THROUGH A MOTHERS EYES.

A FIGHT FOR LIFE.

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A FIGHT FOR A LIFE.

It's New Years Eve 2003, and I am out with friends waiting to welcome in the New Year. I am hoping 2004 will be a whole lot better, after having a horrendous three years. Finally I feel as if I am getting my life back on track for me.

Two weeks into 2004, my best friend's husband is rushed into hospital and has a major operation. So I go over and stay with her until the worst is over. He comes out of hospital, so I go back home and things seem to get back to normal. There is only about a week till my son Julian comes up to stay with me for three weeks. He is travelling up from Chepstow where he works and while he is here we will be celebrating his birthday. He will be 32 years old on February 15th. I was quite excited because I had not seen him since September 2003 when he came up to help me move into my new home. Whilst here he helped me decorate the spare bedroom. Just before he went back my mum was taken in hospital with a severe chest infection. We went to visit her the day before he went back to Chepstow.

On Sunday February 29th my mum passed away in the early hours of the morning. I rang Julian that night and told him about his Nan, telling him I would ring him to let him know when the funeral was. On Monday March 1st I rang him in the evening to let him know that the funeral was arranged for Friday March 5th at 10am. He rang me back on Tuesday night and told me he was travelling up the following day and would arrive about 9pm, but would be going back on the Saturday ready for work on the Sunday. I had arranged for some friends to come for tea on Wednesday afternoon, and they were still here when he arrived just after 9pm as he had said he would. About five minutes after his arrival, another friend from down the road came and asked us all down for a drink, so we all went down.

At 10pm the two other friends said that they had to go for their bus, so Julian offered to walk to the bus stop with them. They had only been gone for about 15 minutes when my friend came back with the dog and then went out again. Within a couple of minutes he came running in and said that Julian was laid out on the corner of the street. I rushed out the door with his partner and ran to find my son out cold with blood round his head. There was a man knelt by his side. I went to go to my son and as I did so the police arrived and the man told them to stop me touching my son. One of the police constables held me while another talked to the man, an ambulance came within minutes and all I can remember is shouting and crying "you've taken my mum you're not having my son!" over and over again. After talking to the man and checking him. The paramedics put my son in the ambulance but would not let me go with him. A police-woman asked the paramedic something and I vaguely remember the paramedic shaking her head. The police took me up to the hospital with my friend and when I asked to go to my son they told me I couldn't and that I had to wait in A&E. I remember looking round and thinking you rotten lot let me see my son, it must have been between 10.30pm to 10.45pm by then. This made it about 1 ½ hours since his arrival in Chesterfield. My friend and I just sat there watching as other people kept coming and going, all the time I kept asking why they wouldn’t let me see my son. After what seemed an eternity the paramedic came and apologised for not allowing me in the ambulance, but explained that it was because I was hysterical and that she could not have worked on my son and coped with me at the same time. I asked her if I could see him and she said they would come and fetch me when I could see him. At about 12.30pm a nurse shouts my name and takes me into a side room, I want to scream because I think that she is going to tell me my son is dead. Instead she calms me down as best as she can and explains that he is in critical condition and they are trying to stabilise him. Again I ask if I can see him and again I am told someone will fetch me when I can. The nurse then tells me that I can use the phone in the room to ring my two daughters, to let them know what has happened. I rang them both and the eldest came and stayed with me. An eternity passed again and then someone came and told us we could see him. We went into the room to see loads of machines and people who said we couldn’t touch him and that we could see him for just 2 minutes as they were transferring him to the Hallamshire hospital in Sheffield. I was so hurt and upset because I wanted to hold him and tell him I was there. Within what seemed like seconds he was whisked away from me again. They wouldn’t let us go with him again so the police had to take us to Sheffield. He seemed to be going at a snails pace which was very frustrating. On arriving at the Hallamshire I looked for him and was told that he had gone straight to theatre and that we had to go to the ward and wait there for him. It was now 2am and I hadn’t seen my son for any length of time since just after 9pm, it felt like a lifetime. After about an hour a nurse from the ward came out and asked me details about my son, he then asked us if we would like a drink, it was very welcome after all the waiting I had done. When the drink came the nurse told us that my son would come past where we were sat, but we could not go near him until he was settled on the ward.

