

# DANIELLE'S STORY

## Danielle's Story:

I'm Danielle Hamilton, I'm 17 years old and I live in Stirling in Scotland. I was a keen swimmer from a young age and had always dreamed of swimming in the Olympics and I was just at a normal swimming lesson and I was doing a tumble turn to go to the next length and that's when I felt a crack in my hip. After 5 weeks of tests I was finally diagnosed with bone cancer. Everyone I knew who had had cancer had passed away and the first thing I thought was 'am I going to die' and I was really terrified of that happening.

## Jamie-Lee (Danielle's sister)

When my dad came in and told me my sister had cancer I genuinely thought she was going to die because I'd only ever known old people to have cancer, and everyone in my family who had had cancer had died. So I thought I was going to lose my sister as well.

## Danielle's parents

When Danielle got diagnosed she was very angry and it was all 'why me'. She goes 'what have I done to deserve this' 'I've done nothing wrong'

## Danielle

So they started treating me with chemotherapy and I immediately got the side effects of sickness, tiredness, weight loss, fainting and the main one - hair loss. Being a normal teenage girl, your worst fear is losing your hair, and that was definitely mine at the time. Just seeing blobs of hair coming out every day, I burst out crying as soon as I'd seen it, I didn't want it to happen.

## Jamie-Lee

She'd lost all her weight and so she was literally a skeleton, a walking skeleton. Every time I touched her I thought 'oh no I'm gonna hurt you' because she was that skinny. It was horrible.

## Danielle's parents

She was missing out so much. She wasn't going to be like everyone else, she was getting jealous of her friends having boyfriends and nobody being interested in her.

## Danielle

I still managed to go to school during my treatment, I was bald and I was wearing my hat, and I was also in a wheelchair.

## Teacher - Owen Kelly, Deputy Head

Danielle was a very brave girl who coming back to school initially had to face lots of difficulties, and difficulties were not just curricular but also pastoral difficulties. On one or two occasions, there were pupils in class who may have said unkind or unpleasant things and the school dealt with them very promptly and alerted parents to that to make Danielle's transition back to school as easy as possible.

## **Danielle**

The first thing that the doctor had said to was that I'd learn who my true friends are. And when I went back to school I did. There were two friends that stood by me all the time and they kept making me happy and they took me out to the cinema and out for dinner as well.

## **Jamie-Lee**

She wanted to be a normal teenager because she was just so young, and at that age where all her friends were going out and stuff and obviously she wasn't because she was in hospital. So when she was at home I tried my best to take her out places and stuff.

## **Danielle**

My doctor finally told me to go off and enjoy my life, and it made me feel happy about myself because I could see myself getting better and my hair was starting to grow in and colour back to my cheeks, and not being sick all the time.

## **Teacher**

I think if you want to help a child like Danielle its most important just to be yourself, that they have enough discussions around their illness and they really just want friends who are going to be there to talk about the normal teenage things that interest them

## **Danielle**

I have got a limp but that's not stopping me do the things that I want to do. I learnt to live my life to the max because you never know what's around the corner. I'm just trying to be a normal teenager now and do all this stuff that you shouldn't be doing.