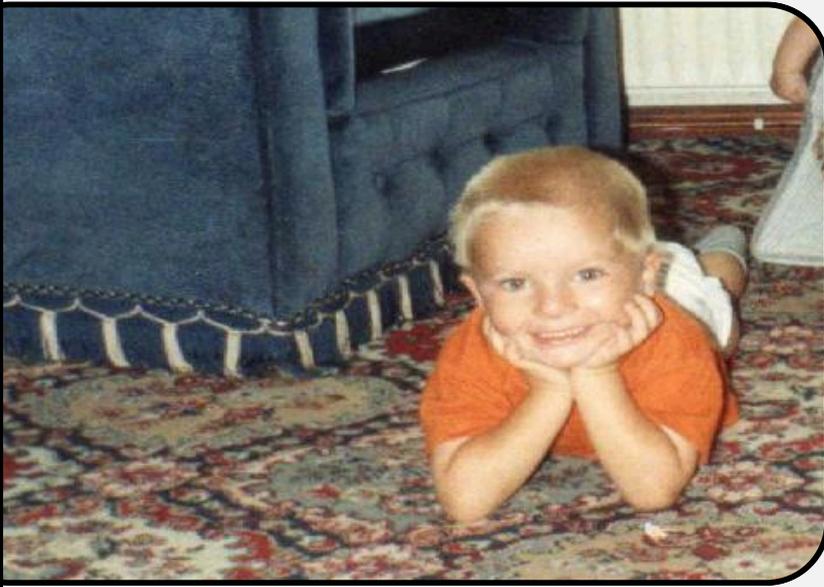


OUR STORY



1 OUR STORY

Every story has a beginning, and ours has to start with a 6-year-old boy from the North of England.

That's when the abuse started - at just 6 years old.

It was by an older boy in his family; someone he admired and trusted. He didn't know this game they were playing was wrong, but thought it was what love looked like. He believed the warning of the older boy, that it had to be their secret, and that he'd be in trouble if he spoke about it. So he stayed silent.

He grew up with big dreams for his life, but by the time he was 14, something in him started to shift. He began to realise that what had happened - what was still happening - wasn't right.

That realisation confused him so much that it took him right to the edge; planning his suicide, writing handwritten and tear-stained letters to those he'd leave behind, and convinced the world would be better off without him in it.

He suffered at the hands of this older boy for over a decade, and remained silent right up until he was 26 years old.

That boy is me, the Founder of **Speak It Out**.

Ten years after the abuse ended I stumbled across a local charity in Salford that offered

psychotherapy for men who had experienced sexual abuse. For the first time, I realised I wasn't the only one!

Until then, I genuinely thought I was. I remember the day of my first session, walking up to this rickety black door right on the main road in central Manchester.

I had convinced myself that I was ridiculous for even going, and I even remember truly playing down everything that had happened to the therapist. I'd never heard anyone talk about this before - not at school, not in youth groups, not in films or TV, and certainly not with family or friends.

That ignorance imprisoned me, and I can't sit on my hands knowing other boys are in that same position I was.

They don't deserve to have to wait 20 years to know they're not alone.

I started volunteering with that service after my therapy ended, and had met many men with stories like mine. Something didn't sit right though - where were the boys? That's when it hit me; they were out there, hiding in bedrooms, walking the

streets, sitting in classrooms, not knowing what it is that's happening to them.

As a secondary school teacher, I had a privileged level of access, and so I tested my ideas by delivering assemblies to Year 10 boys - talking openly, planting seeds, creating space for conversation, and giving boys the confidence to speak. The impact was immediate and undeniable.

That's where **Speak It Out** began.

We're a young charity, but we're here to make a change that will have a ripple effect deep into the future. We want to give boys the words I never had. To bring what happens in the dark into the light, so they don't have to wait twenty years to understand what they've lived through.