A while after this a woman approached us and asked if we were with the young man who had been brought across from Chesterfield, when we confirmed this she introduced herself as a detective constable and told us she would be our ‘Family liaison officer’. She then took us to the cafeteria for a coffee and then went outside with us while I had a cigarette. We then went back to the ward to wait for my son. At about 5.30am this doctor came to talk to us, he told us that he had done the surgery. He said that my son was in critical condition and that he had had to remove part of this skull to relieve the pressure on his brain, and that he had stopped a bleed and removed a blood from his brain. He then told us that his ‘Temporal lobe’ had been damaged, but I could not take all the information that he was giving me in, as all I wanted to do was see my son. I did ask him if my son would live and he answered me quite honestly that he didn’t know and it was in the hands of god, but that he only gave my son a 3% chance to live. At approximately 5.30am the trolley with Julian went past but I couldn’t see him for all the machines that were attached to him. It was about another hour before they told me that I could go on the ward to see him. He looked as though he was dead, covered only by a single sheet. It was a horrendous site that met us; it seemed that all the top half of his body was covered in tubes and attachments to machines. His head was bandaged and he also had a collar on in case he had damaged his neck when he fell down, there was also an oxygen tube down his throat as they could not get a nasal one on him. The only parts I could touch were his left arm and his legs. It didn't feel long that I was with him, until the police officer and ward staff said that we should go home and try to get some rest it was by now 7.30am. She drove us home and said she would come back at 12.30pm and take us back to the hospital. I tried to sleep but could not, so I got up and had a soak in the bath, then dressed to go back to the hospital. I didn't feel I could eat although I did have a coffee and I certainly couldn't sit still. I was on tenterhooks waiting what seemed hours before the police woman came and took me back to the hospital.

We arrived at the hospital about 1.15pm and went straight up to the ward. Again I was shocked at the sight of my son with all the tubes and machines attached to him. I touched his upper arm and told him that I loved him and that he couldn't leave me because I didn't know what I would do without him because he was my rock. At about 3.30pm the nurse who was monitoring him 24/7 asks us if we would leave for about half an hour while they did some tests. We leave and go and have a coffee and a cigarette. The police constable is still with us and I ask how people can do such a horrendous thing to another human being, to which she replies that she does not know and does not understand why it is without reason. I tell her that on the following day I have to go to my mum's funeral and then to my friends house as she is going to accompany me to the hospital so she takes my friends address and says that she will pick us up about 1.30pm. We all then go back to the ward where I again speak to him; my eyes are drawn to the machines where I sit watching the screens jumping and turning back to my son whenever they beep or when he stirs. About 6.30pm the nurses and police woman all tell me I have to go home to eat and sleep ready to face the funeral the next day, I don't want to go but they all insist. On the way out I confide in her and tell her how inadequate I feel because I can't do anything to help my son other than talk to him and pray that he will survive this awful occurrence.

