

BACK CAMPAIGN TO STOP CUTS



TRAGIC... Michelle and late sister Fiona

By SHARON HENDRY

APPRENTICE star Michelle Dewberry is all too familiar with domestic abuse.

Her father used to threaten to burn her and her family to death if they left him.

That is why she backs our Save Our Shelters campaign to persuade the Government not to scrap funding for family refuges.

She and her mother and siblings frequently used refuges while growing up when her father's behaviour left them fearing for their lives.

Now she has a clear message for the ministers planning to remove their main source of support: "By not properly funding refuges you will be responsible for the deaths of women and children."

"Unless you guarantee these vulnerable people safe facilities, how will you sleep soundly at night?"

"If you take away refuge provisions through funding restructuring or any other means, you will have blood on your hands."

Michelle, 38, who won BBC reality show *The Apprentice* in 2006, shared a three-bed terrace in Hull with her five siblings including her late sister Fiona – and suffered a difficult childhood at the hands of dad Dave, a valve salesman.

The entrepreneur, who has not seen him since she was 18, spent some of her early years in Women's Aid refuges.

'Petrol through letterbox'

She says: "We experienced a lot of domestic violence at the hands of my father. He was a very angry person with my mum and his children. I've got very scary memories."

"I recognise domestic violence as a cancer in our society, and while it exists there must be mechanisms in place that allow for long-term, sustainable funding of refuges and related services."

Michelle, who was on the social services at-risk register with her siblings, witnessed domestic violence for 18 years but stresses there is more to it than physical abuse.

She says: "Intimate relationships between partners don't start violently. A woman isn't beaten on the first date and left thinking, 'He's the one for me'."

"They fall in love, have children, then things start to happen. Before women know it, they are trapped."

"When people say, 'Why don't women just leave?' they don't understand the manipulation, the anxiety."

"When we were living with my dad he used to tell my mum that if she tried to leave he'd find us, pour petrol through the letterbox, set fire to the house and kill us."

"Of course she believed him – why wouldn't she?"

"There were times when we had to use Women's Aid's services and I don't know what we would have done without them. They are life-saving facilities, full stop, no different from an A&E department."

One in four women are affected by domestic violence in their life, yet ministers want to remove refuge hostels from the welfare system.

That would mean women would no longer pay with the housing ben-

My dad abused us for years... refuges saved our lives



SAYS

MICHELLE DEWBERRY



DOING HER BEST... Michelle as a Brownie aged ten, and below left, graduating aged 21 with mum Glynis



Elton... £27.5m vow

Elt's firm aid out of own sky Rocket..

By MICHAEL HAMILTON

SIR Elton John is propping up his business with his own cash after personally guaranteeing £27.5million of his music empire's liabilities.

The Rocket Man star, 70, made the pledge in accounts for William A Bong, the firm which runs his recording and music publishing activities.

Accounts filed at Companies House show it had £38.18million short-term debts, up on £31.77million reported in earlier years.

However William A Bong, set up in 1970, remained £1.34million in the black as its debts are offset by company assets.

A source said: "It's not a good sign that Elton is guaranteeing money from his own wealth."

"It shows his businesses are not doing as well – or being run as well – as they were."

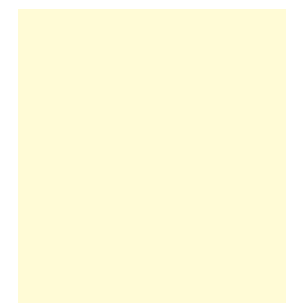
Lasers to fight tips

THE whole of England is to be mapped with laser technology to fight flooding, aid conservation and track illegal waste tips.

Aircraft with scanners will map 50,000 square miles in 3D by 2020.

It will help identify flood risks and can spot sudden landscape changes, which can indicate dumped waste.

Around 75 per cent of England is already mapped but the new data will be higher quality, the Environment Agency said.



Deaf Jo's baby joy

A DEAF woman, known to millions for the stirring viral video of her hearing for the first time, has had a baby.

Joanne Milne's son Teddy with partner Stephen White arrived by emergency caesarean.

The 43-year-old from Durham was born deaf and had cochlear implants three years ago.

Joanne is also going blind. She said: "I'll treasure the sight of our baby's face, I'll make memories."

efit that currently accounts for 53 per cent of total refuge funding.

As a result, the last guaranteed source of income for refuges, run by charities such as Women's Aid, would be removed.

You can join our Save Our Shelters appeal by filling in the panel, right, or pledge your support by signing the online petition, below.

Finally, in 1997, aged 42, Michelle's mum Glynis did leave her dad.

Michelle says: "She is proof that any woman can break free. But the Government has to support women in their courage – not kill them with cost cuts."



Dear Prime Minister,

We demand that the Government urgently halts planned changes to funding for the UK's network of refuges. We call on you to find a suitable, long-term funding solution and ensure that every woman and child can safely escape domestic abuse.

Name.....

Address.....

Signature.....

Send to Save Our Shelters Campaign, The News Building, 1 London Bridge Street, London, SE1 9GF

