

= Abi Branning =

Abigail " Abi " Branning is a fictional character from the BBC soap opera EastEnders , played by Lorna Fitzgerald . She was introduced by executive producer Kate Harwood on 3 July 2006 as an extension to the Branning family , along with father Max (Jake Wood) , mother Tanya Branning (Jo Joyner) and older sister Lauren Branning (Madeline Duggan , later played by Jacqueline Jossa) .

For her portrayal as Abi , Fitzgerald has been nominated for the " Best Young Actor " at the 2010 Inside Soap Awards and went on to win " Best Dramatic Performance from a Young Actor or Actress " at the 2012 British Soap Awards . Kate White of Inside Soap praised her portrayal of Abi , saying that Fitzgerald is the " brightest young star in soap " , adding " Abi 's destined for great dramatic things " . A writer from the Western Mail said that Abi 's relationship with Jay Brown (Jamie Borthwick) is " Walford 's answer to Romeo and Juliet " . However , some critics have been less positive , with one saying in 2012 that the audience are " not nearly " seeing as much of the " classic characters " due to the younger cast receiving more screen time .

= = Storylines = =

Abi moves to Albert Square with her parents Max Branning (Jake Wood) and Tanya Branning (Jo Joyner) , and sister Lauren Branning (Madeline Duggan) , where she befriends Ben Mitchell (Charlie Jones) . Abi is hit by Dean Wicks 's (Matt Di Angelo) car , suffering a broken wrist , cuts and bruises , but she recovers with no long @-@ term impairment . Abi later learns that Ben 's father , Phil Mitchell 's (Steve McFadden) , girlfriend Stella Crawford (Sophie Thompson) is abusing him , so due to this , Abi and Ben plan to run away , but fail as they are caught by their parents . Abi then stands up to Stella and tells Ben to do the same , leading Stella to kill herself when Ben reveals the abuse . In December 2007 , she chooses the name for her newborn baby brother , Oscar . Soon after , when Max 's affair with Stacey Slater (Lacey Turner) is revealed , Max and Tanya separate . Abi begins to live sporadically with each parent , frequently defending Max to Tanya and Lauren , until Max and Tanya reunite in 2009 , however Abi leaves with Tanya after learning of Max 's financial problems . In September 2009 , Abi and Jordan Johnson (Michael @-@ Joel David Stuart) find Jordan 's mother Trina Johnson 's (Sharon Duncan Brewster) body in the summerhouse at the allotments having been accidentally killed by Jordan 's father , Lucas Johnson (Don Gilet) .

Abi starts dating Jordan , but months later he is attacked by Ben with a spanner , leaving him in a coma . They split up , but remain friends . Abi starts to take an interest in Max 's lodger Darren Miller (Charlie G. Hawkins) , who is left uncomfortable when she tries to kiss him , telling her she is too young and is heartbroken when Darren proposes to Jodie Gold (Kylie Babbington) . Abi forms a close friendship with her mother 's fiancé Greg Jessop (Stefan Booth) . She later develops a crush on Jay Brown (Jamie Borthwick) , and the two begin dating . Believing Jay is only interested in Abi for sex , Max tries to split them up , but fails to do so . Jay and Abi plan to have sex several times , but on each occasion , they are unable to go through with it . At one time , Jay and Abi cuddle up as they are watching television , but Max believes they are about to have sex , so he throws Jay out and rips Abi 's bridesmaid dress to Greg and Tanya 's wedding . They go to buy a new one , but they have a car crash on Greg and Tanya 's wedding day . They suffer minor injuries and both recover .

Despite Abi 's insecurities over Jay 's friendship with Lola Pearce (Danielle Harold) , she and Jay remain together , and eventually Max comes to accept them as a couple . Max and Tanya continue to see each other , but when Tanya gets cancer , she keeps this to herself . Eventually , Greg and Max 's fiancé Vanessa Gold (Zöe Lucker) leave Walford when the truth comes out about the affair . Abi , Ben and Lola cause trouble and Abi is arrested for stealing trainers . When Abi is mugged , Lola teaches her how to self defend . Tanya finds a pregnancy test in the bin and believes it is Abi 's , before finding out about her trouble causing and calls Abi a slapper , before Lauren (now played by Jacqueline Jossa) reveals to the family that Tanya has cancer . Abi is hurt by this , but is pleased when Max and Tanya reconcile . Jay proposes to Abi and she accepts , but she is faced with a