I arrive back from the hospital at about 7pm, I make myself a coffee and try to relax for a while, I turn on the TV and try to work out what to eat but just the thought of food makes me feel quite sick. Not being able to sit and relax I start to prowl round the house, all the while thinking that I should be at the hospital. To break the monotony, I decide to go and have a soak in the bath before sorting my clothes ready to go to mum's funeral tomorrow. After my bath I again try to watch TV but all I seem to do is watch the clock. At about 9pm my brother rings to say he will be picking me up about 9am next day to go to the funeral, I then tell him what has happened to my son and he is absolutely gob-smacked. When I had finished talking to my brother I ring the hospital to find out how my son is, and am told he is still holding his own. I have another cup of coffee and decide to go to bed, but sleep is fitful and about 3am I get up to go downstairs and have a cigarette and another coffee. Eventually I go back to bed only to have more fitful sleep and nightmares where I see my son lying on the ground and me fighting to get to him, I go on like this till about 6.45am when I decide to get up as I can't take any more. Watching the clock I wait until 7.30am, and then ring the hospital and they tell me there is no change in his condition and they said he hadn't had a bad night. After having a coffee and cigarette I go up stairs to start getting ready. I have a quick bath, blow dry my hair, apply a little make-up and dress, ready for my brother to pick me up. My brother gets here and gives me a big hug asking if I am alright, I tell him I'm coping, we then drive to mum's flat about 9.30am. I then have to explain to the rest of my relatives why Julian is not with me and that there may be another to the funeral to go too. By this time the cars have arrived to go to the crematorium for the service, of which I don't remember much apart from the one thought going through my head being "I'm sorry mum Julian should be here he only came back to say his goodbyes to you". Also stuck in my mind is the fact that the funeral director gave me a rose from my mum's wreath. We then went back to my sister's house for the wake. Whilst there I rang the hospital to be told that there was no change in his condition. I don't know how I got the strength to go through the rest of the morning because all I wanted to do was go back to the hospital to be with my son. My friend and her husband took me back to their home to wait for the detective constable to arrive; she came about 12.30pm but had to take a statement from me before we left. We arrived at the hospital about 2pm and went straight to the wards, we got to where my sons bed should be to find it was gone! I went into major panic; I think I screamed thinking the worst had happened. A nurse came running up and explained that he had gone for a scan on his brain and suggested that we went for a coffee as he would be about 30 minutes before he was back. This we did, but whilst having it the police woman was called away.

When my friend and I got back to the ward nothing could have prepared us for the sight that met us. My sons head had swollen up to the size of a bowling ball and all you could see was the tips of his eyebrows and the tip of his nose, the only reason we recognised him was by his broken tooth which was only visible because he had the oxygen tube down was holding his mouth open. I asked the nurse what all the machines were for, she did try to explain what each one did but I don't think that I could take everything she said was absorbed by me. We stayed at the hospital until about 6pm when the police woman came and took us back to my friends where I had some tea. My friends were asked if I could stay with them for a while, at this point in time I didn't understand why.

On Saturday 6/3/04 I woke up about 6am after a fitful night's sleep, I tried to doze off again but at 6.45am I gave it up as a bad job and got up. I made myself a cup of coffee and sat waiting for my friends to get up; when they did we sat talking about what had happened. I was clock watching all the time until 9am when I rang the hospital and was told there was no change. When I got off the phone I went and had a shower before getting dressed, then went down stairs where my friend made me eat a slice of toast. At about 12.30pm my friend's husband drove me to the railway station; I caught the train to Sheffield and made my way to the hospital. I got there about 1.15pm and went straight to the ward. My sons head was still badly swollen, and on talking to the nurse was told there had been no improvement in his condition. Sitting down I began to talk to him and tell him I loved him and that everyone sent their love and best wishes. The machines with their graphs still mesmerised me and I kept watching them, the nurse noticed this and told me what each one was for. During this time my Julian got quite agitated and became quite aggressive in move his movement and at one point the oxygen came of the tank which the nurse quickly put back on. By this time I was getting upset so the nurse said she thought I should go for a break for half an hour which I did. Returning to the ward I sat talking to him and touching his leg, the only clear place to touch. I left the hospital at 6pm and made my way back to the railway station, getting back to my friends house ninety minutes later. All I wanted was a cup of coffee but I tried to eat some of the meal my friend had made for me, I think I pushed more round my plate than I actually ate. After this I rang my sister-in-law and told her what had happened and her and her husband said they would come on the next day and go with me to see my Julian. Later that night the police rang to see how he was and when I told them about his brain swelling they said that the police photographer would be going to the hospital on the Sunday to take some photographs.

