



Make a difference for a child at Christmas

When seven-year-old Maisie* received a sparkly new bracelet from her mummy she was thrilled.

After years of neglect and witnessing horrible domestic violence Maisie, who lived just outside of Peterborough, had got something to treasure. Then her mum told her it was "a goodbye present."

Maisie's mum wanted to be with her boyfriend more than she wanted to be with her daughter. She said goodbye to her little girl and started a new life.

Maisie didn't understand why her mum had chosen a nasty man who used to hit her and hurt her over her. But the devastated little girl still treasured the bracelet as her only reminder of her mum. Thanks to specialist counselling and support from Embrace Child Victims of Crime (Embrace CVOC), a city-based charity which supports children who have suffered trauma through serious crime, Maisie is re-



embrace
Child Victims of Crime

Peterborough
Telegraph

building her life with her dad and her confidence grows every day.

Embrace CVOC helps thousands of children each year recover from neglect, sexual and physical abuse and other serious crimes with therapy,

counselling, hardship fund donations and specialist individualised support.

The Peterborough Telegraph has teamed up with Embrace CVOC to support its annual Christmas campaign Dear Santa 2020 to give you, our readers the chance to buy gifts of choice for children like Maisie who have suffered terrible trauma through serious crime.

Many of these children won't get any other gifts under the tree on Christmas Day. Over the past three decades, Embrace Child Victims of Crime has helped thousands of children like Maisie put the pieces of their lives back together - including 13-year-old Luke* whose home life was ripped apart by domestic violence.

Moving house was a common occurrence for Luke. In just a few years he changed school seven times as he, his mum and sister fled from a violent man who they should have been able to trust. Luke was often terrified as

he watched this man hit his mother, and smash up their home and possessions. His only sanctuary was his family fishing trips. Luke loved fishing with his mum - then he felt safe and calm.

So when the perpetrator tracked them down again, the teenager was devastated that his fishing equipment was left behind in the rush to escape.

That's where Embrace CVOC came in. During Luke's counselling sessions his therapist saw how much fishing meant to the family. The charity funded new fishing gear so they could enjoy their days out again.

Some children helped by Embrace CVOC are crippled with guilt because they have spoken out against horrific abuse which has then divided their family. Some struggle to come to terms with the loss of their mum, dad, sister or brother who have been unlawfully killed.

Others are terrified because the home that should be their safe place is the regu-



lar scene of domestic violence and abuse. There are other young people who, through years of neglect and abuse, have little self-confidence and self-esteem.

All of these children have very different circumstances and very different stories but they all have one thing in common. They have suffered terrible trauma because of serious crime affecting their young lives.

Children like those described and others can be helped by city-based charity Embrace Child Victims of Crime.

Embrace CVOC is unique because it is the only UK charity working solely with child victims of crime, providing bespoke and individualised support packages for children and their families.

Anne Campbell has been chief executive of the charity, based in Copse Court, off Thorpe Wood Road, Peterborough for the past eight years. Over this time she has led its growth from helping a few

hundred children a year to several thousand a year.

She said: "What we offer is really unique. It is not a one size fits all approach, everything we do is child-centred. We assess every case thoroughly to really get to the heart of what that child and that family

needs to help them rebuild their lives and succeed, rather than spiral out of control which can happen when the right support isn't there."

From specialist counselling to providing caravan breaks or even a new bike or guitar lessons, Embrace case workers really get to know the children and their families so they understand what therapy, practical, emotional and specialist support they can give to really make a difference to those children's lives.

Anne continued: "One little boy had no self-esteem or self-confidence because of what he had been through. He didn't have any confidence and just wanted to hide in his room. Over time, as we got to know him, he told us he had always wanted to learn to play the guitar."

"We arranged the loan of a guitar, organised guitar lessons and eventually we bought him a guitar of his own. The change in this little boy was immeasurable. We were able to rebuild his faith in human nature and give him the confidence to learn something new and succeed at it."

In 2019, Embrace helped 270 children in Peterborough alone. Some were referred by the Victim and Witness Hub, a free confidential service which provides emotional and practical support to

crime victims and witnesses in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, which just happens to share the same building as Embrace's head office.

Anne said: "Children are referred to us by police officers, teachers or domestic violence support workers - all those people working in safeguarding roles."

"Although the Covid-19 pandemic has meant we've had to halt our face-to-face services, it has also given us the opportunity to develop our telephone and virtual services enabling us to support children no matter where they live in the UK."

"The demand for our services increases each year. According to the National Crime Survey over 700,000 children between 10 and 15 are the victims of serious crime each year. But these are just the crimes that are reported."

"We believe it is just the tip of the iceberg."

To find out more about Embrace CVOC visit www.embracecvc.org.uk

How you can help Dear Santa appeal

There's still time to support our Dear Santa 2020 campaign and children whose lives have been torn apart by serious crime.

Dear Santa 2020 is unique because it enables you, our readers, to a buy gift for a child in need - and it's a gift they have actually wished for - so you know your generosity will definitely make Christmas special for that child.

Many of these families cannot afford to buy presents for their children and for some it will be the only gift they get this year.

Every child who is referred to the Dear Santa campaign gets to choose a gift they would like from Santa. All these gifts are available to buy through Embrace's website.

Santa's elves gift wrap it for you and ensure it gets to the child who wished for it.

You can purchase a gift from our Dear Santa Wish List at <https://embracecvc.org.uk/dear-santa/> You can also donate cash to <http://virginmoneysaving.com/fund/dearsanta2020>

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Home has become so much more important this year as we've all been spending a lot more time there for obvious reasons!

So, as the dark nights draw in, why not give your pad a cosy feel?

With restrictions on visitors coming and going, now is the perfect time to focus on the more private and personal rooms, such as the bedroom.

"Turning your bedroom into a haven couldn't be easier," says sales director Darren Barker, from mattress specialists Mattressman (mattressman.co.uk).

"Whether you want to keep it simple with a change of duvet set, or choose some beautiful new bedroom furniture, there's so much you can do."

Mattressman has a great range of mattresses in a wide variety of sizes and levels of



support, plus a vast array of well-known brands to choose from.

"If your old mattress is past its best, a new one could make all the difference to your night's sleep and how you feel during the day," says Darren.

And if you want one before Christmas, that's no problem. Mattressman can deliver the next working day right up until Christmas Eve.

Delivery arrangements can be tailored to you. A mattress can be brought to

your front door, or be carried straight to your bedroom by the delivery team who take every precaution to make sure it is done in the most Covid-safe way possible. They can even take the old mattress away and make sure it is recycled.

Despite the name, Mattressman does so much more than mattresses.

Go into a store or visit mattressman.co.uk and you'll find elegant dressing tables and wardrobes, and great storage solutions such as stylish blanket boxes and contemporary ottoman beds.

The picture shows the Birlea Phoenix Ottoman Bed (£319), which gives plenty of hidden storage space.

Plus, it comes in oak, white and grey finishes, so it can fit in nicely with a variety of décor ideas.



The snugly vibe doesn't have to stop at the back door.

Mattressman has a range of outdoor sofa sets with firepits to extend the use of your garden deep into winter.

What could be nicer than wrapping up cosy and watching the flames with a warming winter drink in your hands?

VISIT A STORE

■ All Mattressman stores are currently open including at the Nene Valley Retail Park, St James Mill Road, Northampton (call 01604 978630), and 740 Lincoln Road, Peterborough (call 01733 796670).

■ Covid safety precautions are in place, so you can test the beds and mattresses knowing they will be treated with sanitising spray after anyone tries them out.