

CASE STUDY

Engaging children and parents affected by child sexual abuse

Sally is an 11 year-old girl who lives with her Mother, Janet, and her nine-year-old sister, Evie. Janet works nightshifts and Sally has always taken lots of responsibility for Evie.

At school, Sally mainly keeps to herself, and has trouble making friends. She experienced some bullying last year and Janet had to meet with the school principal. Sally also has some learning difficulties and has trouble concentrating in class.

Twelve months ago, Janet started seeing Gary, and he moved in with them soon after. Gary was very charming to Sally and Evie when he first met them and was particularly nice to Sally. He picked the kids up from school sometimes and always had lollies and soft drink.

Gary liked basketball and he started taking Sally to all the games. Sometimes they would stop at the pub for a counter meal afterwards. Sally liked the way he listened to her and made her feel like she was important.

A couple of months ago, Gary started touching Sally before bedtime. At first, Sally thought it must have been by accident, but then he started coming to her room at night when her mum was at work.

Sally didn't know what to do. She knew it took her a long time to understand things, and that maybe she made Gary think it was okay.

Gary told her that her mum would be furious with her if she found out, and that it was their 'little secret.' When Gary started coming home with presents for Evie, Sally started to worry about her sister. She tried to talk to Evie about Gary but couldn't find the right words.

Eventually, she found the courage to tell her mum that Gary was hurting her. Janet asked Sally lots of questions in a frantic kind of way and cried and hugged Sally a lot. The hugging was reassuring, but Sally also wonders if Janet secretly blames her for what happened. Janet has seemed even more exhausted since she told her.

The police came and talked to Sally, but the questions were confusing and went on for a long time. She hasn't seen Gary since she told her mum, and Evie keeps asking her why she made Gary go away.

This was a couple of weeks ago and Sally still hasn't been to school. She is feeling constantly exhausted and doesn't want to get out of bed.

Janet is really worried that Sally is depressed, but she is having trouble talking to her about it. She decides to take Sally to her local GP to discuss her mental health.