dilemma when she is offered the chance to go to Costa Rica to help with sea turtle conservation . Jay gives Abi an ultimatum , threatening to break up with her if she goes to Costa Rica but she goes regardless . When she returns several weeks later , she finds out that Jay has been involved in the murder of Heather Trott (Cheryl Fergison) . Abi is upset and slams the door in his face when he tries to see her . Abi goes to visit him but when Tanya discovers they have been seeing each other , she bans Abi from speaking to him . However , they eventually reunite . Abi , along with the rest of her family , are devastated to discover that when Max was away in Manchester , he married Kirsty Branning (Kierston Wareing) . Abi meets her cousin Dexter Hartman (Khali Best) , not knowing they are related , and this causes Jay to be jealous until the truth of their relationship is revealed . Tanya ejects Max from the family home after discovering he loves Kirsty . Abi loses her virginity to Jay much to her parents ' disappointment . Abi tries to support Lauren with her drinking problem , however , this ends badly when Lauren destroys Abi 's revision notes . Abi is distraught when Tanya leaves Walford with Lauren and Oscar as Lauren goes into a rehabilitation clinic in Exeter , so Max decides to move back in with her after Kirsty confesses that she has lied about being pregnant . Abi is defensive of her father and she argues with Kirsty about it , blaming her for her family 's breakdown .

While on holiday with Jay and their friends , Abi thinks she could be pregnant . Jay hopes to be a father , while Abi would prefer to have an abortion . She is not pregnant , but ends their relationship , believing that they want different things . However , they soon reconcile . Max is framed for causing a car crash that leaves Phil hospitalised . Abi and Lauren , who returns from rehabilitation , struggle to pay Max 's legal costs , as well as their bills . Abi receives her exam results and discovers she has not gained the grades to go to university to become a vet , but Lauren , believing that Abi has passed the exams , throws a party , during which Abi blurts out that she blames Lauren for her poor results because she has an alcohol problem . Abi decides to continue studying , but when Max goes to prison for a while she has to take a job , and struggles to find time for her studies . However , Max is proven innocent , and returns home to support his family . In an argument between Jay and Dexter , Abi discovers that on their holiday Jay kissed a barmaid while they were arguing over the suspected pregnancy . She also finds out that Lola knew and furiously confronts her best friend . However , after a heart @-@ to @-@ heart with Jay , they decide to work through their issues and she fixes things with Dexter and Lola as well . She also takes in a stray dog , Tramp .

When Lauren 's friend Lucy Beale (Hetti Bywater) is murdered (see Who Killed Lucy Beale ?) , Max supports her father Ian Beale (Adam Woodyatt) through his grief . Seeing this , Abi calls him hypocritical , before revealing that she saw him kissing Lucy days before she was killed and they were having an affair . Max urges Abi to keep it a secret , but Phil discovers the affair from Jay and tells Ian . Abi proceeds to move into Cora 's new flat with Lauren . She eventually forgives Max and returns home . Her final A Level results come through , and she tells everyone that she has got what she needed to get into the University of Liverpool . However , she later confides in Jay that she has been lying , as not to disappoint her family . He encourages her to go through clearing , and she gets a position doing a similar course at the University of Bolton . Jay decides to go with Abi , which Max at first is opposed to , but he comes around eventually . Ben returns from prison and reunites Jay and Phil , and Jay agrees to attend Phil 's wedding to Sharon Rickman (Letitia Dean) , holding off on going to Bolton . At the wedding , Phil 's aunt , Sal Martin (Anna Karen) , comments that she believed Lola to be Jay 's girlfriend . Ben then reveals he thinks Jay is in love with Lola , and he confesses this to Abi when she confronts him . He then ends things to stay in Walford . Devastated , she wants to leave for Bolton immediately , but when Max refuses to take her she drives the car herself , accidentally running over Tramp , killing him .

Abi begins a relationship with Ben (now played by Harry Reid) , which is discovered by Emma Summerhayes (Anna Acton) who informs Max of the relationship . Max demands that Abi does not see Ben anymore , which Abi refuses to do . Abi later discovers that Max used Ben to sign over part of Phil 's businesses to him . In February 2015 , Abi is accused by Max of killing Lucy . Abi did not kill Lucy , but it is revealed that on the night Lucy died , Abi had a confrontation with Lucy about her affair with Max , which resulted in Abi slapping Lucy . After Max tells her that Tanya would like her to move to Devon with her , Abi refuses and instead moves in with Ben and his family . After she

