



izzy's promise

1 Victoria Road, Dundee DD1 1EL. Tel 01382 206222
www.izzyspromise.org.uk. Charity No SC033706

“A Dundee based ritual abuse support charity changes its name from TRASH to Izzy’s Promise”

By

Joseph Lumbasi

Support/Development Worker

Izzy’s Promise

A Dundee based charity offering free confidential support services to ritual abuse survivors throughout the UK changed its name from TRASH (Tayside Ritual Abuse Support and Helpline Project) to Izzy’s Promise on the 24th March 2008. The reasons for the change of name were twofold. Firstly, to reflect the wider coverage of the charity in supporting ritual abuse survivors beyond the Tayside area. The second reason was to honour the promise made by a volunteer-founder member to a ritual abuse survivor by forming a charity which would offer support services to ritual abuse survivors.

Izzy’s Promise was established in 2002 through the efforts of volunteers who have kept it more active up to now. The organisation has grown in *leaps* and *bounds* relying mostly on small donations from well wishers and local trusts in Dundee and other parts of the UK. A major step forward was marked when TRASH now Izzy’s Promise secured a five year funding grant from the Big Lottery to advance and develop support services for ritual abuse survivors. This funding has made it possible for Izzy’s Promise to recruit two workers who have *temporarily* taken the burden off the shoulders of the hard working and untiring volunteer-founder members. Temporarily because the founder members and volunteers are still the cog in the wheel of all the activities within Izzy’s Promise. They have remained active in inventing new ways of supporting ritual abuse survivors. A large number of ritual abuse survivors have been offered a chance to tell their stories to an organisation that is caring and believes in everything survivors say. Survivors have continuously telephoned us, emailed us, send text messages and even come in personally to tell their *untold stories* of *long suffering* that has always been dismissed as paranoid or psychic associated.

Izzy’s Promise has come in at the right time when there have been cases all over the UK of abuse in places such as Cleveland, Orkney and Jersey. All these have been *chilling* stories that have been met with mixed reactions of either disbelief or anger about how society has failed to protect its own people from abusive situations. These stories have led to new terminologies being coined to explain scenarios not usually



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associated with a developed society like ours which highly respects human rights to the core. These stories have thrown policy makers, social workers, the police, the legal justice system, religious folk and traditionalists into disarray. Some, in an attempt to uphold the sanity and to avert panic amongst the people, have resorted to using terms which are perceived to be understandable and easier to be believed by the society as a whole. In most of the stories that have been aired around these abuse occurrences the main term that has been employed by many investigators, social workers and other reporters has been 'child abuse' or 'sexual abuse'. However, said boldly all these stories and the pattern of the occurrences point to the term *ritual abuse*. Most sexual abuse of children is ritualised in some way. Abusers use repetition, routine and ritual to coerce children into patterns of behaviour they require, to instil fear and to ensure silence. Nursery rhymes, prayers, bath times, or teddy bears might be used like this by an abusing parent or relative: gifts, secrets, elaborate games, dressing up, taking photographs may be part of a paedophile's ritual preparation of a new victim. The sexual abuse of children is never a random act of lust: it always involves thorough planning and preparation. It is evident however that whenever this term is invoked in normal conversations, most people tend to freak out while others panic.

The panic and freaking as a result of people hearing the term ritual abuse is not a new phenomenon. This may be partly due to lack of clear understanding of what *ritual abuse* means in its simplest terms, the secrecy associated with it or a calculated way of averting panic amongst the general public. Therefore, apart from this article being to publicise the services of Izzy's Promise within the community, it is intended to dispel the misconceptions and secrecy associated with the term *ritual abuse*. *Ritual abuse* is organised sexual, physical and psychological abuse, which is systematic and may be sustained over a long period of time. It may involve the use of rituals, with or without a belief system, and usually involves more than one abuser. Other organisations expand that definition to include 'spiritual' abuse, although how this is defined seems to depend on religious orientation. Various ritual abuse support organisations and websites do vary in the definition of what constitutes ritual abuse, especially depending on religious, cultural or political bias. Ritual and organised abuse are areas of great controversy and exact definitions and categorisations have divided campaigners against abuse since the late 1960's. The terms *ritual* and *organised abuse* can be applied to many reported instances and cases of abuse such as those detailed in this article. It is worth mentioning at this stage that the definition of ritual abuse especially is a matter of great debate and controversy. Elements and practices of various religious, institutional, political and cultural authorities have been subjected to accusations of abuse and defined by others or ideologically opposed parties as ritual abuse.



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In the process of all these *unending debates, controversies* and *secrecy* associated with the term ritual abuse, there are many people suffering and needing support. That is why Izzy's Promise decided to overcome the barriers and obstacles associated with the term ritual abuse and formed a charity aimed at offering confidential support services to those people whom the society has *categorised* and *pathologised* as *insane, psycho, paranoid* and *liars*. Based in Dundee, Izzy's Promise is currently the only service of its kind in Scotland. We offer long term, free, confidential support and information to survivors of organised and ritual abuse by telephone, face to face, email and via our two websites (www.izzyspromise.org.uk and www.rans.org.uk). We also support workers in other agencies who are isolated and out of their depth while trying to work with survivors of ritual abuse. We work with survivors helping them to heal from the trauma of abuse and escape from such abuse. Over the past few years, our expertise has grown and we are now a well respected organisation that offers training, consultancy, advice and information to agencies and individuals on the subject of ritual abuse. Last year (2006-2007) Izzy's Promise supported 148 ritual abuse survivors by telephone that were already known to us, and we took on 46 new survivors for support. We further received 15,000 emails from ritual abuse survivors all over the world in 2007 needing support. There are currently 4-5 new ritual abuse survivors phoning each week and being supported by our workers and volunteers. We have so far recruited and trained 80 volunteers from different sections of the community and aim to diversify our recruitment so that we have volunteers in the project with knowledge of how to reach and talk to a range of people.

A major remarkable development has been that most ritual abuse survivors that we have supported have gained confidence and they have moved on to become volunteers in our charity hence providing support services to other ritual abuse survivors. By June 2008 we had 10 ritual abuse survivors who had escaped abuse and had gained more confidence and are now volunteering with us by supporting other ritual abuse survivors. Izzy's Promise has provided training for 100 organisations including the police, social work, rape crisis centers, women's aid staff and a variety of other support agencies. Demand for the training has come from all over the UK. We have provided training in Wales, London and Glasgow in addition to what we provide in Dundee. This has increased the ability of other organisations to provide support for ritual abuse survivors. We have held 10 writing workshops for survivors and the end result of this was a poetry book (*The Living Proof: poems by ritual abuse survivors*) which we have published and it is available for use by support workers, other agencies in supporting ritual abuse survivors and raising awareness on ritual abuse in our



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society. Furthermore, an experienced volunteer has written 6 books on the subject of ritual abuse and these books are now available online for workers and survivors to purchase. These books are helping to raise awareness on ritual abuse and support needs for survivors. Funds raised from these books are being used to improve support services for ritual abuse survivors. Therefore, you are all welcome to refer survivors to us for support, to be trained in ritual abuse support skills, volunteer with us, donate and support us in any way possible to enhance our programs and services for the benefit of ritual abuse survivors.