Sunday morning and my routine is much the same as the last couple of days. I phone the hospital to be told there is no change. The rest of the morning passes in a blur as I wait for my sister-in law to arrive to go to the hospital. On arrival at the ward we are met by a detective sergeant and a photographer waiting to get some photographic evidence of my son's injuries. We were advised to go for a coffee and return in about 30 minutes. When we got back to see my son the police were just going, we went to his bedside and saw no change apart from the fact that he head swelling had gone down slightly. We stayed until 5.30pm and on the way back to my friends and my sister-in-law and her husband said how appalled at what the attackers had done to my son. After having a coffee they went home as they had a journey of about an hour and a half to get back. The next few days pass in a blur of hospital visits fitful nights. At one point I remember being told that they were keeping my son in a drug induced coma as when they tried to bring him round he was very agitated and was fighting the machines and tubes attached to him. It was approximately March 13th or 14th about ten days after the assault when they finally stopped the drugs and allowed him to come out of his coma naturally. The next day they moved him from the intensive care ward N1 to the ward next to it N2. I still visited him every day, and on the second day on this ward I was allowed to take him down to the shop in the foyer. This was a red letter day that I thought at time would never happen, it was March 17th. Each day he improved a little more, but was not allowed to walk anywhere because if he fell it could have been dangerous, as he had no bone to protect his brain on the right side of his head. They tried several helmets at the hospital but did not have one to fit him, so I went round the sports shops for the next couple of days trying to find a helmet that would cover his head, this in between my visits to the hospital. I eventually found one and he was allowed to walk for the first time. The following day he was transferred from the Hallamshire to Chesterfield Royal, it was March 21st, and I was told he would be staying here until there was a bed for him in Northern General where he would be assessed as to his capabilities. He stated at the Royal for about 3 weeks, whilst here his sisters and I visited him every day and he got to meet his 3 month old niece. While in Chesterfield Royal I constantly asked to speak to a doctor and also a social worker, but none materialised which I found very frustrating.

On April 12th he was transferred to Northern General, I was allowed to travel in the ambulance with him. When we arrived he was admitted to Osbourne 4, which is a ward for brain injured people. I stayed with him until about 5pm and then made my way back to the centre of Sheffield to go to the railway station. By this time I had moved back to my own home, where I arrived back about 6.45pm. I visited him every other day as I was finding it exhausting travelling every day. At the weekend of May Day he came home for the weekend, he went back on the Tuesday. He stayed at Osborne 4 until Spring Bank Holiday when he was allowed out for good. The first month he was home was very demanding of my time and energy, even worse than the weeks he spent in the hospital, probably on a par with the first two weeks after the assault. His days were spent mainly in bed with severe crippling headaches or listlessly sitting round the house. Trying to encourage him to eat was a nightmare as the brain damage has affected his sense of taste and smell, his description was that eating food was like eating cardboard, but whilst in hospital his weight had dropped from 8 ½ stone to 6 stone so I needed to encourage him to eat. During this first week of this month the police came and interviewed him to see what he could remember of the incident, but he could remember nothing (which in one way was perhaps a blessing). Before they left they said they would keep us informed of how the case was proceeding, which they did on a weekly basis. It was a worrying and harrowing time for me both as a mother and sole carer, because besides his continual lack of appetite and the severe headaches I was to finding out that the son I had was no longer there and that I had a virtual stranger living with me. What I mean by this statement is the fact that he was no longer the loving caring son that I had, instead I had someone who had no sense of personal hygiene, he had now got a frightening temper and although it was never aimed at me was very worrying and I spent my days caring for him on edge and nervous all the time. I began to realise that the changes the neuro-surgeon had told me could occur through a brain injury were manifesting themselves within my son and I found it too much and too oppressive to cope with. It began to dawn on me that the son who used to tell me that he loved me and that used to give me loads of hugs and support had gone and the stranger that was now here was lethargic, frustrated, angry and downright rude at time and one whose hygienic ways had disappeared.

It is now the middle of June and the police have come to talk to us, they tell us that the two lads that committed this horrendous attack are in court on the 29th and that they have pleaded guilty, and that the court case is just for sentencing. We are told that although, no witnesses will be called as the evidence is conclusive. But they felt if we were up to it that we should be there. They stayed about 1 ½ hours and said they would come and see us the following week for our answer. My Julian wasn't very communicative over the next couple of days but was expressing some angry aggression by slamming doors and punching walls, it was very worrying time for me and I was seriously worried about him. On the third day after the police visit he was calmer when he got up and after about an hour he asked if he could talk to me, I told him he could and that I was always going to be there for him when he felt he needed me. We spoke for quite a long time about what the police had said; I asked him what he thought and what he wanted to do. He said that he was angry that there wasn't going to be a trial, but that he wanted to be there to see them and to know what sentence they were given. I said that if that was what he wanted then that is what we would do. The police called on the Monday and they were told of our decision, and they asked if we could get someone to go with us for support, we told them that my best friend and her husband had said they would do this if we wanted them too.

