

Standing

Tall

After Feeling

Small



The
Children's
Society



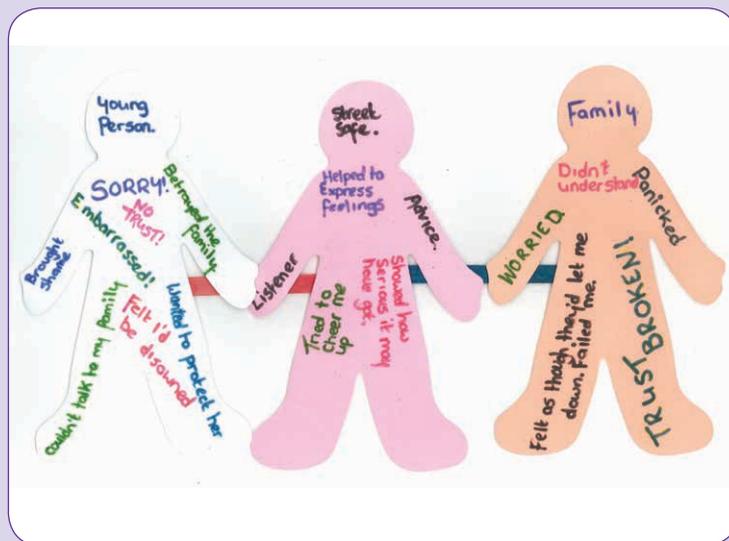
A Purple Monsters guide for professionals

We are young people from different places in Lancashire. Some of us live in children's homes, some in foster care and others live with family, mates or even on our own. One thing we all have in common is that we have been involved with **Street Safe** and now we want to help other young people too.

We want adults to learn from us and become better at their jobs especially when they are helping young people. So we decided to put together our **thoughts and ideas** and come up with a resource to train people like social workers, police and teachers so they help other young people like us.

This hasn't been easy because it isn't always easy or nice to talk about stuff that happened to us.

But we think that if you want to get something right, you **go talk to the people who know about it**. And you know what? We do know about young people because that's us. **And we know about the problems because we've been there ourselves**. So we hope this will help you so you can help others too.



Purple Monsters? Why?

Why not? It's a fun name we chose and it could be used for any type of group or even a football or rugby team! It doesn't mean anything and **you can't guess, judge or label us**. Purple monsters meet as a group regularly but that doesn't work for everyone. Some of us can't or prefer not to meet but **we still contribute with our ideas, opinions and art work** from wherever we are.

Risk!

We get it that there are bad risks and really nasty things can happen but we sometimes think it won't happen to us. You see, it's so much easier to think of the fun and forget all the bad stuff because we already have loads of bad stuff going on in our lives.

Things that worry us about running away and bad relationships (bad risks):

Getting STIs, unwanted pregnancies, emotional pain, being attacked, being homeless, losing confidence, going hungry, rape, kidnap, drugs and alcohol, being arrested, bullied, getting behind with school work, suicidal, having to deal with social workers and other professionals.

What we like about taking risks, running away or 'risky' relationships:

Fun, good pressure, exciting danger, adrenalin rush, the buzz, self-achievement, pride, friendship, keeping in touch with mates, stress relief, confidence, helps forget problems and arguments, secret exciting life, others look up to you.

Note to professionals

Coming in shouting at us, telling us what we're doing is wrong and wanting us to stop because of the risks we are putting ourselves in, doesn't work. We don't listen. We don't see it that way. You've got to be prepared to take time, to help us get there and see it for ourselves. **If you are taking something away that we see and experience as positive, fun or good, you must help us find an alternative that it is also positive, good and preferably fun.**

'You call it risk, we call it fun!'

'There's more to us than what you see.'

'Short-term happiness, long-term pain.'

'Girls just wanna have fun!'





Please read my story so you understand what was going through my mind:

My story

I remember being in the car with my mum shouting at my sister. I was asleep in the back but I could hear everything. She was saying stuff about my dad doing weed. She always badmouths him and it upsets me. She said he never cared about us and he left us when we was little – I don't like it when she says it. It really, really upsets me. It spoils my relationship with my mum.

My step dad tries to tell me what to do but he is not my dad. Only a parent should tell you what to do and he is not my parent. I get so angry and confused!

I remember my dad before he died. One day I was with him and his friend pulled up in his car and he had quite a lot of weed in cling film in the car. He asked my dad if he wanted some and he said he didn't because he had the kids with him. And then he came

'I used to go missing from home all the time. The police would always pick me up and take me back but I hated being at home so I would go back out straight away.'

in acting all worried and it was so weird. We fell out with him about this and didn't see him for a long time. But I missed him. He was my dad.

Then we had started talking to him again and visiting. I was going to stay at his that weekend, but it never happened.

We went out for tea and we were talking about where we were going to sleep and that's when it all happened.

