

## Ray & Vi's Story

*This story is not to be reproduced without the express permission of Why me?*

Ray and Vi Donovan's young son was murdered in 2001. Ten years later, they sat down and talked to one of the young men who had killed him.



Ray and Vi Donovan's son, Chris, was murdered near to their Surrey home. Three teenage boys were convicted and sentenced for the crime soon after. Since then Ray and Vi have devoted their energies to working with other offenders in prisons and to an education programme that they take round schools, churches and community groups.

They had always been keen to get a restorative justice meeting with the young men who killed their son, but had to wait a very long time for it to happen. Eventually in July 2011, Ray and Vi sat down in a room with one of the young men, just after he had completed his eight year prison sentence.

"This was the first time we'd set eyes on him in a decade – when we saw him in court he was a boy – now he was a man in his mid twenties."

### **An emotional meeting**

"We felt calm. We hugged him when he came in to the room. Ray said he was forgiven and he whispered his thanks", said Vi.

"He then told us that during the first two years of his sentence he didn't admit to himself that he'd had a hand in killing our son. But then he went on a prison course and said that after that he couldn't get Chris out of his head. He said that the first thing he'd done on his release was to go to the place the murder happened and put flowers there.

### **A fifteen year old coward**

"He told us that he'd been a fifteen-year-old coward. He acknowledged he'd kicked Chris then left him in the road and run away. That was something we'd waited ten years to hear. He wasn't at all the person we'd expected to see.

"It was good to tell him what he'd done to us. We then talked about the future and his plans to become an artist. He'd won a prize for art while he was in prison and Ray was able to put him in touch with someone we'd met in the course of our work with offenders who could help develop that.



“That restorative justice meeting made a real difference to us and we are now hoping to have meetings with the other two young men”.

Ray and Vi have set up a trust in their son’s memory which you can read more about on the **Chris Donovan Trust** [website](#).