About this time I approached Social Services to see if they could give me some support in caring for my son as I was a single parent, they hummed and said that they could give us no help unless we had been referred. We told them that we had been referred when he had come out of hospital and that we both needed some support. At this point they disappeared for about 20 minutes and on coming back they told us that they had got the referral but until his case had been reviewed that they could do nothing at all to help us.

On the 29th June we went to Derby Crown Court and saw his assailants for the first time. My Julian was still wearing his helmet at this time to protect him from harm, as if you looked at him front the left his head was caved in. The police asked him to remove his helmet when we went into the court room so that the people there could see the damage that the two assailants had done to my son. The actual court proceedings are an emotional blur, but I can remember the judge saying that one was getting a 3 year and the other a 3 ½ year sentence. I was really shocked and I remember giving a gasp of disbelief at what I thought was a very lenient sentence when they had almost killed my son. Whilst we sat in court we heard for the first time exactly what they did to my son in the actual attack. They had attacked him from behind with a metal bar knocking him unconscious and whilst he was lying there they had hit him twice more, kicked his upper body and head and then had smashed a bottle on his head. I also learned that his heart had stopped twice and that when he got to the Hallamshire they only gave him a 3% chance of surviving. The shock and horror I felt is indescribable, how can any sane human being do such atrocious things to another human being. At sixteen and seventeen they must have known right from wrong, at this age as young adults they should have been allowed to be given a more severe sentence and let the sentence fit the crime. On leaving the court room the Prosecution counsel took us into a side room and apologised for what he too thought was lenient sentence. I got really angry at this point and said I was disgusted and asked him to put me in a room with them and let me do to them what they had to my son. We were told that because both of them were under eighteen that this was all the court could give them but that if they had been over eighteen they could have been charged with attempted murder. What on earth has happened to the moral fibre of this country that they can allow and condone so called humane reformists to condone such wilful acts of violence to be treated so softly without thought for the victims or their families? With these thoughts running through my head, (goodness knows what was going through my son’s as he hardly said a word when we left court), we went home to carry on with what our lives had come to. A mother who was coping with a son who physically the same but in every other aspect was a stranger, and a young man whose life had been so horribly changed and shattered. Over the next two weeks some of my son’s emotions surfaced, he felt that his life wasn’t worth living. He had lost his home, his job, his girlfriend and his friends and the life he had created for himself in Chepstow where he had lived for about eighteen months. He didn’t know what this future held for him. It was at this point in time that this anger started to surface. By the July 12th his angry outbursts were getting worse, so I called in Disability Service and begged them for some help. When they came I explained everything that had happened since my son had come out of hospital, I asked for some help or support that they could give me, I also told them that I needed a break from all the stress in my life now. They contacted Social Services and managed a two week period of respite, but then told me I would need to pay £750 which I told them as a person on income support that it was impossible for me to do. They again contacted Social Services and managed to get the few waved. It was arranged for my son to go to a place in Mansfield called Dove House for two weeks starting July 23rd to August 6th. Julian went to Dove House on the 23rd of July and the following day I went to visit my sister-in-law and her family. The first two days were great and it felt good just to get away from everything., it was good to have some good company without my son’s anger tantrums’ and interruptions of conversation. By Monday evening it was all gone, I was getting angry abusive phone calls, asking me why I had done this to him? Why was he a prisoner? (This because he was not allowed out on his own.) He even said that he was not staying there. So much for the start of my respite period.

I arrived back home July 30th feeling a little more physically rested but still very drained emotionally. Meeting my best friend a couple of days later I was informed that my son had phoned her and her husband and that was on the phone for 90 minutes they had finally convinced him that I was not being horrible or trying to hurt him, but that it was to give me a break so that when he came home I could give him the care that he needed. The rest of the second week I spent cleaning and preparing for his home coming.