After the accident I remember going to hospital to see him, it was dead crowded. My uncle took me and my sister, we were holding hands. I went to go feel his head and it was cold, it didn't feel normal. My uncle called us to talk to the nurse and they told us they were going to switch off the life support machine in the morning, and it was so awful.



I keep thinking he is not dead and that it was someone else in that coffin.

After that I was proper vulnerable and lonely. When he died I used to talk to this man about it and then his friend asked me to be his friend on Facebook, I didn't know how old he was but I said yes. At the time I was just happy to talk about my dad. I missed him so much!

I found that guys listen to you more than your mates at school or your family so I started hanging around with lots of them. The drug dealers knew who I was and wouldn't leave me alone.

I only had arguments at home and I wanted to move out. I was so angry they wouldn't let me I pushed my sister down the stairs.

Because I was so unhappy at home, because of the way they talk about my dad I just didn't want to be there and kept running to anyone who would have me.

If an older guy talked to me I liked it - it was better than being at home. I didn't care if they just wanted to use me, it meant I wasn't home and I could talk about my dad if I wanted to. That is why I ran away so much and why I ended up involved with the people I did but all professionals could see at the time was a gobby, angry, moody teenager that kept running away and placing herself at great risk. All I needed was someone who would take the time to listen and believe and not judge me - so glad that someone came along!



Do you see what I see?

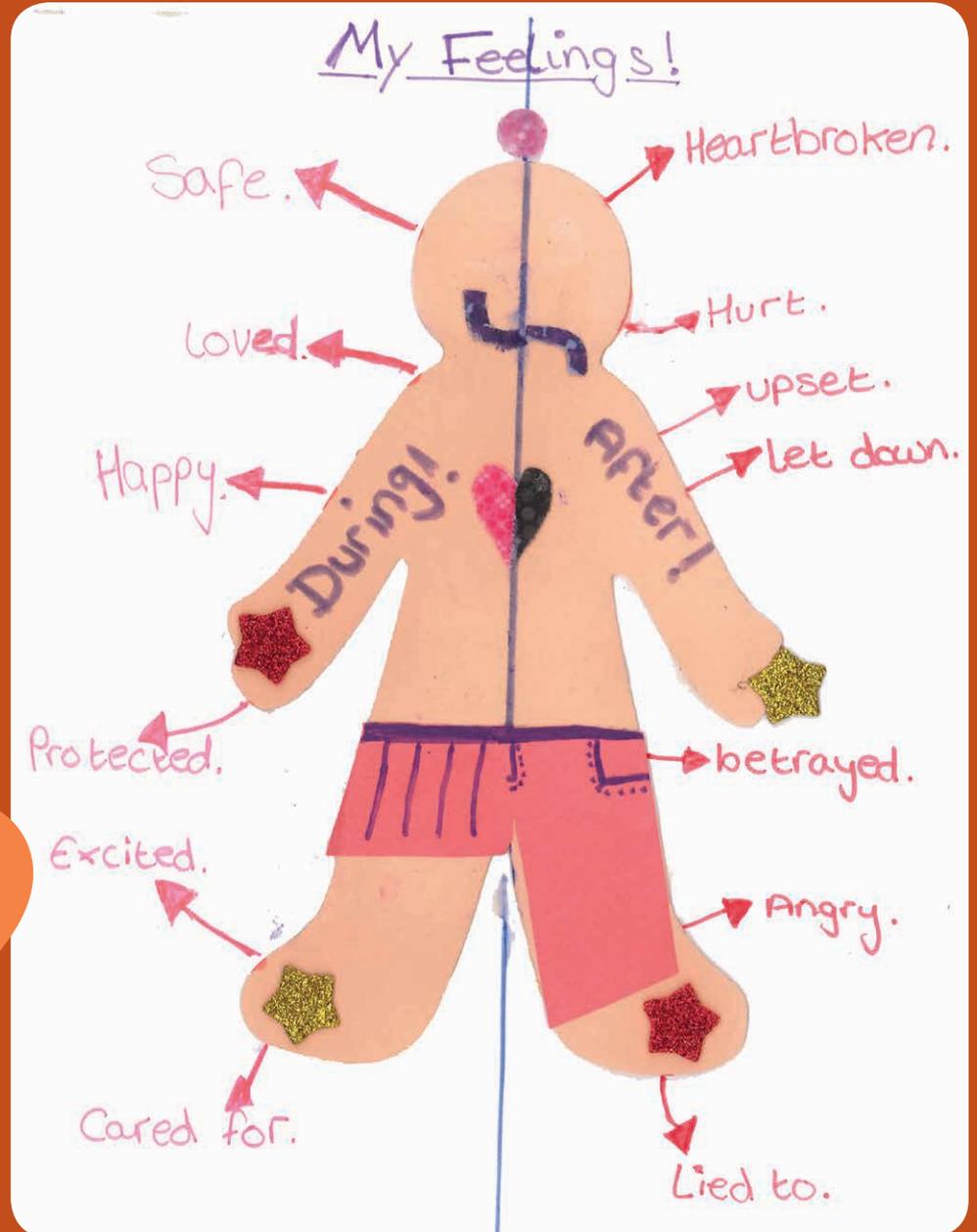
You look at me and all you can see is what I'm doing wrong. All I care about is how good I am feeling.

