**Safeguarding Adults Week – Brenda’s Story**

**Trapped and controlled by my spouse**

*70-year-old Brenda’s first-hand account of surviving domestic abuse from her husband and the signs you should look for.*

A woman’s story of control and fear of her husband have been laid bare as partners around Bolton launch a campaign to encourage people to report abuse.

We’re sharing this story with Brenda’s consent as part of Safeguarding Adults Week (15 to 21 November), and in the run up to Christmas periods when domestic abuse cases usually increase.

For Brenda *(name changed)*, 70, she had spent most of her life scared of her own husband.

Brenda’s story includes emotional and physical abuse over 35 years that left her fearing for her life, fully controlled by her husband and isolated from all friends and family.

After her first marriage had broken down, Brenda and her child moved into a new marriage with Ray *(name changed)*. Ray, whose previous marriage ended after his physical attack on his first wife went unreported, was jealous of Brenda and fixated on stopping her from leaving him.

As such, he took steps to ensure she couldn’t live without him, controlling her finances, managing the household bills, pensions, and benefits while he managed any accounts in Brenda’s name, and gave a small allowance to live on each week.

He never let Brenda leave the house on her own, and as a result Brenda was isolated from her friends and society, losing any support network and unable to have any control or independence over her life.

To most people, she was never seen and known only as Ray’s wife.

In addition to the emotional abuse, Brenda also suffered from physical and sexual abuse from Ray, who tortured her into thinking he would one day kill her.

Even after she eventually left him, Ray continued to live on the fringes of an exclusion zone and harass Brenda, making her feel excluded in the community, blaming her for the breakdown of their marriage and trying to turn family members and friends against her.

For Brenda, the abuse only really stopped when Ray died, after 35 years of control and abuse.

However, it’s stories like Brenda’s that have quite literally led to a rise in personal support services for older adults in recent years, such as Endeavour’s Evergreen project in Bolton, to help more women and men who are experiencing domestic abuse.

**Eyes Wide Open**

We’ve shared Brenda’s story on behalf of the Bolton Safeguarding Adults Board and as part of Safeguarding Adults Week.

It’s a time to help raise awareness of domestic abuse and the specialist support available. We need more people, particularly older adults, to know the signs of abuse and how to report it.

Sadly, Brenda’s experiences are a reality for many older people across the country, who live scared of their husband or wife, isolated from society and with no control over their own life.

Domestic abuse is any form of abuse committed by intimate partners, former partners, or family members. People often think of it affecting younger people, but any person, any age, any gender can experience domestic abuse.

It isn’t confined to spouses. Abuse can also take place between children and parents, or even siblings.

If this story reminds you of somebody you know, your own situation, the best way to protect yourself or a loved one is to tell someone about the abuse. This may be difficult for you to do, especially if the person abusing you is a friend or a family member, but please understand that abuse is never acceptable.

If the person who is causing the abuse is a paid or family carer, you may worry that telling someone will mean that you lose the care and support. Please be assured that your care and support needs will continue to be met, and you don’t need to worry about this.

**Tell someone about domestic abuse:**

* Bolton Safeguarding Adults Team 01204 337000
* National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247
* Greater Manchester Domestic Abuse Helpline 0800 254 0909.

You can also get support from:

* Your GP or other NHS health providers
* Bolton at Home 01204 329636
* Fortalice 01204 365677
* Endeavour 01204 394842
* Age UK Bolton 01204 382411
* Age UK Advice Line 0800 678 1174
* The Police - You can call the local police on the 101 non-emergency number or call 999 immediately in an emergency.