He arrived home on August 6th and from walking in the door his angry outbursts started, I wasn't to do anything like that to him again. About ten days later Social Services came out to talk to us, they were here about an hour. They sent us a letter a couple of days later stating that from the beginning of September my son would receive ten hours a week of support to give me some space to have a little time to myself. The following day we had an appointment at the Hallamshire with the Neuro-surgeon to which we went. Transport was provided for us and we were picked up at about 9.30am. We were told when we saw the doctor that my son would be going into hospital for his craniotomy the following week and that we would be picked up by transport on August the 23rd about 8.30am. When we got home I phone Social Services to let them know that the support could not start until my son came back out of hospital, they told me to ring them when he came home.

He went into hospital on the Monday morning, transport picked us up about 9.30am, I travelled with him and stayed at the hospital until about 5pm. The operation he had was quite a long one as it involved putting a titanium plate in his head as the bone of his skull had been too badly shattered to use which otherwise they would have done. I knew he was due in theatre about 9am and had been told that I couldn't visit him until the Wednesday. It was an anxious time waiting until after 2pm before I could phone, I really couldn't settle to doing anything. Phoning the hospital I was told that the operation had gone well and that he was still sleeping, but could phone later that day. Wednesday came and I was on edge wanting to get there as soon as possible to see what they had achieved with the craniotomy. When I arrived at ward N2 he was sat up in bed with a normal looking head and no helmet, although he had bandages on it. He was looking very pale, but said he felt fine. After sitting on the ward for about two hours I said that I was going for a cup of coffee and would not be long, but before I could stand up he had asked the nursing staff if he could come with me and was told that if he felt up to it he could. We took a very slow walk to the lift and went down to the WRVS cafe on the ground floor where we stated for about twenty minutes, after which we had a look at the gift shop and then the paper shop where he chose himself a magazine. Whilst I went outside for a cigarette, he sat on a seat in the foyer and waited for me. We then made our way to the lift and went back to the ward and I stayed with him until about 6pm. At this time I left to go home as he had started to look really tired, I think that for a first day he had tried to do too much. The rest of the days followed this pattern until he was allowed home on September 2nd when we both came back on transport about 4pm. Next day Wednesday I rang the care agency and social services to say that my son was now home and was told his care would start on the following Monday September. During the next few days after leaving the hospital my son slept a lot as he had a number of really bad headaches, but by the Monday his support was to start he was feeling better.

Whilst he was in hospital the police had told me about a group called Headway whom I had phoned and was told that they had a meeting on September 10th at Whitecotes School at Walton, which started at 7pm and that we would be welcome to come along. I discussed this with my son and he said that he would like to go, so along we went. We introduced ourselves and were told to find a seat, this we did and very soon people were coming up to him and talking to him whilst I felt like a spare part because although people were saying hello I was left on my own for most of the evening. Towards the end of the meeting, a lady came up to me and introduced herself and asked where we lived, I told her and she asked if we had driven there. When I said no she asked how we were getting home and when we said by bus she insisted that her and her husband would take us, which was really thoughtful and kind as they had only met us that night. On arriving home we thanked them and when asked if we would go again my son said yes. I made a coffee for us both and we discussed the events of the evening before going to bed.

The next few weeks fell into a routine where during the week my son had two hours a day support and our weekends were spent with each other.

The second week in October we went to Hallamshire for my son to see the doctor and let him see how the scars from the craniotomy were progressing, they were extremely pleased with the results and said we should make an appointment for six weeks later. It was in this same week that we went to our second meeting of the Headway group. At this meeting there were two people from the Youth Offenders team and they were speaking about how young people who were fighting and injuring others would benefit from talking to people who had been brain injured. I walked out of the talk as it was too painful to hear things like that after all it was only six months previously that my son’s injury had occurred under similar circumstances. Shortly after I walked out the gentlemen from youth offenders came out and asked why I had done this, so I explained the situation of my son. He then asked if I thought it might be useful and I said I didn’t think it would work, so we left it like that and went indoors for the rest of the meeting. On going back in we had a coffee and stayed for the rest of the meeting which finished at 9pm.

Life continued in this vein, with hospital visits every six weeks and my son’s support continuing at two hours a day for five days a week. In December we had a party at the Riverside Club with family and friends for my 60th Birthday, it was very enjoyable and made the more so because I still had my son. We spent Christmas on our own which was quite pleasant and meant that my son could go to bed if necessary as his debilitation headaches were still affecting him on a regular basis. New Year came and went and we said thanks but we hoped that 2005 was going to be a better year for us.

