

I'm Not Laughing



I am a 19 year old girl and will be 20 in June this year.

I was born with Achondroplasia, which is restricted Growth and because of that I am to some degree physically disabled.

I have been brought up in mainstream schools, and although I have come across different types of ignorance, I have always been lead to believe it is those people who have a problem and not me.

I spent 2 years in wheelchairs after 2 major operations, screws were placed in my bones and they were turned a centimetre a day, to try and gain some thing near a "Normal" height. I gained 5 inches.

These operations were painful beyond belief; I went through this pain as a child.

Growing up, I have encountered different reactions from people, but this has always made me more determined to make something of myself, and to pursue a career.

I spent 3 years studying at College and have now qualified as a Beauty Therapist and nail technician.

I have been unable to gain employment in my chosen field, but do have some clients.

I do have a job, I work as a customer care assistant in a retail environment, I really enjoy my work and made some good friends.

I have been out with my work friends on nights out in Bolton and other towns, but always as a large group. I would also go out with family members, or with girl friends.

My boyfriend was also born with Achondroplasia and is 29 yrs old. He also has spent most of his nights out in large groups of friends. It feels safer that way.

About 4 weeks before Christmas 2010, my boyfriend and I decided we needed a night out, and we chose to go for a few drinks in Bolton town centre.

It was a Saturday night; we had also asked 2 friends of ours Sarah and Andy, if they would like to come with us.

Sarah is 19, and Andy 18. Amy had a stroke some time ago, and finds it difficult to walk at times, and struggles sometimes, they are a lovely couple.

My Mum was reluctant to let me out that night without any family member to come with us, however, I felt the need for us to have some time to ourselves, and had never had any problems previously.

My mum gave in, after I promised we would be home before 12.

We made our way in town in a taxi, and went in a couple of pubs, Yates and Flying Flute. I had been in these bars before with friends and had never had problems.

We made our way into another bar, which was busy but has a dance floor area.

My boyfriend and I decided to dance, and it was obvious we were being stared at but we ignored it, and after a short while we made our way back to our seats.

A group of lads were pointing towards us, laughing and swearing, and it was beginning to get too much.

Because it continued we decided to leave the pub, and made our way towards the exit, the group also left at the same time, and continued to take the Mickey out of us, swearing at us, pretending that they couldn't see us, they were generally mocking us, the whole group were laughing and generally abusing us.

I began to get upset.

What made it worse, was the door staff, they just stood there, with their arms folded, watching and sniggering, without making any attempt to stop the group.

The lads surrounded us and it was very frightening.

Yet still the door staff did nothing.

I thought they were supposed to look after people, make the places safe, to stop this kind of behaviour.

They didn't.

We left and made our way towards the taxi rank, and got in the first taxi, As we did I could still hear the group shouting behind us.

Again the door staff did nothing.

When we got home, I couldn't stop crying, my makeup had run, and my mum was panicking thinking that we had been attacked or something. I was heartbroken, too upset to explain what had happened.

Michael explained to my mum her what had happened

It took me some time to calm down.

As it was before Christmas, we were both obviously asked out to various parties over the Christmas and New year period.

But I no longer want to go into Bolton, or out at all for that matter.

It has really upset me that people could be so cruel, I know I have been protected by my family and friends, and maybe this is why I am so upset now.

My boyfriend is the same as none of his friends are smaller than 6' feet tall, and have always protected him, and dealt with things he might not have been able to.

Now I feel I can't go out without feeling unsafe. I wasn't protected from people's dirty mouths and offensive actions.

I don't feel safe in Bolton, or anywhere now, as the door staffs don't protect any one who may be vulnerable.

The damage has been done for me, I don't know what can be done to make things better.

I just wanted you to know how I feel, how cruel people can be, the ignorance people can show, and most importantly to show what its like to be on the receiving end of this abuse, knowing people are not willing to help.

How would you feel if they you been in my place, or if I was a friend of yours or one of your family – would you expect me to be protected then ?