When I was 'being exploited' I did not see it that way. I was in a bubble thinking I had never been so happy.

My feelings!

When I was with him I felt safe, loved, happy, protected, excited, cared for.

When I found out the truth I felt heartbroken, hurt, upset, let down, betrayed, angry, lied to.





'The truth hurts so
I tried to hold on to
the lies a bit longer
hoping they would
be real.'

My song

'Hey you, yeah you,
Why you have to be such a fool
You played me off like some animal
You stamped on my heart like a criminal
You don't deserve to be there for eight years
You should be sent down for a life time
You hurt me and everyone around you
You didn't play fair
Instead you cheated, you lied
You crushed my heart and my life.'

'I went round to your house
Sat there quiet as a mouse
No movement, no talking
All I can see is you walkin'
You try kiss me
But when my back turned you diss me
It aint gon' happen
You lied and hurt me
You said you was twenty
All this time you knew
Add six years on then you get the truth.'



Don't rush me!

Hurting takes time, healing takes longer

u used me

u used me
u abused me
I was stupid I didn't know
u called me baby
said u loved me
but it just goes to show
that u can't trust anybody
though I thought u was the one
bought me presents
gave me money
u was my moon
u was my sun

when things got hard
u was there
u held my hand
u said u cared
I could not breathe
u was my air
talked of the life
that we would share

things were perfect at the start
then we began to grow apart
u stole my life u broke my heart

I did things that were unknown
I felt cheap and all alone
though I did them just for you
coz I thought our love was true

hurt my family
lost my friends
now its hard
to make amends
don't know how
I don't know when
things will be
the same again

u got angry
I got scared
I took the blows
I weren't prepared
I said sorry
didn't know why

u was my angel in disguise
without u my world would die
just a face a broken smile
I was happy for a while
u said to be versatile





u told me lies
that id believe
I was young
I was naive
and that was why you'd chosen me
u said one day that id achieve
u thought no-one would intervene
u had a plan
u had no doubt
you thought that no-one would find out
you cast a shadow over me
you broke my heart you crushed my dreams
to this day I will miss you
although the pain you put me through
you taught me things I never knew
you was my wind
you was my rain
I find it hard to face the pain
so I guess this is goodbye
I will heal as time goes by
no more tears and no more lies
no more brightness in my life
though I know I have been saved

*'I was on a downward spiral
like I'd hit a self-destruct
button and there was no way
back. I'd hit rock bottom. I'd
stopped attending school. I
didn't care about myself let
alone anyone else. My anger
controlled me, I refused to
trust anyone.'*

left alone and left ashamed
I have begged and I have prayed
though now I know I must be brave
and ill let justice run it course
though for a broken heart
there is no cure

u told lies they set you free
you hold your head high above me
I hold my head right down in shame
coz now I feel I'm all to blame
I feel like nothing's going to change
I know the memories won't fade

Sad I am

I am
The star
That doesn't shine bright
The key
You can't remember what's for
The shadow
Hiding behind you

I am
The imaginary friend
The one you grew out of and forgot
The wonky tooth
People only notice because it's different
The raincloud
That no-one wants to see



'I personally never like my poems, I just write them as an alternative to cutting.'



I am
The cut
Of a teenager
Who can't cope
The blood
That makes the cut seem worse
The arm
That awaits its next injury

I am
The leaves
You walk over and kick in autumn
The broken heart
You left in the dust
The song
That the lyrics are too true to the situation

I am
The drawing
That no-one understands
The girl who looks longingly at the sun
But knows she'll never shine that bright
The one with her head down
Because she can't look the world in the eye.

Do you see what I see?