Towards the end of January we back to the Hallamshire for my son to have a check-up. Transport picked us up about 9am and we got to the hospital about 10.10am after picking up several other passengers. We waited in the clinic for his appointment at 11am. We went in to see the consultant and after being examined and asked some questions were told that my son could now stop his Epilim tablets but was to take his others as and when needed, and that we had to make an appointment for three months time. We then went down to the foyer to have a coffee as our transport home was not due until 2pm. After going on a tour round taking several other patients home we eventually arrived home about 3.30pm. Having got home my son went to bed as travelling still fatigues him quite a lot. Whilst he was in bed I prepared a meal for us to have for tea, which we did when he got up after which we spent a quiet evening watching TV.

Again our lives settled back into a routing and continued as normal as we could make it, with my son continuing with his support and his six weekly visits for reviews at HIRC (Head Injury Rehabilitation Centre) in Sheffield which started at the end of January shortly after his hospital appointment.

Our lives continued in this pattern until about April, when night whilst watching television. I had got up to make a coffee for us both and during a conversation we were having my son leapt out of his chair and began to shout and shake me in a sudden violent outburst of anger. When the incident had passed I asked my son why he had done this and he said that I was trying to control his life and that he thought I was treating him as a child again. The next day while my son was in bed I rang Disability Services and asked if it was possible for them to come to the house and talk with us. They came out a couple of days later whilst my son was at the shop with his support worker. While we were on our own I told them what had happened a couple of days before and said that I was very nervous about what could happen if he lost his temper again as although he was very wiry he is quite strong and I didn’t want him attacking me. They said that they would help in any way they could, but it would have to be me that contacted the local council to see if they could help. It took a lot of soul searching to make the decision to do this to my son whom I love very much and who I didn’t want to alienate. I decided to discuss the situation with my son and it was decided that we would go to the council and talk to them about our situation and see what they could offer us in the way of assistance. A couple of days later we went into town and went to the housing office to see if we could talk to someone in private. We went into a small anti-room and a gentleman came in and asked us what the problem was. We then explained about my son’s assault and the effects it had had on him, what had happened in my home the previous week and the effect it was having on our relationship and that if they didn’t help us what may have come to a nasty conclusion. We also explained that due to his short-term memory loss that he would need to be in an area that he was familiar with. We were told that they would see what they could do to help and would contact us in the next couple of weeks. After having a coffee and doing some shopping we went back home. Meanwhile Disability Services had contacted a housing association on my sons’ behalf and they said they would consider him for a property.

For the next few weeks life carried on as usual although at times it was quite tense, but we survived and managed not to have any more threatening behaviour clashes. About six weeks later we got a letter from the council telling us my son had been given a flat and although it was in area my son did not know he decided he would accept it and move in. We cleaned the flat out and a week later he moved in. I saw my son on a regular basis, but it worried me because being in unfamiliar surroundings he could have got confused as to how to find his way home. However this did not occur and then weeks later he was offered a house, in an area he knew, by the housing association contacted by Disability Services, into which he moved about ten days later. I helped him to move with extra help being given by his support worker. Life carried on with hospital visits and the usual day to day living with visits from me.

At Christmas my son came up to spend it with me and stayed till the New Year. In January 2006 we went to the Hallamshire hospital to see the doctor and were told that there were discharging him, but with an open appointment so that if we needed to see them we could. Six months later we were told the same at the Northern General. Life then carried on as usual with periodic reviews with Social Services and his support services; with his hours being cut at various times, this is how it stands at this moment in time. Now we have to get on with the rest of our lives.

It is now 11 years since the assault and Julian and I have a much better relationship. We phone each other on a regular basis and try to see one another at least once a week. Julian has own home and I have mine, we each live much more relaxed lives doing what each of us need to. But keeping in contact.

It has been a long struggle at times and as I have got older stressful times, but we both have our routines and live a more normal life than we had. I still worry about Julian and I always will. This does not stop the pride I feel in what Julian has arrived in his life and what he does to support others in a similar situation to his own. But why shouldn’t I ---- I’m MUM.