. This was great for a 13 year old girl – she would be the envy of her friends!

A while later these boys with cars introduced her to older boys, well men. Men in their 30s. Emma knew this was a large age gap but they had a laugh together and they treated her so well. They spent money on her and drove her around, took her to nice places and never asked for anything in return. "If they wanted to spend all their money on me that was their decision," Emma thought.

They groomed Emma for a year. At some point during that time Emma was introduced to soft drugs. Emma had been brought up well and knew drugs were wrong, but because she trusted and liked these people so much she didn't feel what she was doing was wrong. Eventually harder drugs and drink were consumed. There were never any sexual advances during that first year. One night that changed. One of the men started touching Emma. She was 13, she had never had a sexual experience, she hadn't even entertained the thought of sex. This was a foreign experience for her. She didn't know how to react but laughed it off and the man pulled away and laughed too. The moment was forgotten. Until a little while later that same night in a dark alley she was approached, held down and raped.

After that Emma continued to be sexually exploited. She couldn't escape – she 'owed' them for the drink and drugs and all the money they had spent on her over the last year. The punishment, if you can possibly imagine, was far worse than rape if she tried to escape. Her 'debt' could never diminish because taking the drugs and alcohol offered was the only way of blocking out the inevitable in order to cope with the sexual abuse.

Eventually Emma came to the attention of authorities and her parents took her out of the country, being told if they didn't they would be identifying her body on a mortuary slab.

Emma now works with children and young people who have been victims of sexual exploitation, hearing horrific stories of gang rape and worse. Emma's story is horrifying but true. Emma was not a stereotypical child who would be on the authorities' radar. We all need to know what has happened and what could be happening just around the corner from us.

Emma's book ['Exploited'](#) contains her story in full.