The 'dummies' guide to working with young people

(written based on our experience of great and terrible professionals)

Top dos:

- ✓ Support me through thick and thin
 - ✓ Listen and let us speak
 - ✓ Visit me regularly so I learn to trust you
 - ✓ Give good advice
 - ✓ Do something useful
 - ✓ Be flexible
 - ✓ Take us out (we may not be comfortable speaking to you at home or in school)
 - ✓ Be available
 - ✓ Be trustworthy
 - ✓ Be friendly
 - ✓ Give one to one attention
 - ✓ Show me you actually care (not by what you say but by what you do)
 - ✓ Understand our point of view (you don't have to agree, just try to get it)
 - ✓ Keep up to date knowledge about young people
 - ✓ Tell me what you are telling others about me instead of talking to them behind closed doors
 - ✓ Ask me what I think
- 

Top don'ts:

- ✗ Don't speak over us
 - ✗ Don't shout
 - ✗ Don't be rubbish at your job
 - ✗ Don't gang up on us
 - ✗ Don't put us on the spot in front of everyone (you wouldn't like it if someone did it to you, would you?)
 - ✗ Don't care more about your school reputation than you do about our feelings
 - ✗ Don't be pushy or rude
 - ✗ Don't look too formal
 - ✗ Don't keep changing your mind every time you see us
 - ✗ Don't be too intrusive (we will tell you when we trust you)
 - ✗ Don't speak to me like I am a little child
 - ✗ Don't twist my words nor put words in my mouth
 - ✗ Don't talk down to us
 - ✗ Don't say things that are not true
 - ✗ Don't miss appointments without a very good reason
 - ✗ Don't make decisions about me without even asking me
- 

Boys want you to know:

We need you:

- to be patient, understanding and not judgemental
- to understand that sometimes boys aren't as trusting or open as girls
- to see past the 'hard front' and look at ways to help
- to keep it fresh (relevant and fun)
- to understand that every young man is different
- to believe us
- to not judge the bad behaviour or attitude
- to keep it 'on the level'
- to learn about what boys go through in their lives and on the streets

Boys want you to know:

We like it when:

- You don't just come and tell us what to do
- You help me make decisions for myself
- You help me not to feel judged
- You take me seriously and I feel listened to
- Your visits are fun and we can talk about different things to get to know each other better
- You take me places where I feel comfortable and safe to talk
- You plan your visits for when it suits ME
- I can ask for advice about anything I want to and don't have to feel embarrassed or worried that my mum or others will find out
- You don't force me to talk about what you don't want me to



We're not a waste of time

We're just a little lost on the way but we'll get there

'I've not always understood why professionals do what they do. Sometimes I felt so angry I just wanted to shout at everybody. Now I can look back and see what was going on. You were all trying to help - even though some of you were going about it in the worst possible way. I don't want to sound ungrateful, I'm not. It was just really hard sometimes but thank you. I am grateful for professionals that stuck with me even when I wasn't being the nicest person I can be.'

'I needed help to get through the rough parts of my life. When most people just walked off and left me to fend for myself, there were some professionals who cared. They were there for me. Even though everyone gave up on me (including myself), they never gave up once. There were times in my life where nobody knew if I would be alive the next day. But no matter what I did, who I hurt, they stuck by me. If it wasn't for them I seriously doubt I would still be alive today.'

'After all I'd been through I didn't trust anyone, adults specially and even worse, the dreaded professionals. However, when they came and offered me help, they were great and I felt they really listened to me and understood how I was feeling. They helped me get back into school and supported me when I felt I couldn't cope. Two years on, I am doing well in school, winning awards, participating in different ways both locally and nationally. Most of all I'm enjoying being a 'normal' girl and doing things girls my age do.'

'Don't ever give up on us.'



Some last reminders

- Don't give up – even when we don't understand why we need you
- It's not good to keep changing professionals all the time. Having the same professionals through the whole process helps to build trust
- It takes years to build trust and seconds to break it
- Stay in touch (don't just drop us)
- If we change our mind about what we said, take us seriously, don't write us off as liars



Moving on – life here we come!

'I am much safer online now. I've deleted loads of people I didn't know. Not falling for that again.'

'I'm going to have my own clothing brand and I am already learning how to get there – starting with my prom dress.'

'I'm stressing over exams!!! It's nice though to stress over the same things as your mates rather than have this all other secret life where police comes to your house and people you don't know have meetings about you.'

'I'm going to college and then I'm coming to work with you. I want to give back and help people like me.'

'I am going to make my family proud and prove everyone else wrong when I get the school award.'

'I am going to be famous – good famous! Not famous for getting into trouble!'

'I'm going to have my own family and my own house and my children will never go through what I went through. Never!'

'I am learning to trust some people again. Thank you for restoring my faith in adults.'



I am standing tall after feeling small

Even though we wanted to be famous, we've agreed not to tell you our names to protect our privacy. You just have to know us as the Purple Monsters.

The Purple Monsters, present and past, would like to thank the staff of Street Safe Lancashire for helping us put this book together and for all you have done and still do so that we can stand tall after feeling small.

The Children's Society

The Children's Society has been a leading provider of specialist services working with children who run away in England for over 25 years and we run dedicated projects that support hundreds of children in England. **Street Safe Lancashire** works throughout Lancashire with children and young people missing from home and those at risk or involved in child sexual exploitation.

For more information about our work please visit:
www.childrensociety.org.uk/runaways-work

For more copies of this booklet please visit:
www.childrensociety.org.uk/resources

