

Case Study: Alex Lowe - Empowerment Through Survivors Forum

1. Background

Alex Lowe, a survivor of domestic abuse, found herself coping with life after an abusive relationship and a lengthy time trapped in the family court system. With curiosity, she joined the Survivors Forum in St Helens, a local initiative aimed at empowering individuals affected by domestic abuse and changing the system.

2. Involvement in the Survivors Forum

Alex participated in the forum for three years, attending bimonthly meetings that fostered a sense of community and shared experience in improving the system among survivors. These sessions not only offered emotional support but also provided training opportunities that equipped members with essential skills for advocacy and public speaking.



3. Engagement with Local Authorities

As a member of the Survivors Forum, Alex collaborated closely with the local authority, engaging in campaigns to raise awareness about domestic abuse. Her involvement allowed her to contribute her insights as a survivor, shaping policies and initiatives aimed at improving support systems for others in similar situations.

4. Public Speaking and Engagement

Alex's journey in the forum culminated in her role as a speaker at various events aimed at educating the public about domestic abuse. These speaking opportunities served as crucial platforms for her to share her story and advocate for change. Through these experiences, her confidence in public speaking soared, enabling her to articulate her experiences and perspectives effectively.

5. Board Membership

Additionally, Alex was appointed to the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, where she provided valuable input on strategies to combat domestic abuse and gave an update on the Survivors Forum. Her insights as a survivor were instrumental in shaping programmes that prioritise survivor well-being.

6. Training and Preventing Toxic Relationships

Throughout her time in the forum, Alex took part in various training sessions that focused not just on advocacy but also on recognising the signs of unhealthy relationships. This training empowered her with knowledge about personal boundaries, healthy communication, and red flags to watch for in potential partners. As a result, Alex developed a greater understanding of what constitutes a healthy relationship, equipping her to avoid falling back into toxic dynamics.

7. Benefits to Agencies and the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

Alex's presence and participation provided numerous benefits to local agencies and the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board:

7.1. Informed Policy Development: Her firsthand experience as a survivor offered invaluable insights, enabling agencies to create more effective and responsive policies that address the real needs of victims.

7.2. Targeted Training Programmes: The integration of survivor perspectives helped agencies tailor their training and resources, ensuring they are relevant and practical for those affected by domestic abuse.

7.3 Enhanced Public Awareness Campaigns: Alex's involvement boosted the credibility of campaigns aimed at raising awareness about domestic abuse, as her lived experience resonated with both the public and stakeholders. Participating in Public Consultations, voice-over in the Coercive Control video, and going into high schools delivering DA training.

7.4 Collaborative Approach: Her active engagement reinforced the importance of collaboration between survivors and agencies, promoting a more inclusive approach to tackling domestic abuse.

8. Transformation and Healing

Throughout her involvement in the forum, Alex experienced a profound transformation. Her confidence flourished as she stepped into the role of facilitator, guiding other survivors through their healing journeys. With each training session and public engagement, her understanding of the broader systems at play in domestic abuse improved, allowing her to navigate these complex structures with greater ease.

9. Outcomes

As a result of her active participation:

9.1 Increased Confidence: Alex's public speaking and leadership skills significantly improved, enabling her to share her story with poise and authority.

9.2 Empowerment: She transitioned from a survivor seeking help to an empowered advocate shaping the future of domestic abuse support.

9.3 Knowledge for Safety: Through her training, Alex gained invaluable insights that equipped her to recognise and avoid potential toxic relationships and her experience shared helped others.

9.4 Community Impact: Alex's advocacy work contributed to a more informed public and better resources for victims of domestic abuse in the St Helens area.

9.5 Knowledge of the wider system and cultures: She was exposed to agency cultures and wider constraints within the system, which gave her a good understanding of the challenges within the system, too.

10. Conclusion

Alex Lowe's involvement in the Survivors Forum exemplifies the power of community support and advocacy in the healing process for survivors of domestic abuse. Her journey highlights the importance of providing survivors with platforms to share their stories, advocate for change, design services, hold the system to account and turn pain into power. Through her courage and determination, Alex not only transformed her own life but also became a beacon of hope and empowerment for others, ensuring that her past would not define her future. Additionally, her contributions significantly enhanced the effectiveness of local agencies and the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board in addressing the complexities of domestic abuse.