moves in , Ben reveals to her that he might still be gay and is worried he will never get over his homosexuality but Abi assures him that they will make things work . She continuously mocks Jay and accuses him of being jealous of her relationship with Ben . Jay tries to make Abi see that Ben is not interested in her , but she pretends not to care about what Jay says . Abi discovers a letter from Sharon 's birth mother and Sharon says that she intends on meeting her birth father after discovering that her mother has died . When Paul Coker (Jonny Labey) arrives in Walford , Abi suspects Ben of cheating on her with Paul . She and Ben have sex , so Ben can convince her he is not gay . Following Ben 's arrest for Lucy 's murder , Abi tells Phil that Max assaulted Lucy to get Ben off . Despite being innocent , Max turns himself in and is formally charged while Ben is released . Stacey visits Max , who tells her that he thinks Abi killed Lucy . Stacey confronts Abi , who attacks Stacey , blaming her for her parents ' split and Bradley 's death , and later vents to Carol that she does not think Max cares about her . Carol visits Max in prison , where he informs her that the reason he thinks Abi killed Lucy is because she attacked and beat her on the night of the murder . After confronting Abi on this , Carol agrees that she has been out of control lately and advises her to call Tanya for moral support . During the phone call , Abi finds out that not only is Oscar ill , but Cora had apparently not stayed with Tanya at her house as she had earlier said . Abi , Carol and Jane Beale (Laurie Brett) find Cora living rough and bring her home . She reveals she saw Max and Abi cleaning the car lot after Lucy was killed , forcing Abi to admit that Max and Lucy had argued there and she was helping Max clean Lucy 's blood . Abi then gives a statement to the police . Max is later found guilty of the murder .

Ben and Abi continue their relationship , but Ben is still secretly seeing Paul . Babe Smith (Annette Badland) offers Abi work in the pub kitchen , and Abi tells Babe that she is able to turn a blind eye to Ben 's homosexuality as long as he loves her . However , when Abi finds a present that Ben has got for Paul , she realises he has feelings for Paul and confides in Babe , who helps her to publicly announce that she is pregnant . Ben asks Abi to have a termination but then changes his mind , saying he wants the baby . Abi then goes to Babe , panicking because she has lied and is not really pregnant . When Ben accompanies her to a doctor 's appointment , she gets him out of the room and confesses her lie to the doctor , who encourages her to be honest , but she then tells Ben the baby is due in October . Abi plans to get pregnant by Ben , but when he admits he may have caught an STI from a stranger , she is unable to have sex with him , so Babe tells her to get pregnant by another man . Babe forces her into getting drunk , and after a drunk Lee Carter (Danny @-@ Boy Hatchard) compliments her , they have unprotected sex . However , Abi does not get pregnant . She decides to tell Ben the truth , but as she is about to do so , he tells her he has caught chlamydia . Abi later tests positive for chlamydia and realises that Lee may have caught it too . Abi panics to Babe that Ben will discover she is not pregnant , so during an argument between Ben and Phil , Babe pushes Abi into Ben as he is pushed by Phil , knocking her to the ground . Babe takes Abi away from the square , and on their return , Abi tells Ben she has had a miscarriage . When she later sees Ben being comforted by Paul , she feels uneasy .

Abi and Babe discover that Ben 's half sister Louise Mitchell (Tilly Keeper) has been using Phil 's credit card , so they force her to return everything she has bought . Babe asks Abi for a favour , but Abi realises that Babe has already assumed that she would say yes , so calls Babe a user . As revenge , Babe sends Ben a letter , telling him of the fake pregnancy . Louise finds the letter and blackmails Abi , telling her to move away with Ben . Abi tries to persuade Ben into moving but he refuses , saying he needs to be there for alcoholic Phil , and Abi tells Louise that Ben will always believe his girlfriend over his sister . Abi tells Babe that she is worried that Ben will find out , so Babe suggests that Abi tells Ben the truth . However , Abi allows Louise to continue using Phil 's credit card . Later , Abi catches Ben and Louise arguing and assumes it is over the letter , and she inadvertently reveals she was never pregnant , but Ben was referring to Phil 's credit card . In The Vic , Ben gets drunk and kisses Abi in the toilets and starts to undress her , but then drags her into the pub in her underwear and reveals via the karaoke microphone that she made up her pregnancy . Abi is humiliated and is taken to Dot Branning 's (June Brown) house by her uncle Jack Branning (Scott Maslen) , however , an enraged Phil takes her away in his car , but is stopped by Jay , who insists that enough people have been hurt .

= = Character creation and development = =

= = = Introduction and characterisation = = =

Abi was introduced into the series in 2006 , by executive producer Kate Harwood . The character and her casting was announced on 25 May 2006 . She and her immediate family , father Max (Wood) , mother Tanya (Joyner) and older sister Lauren (Duggan , recast to Jossa in 2010) , are an extension of the Branning family , who have appeared in EastEnders since 1993 . Fitzgerald , in her first major television role , began filming for the soap in May 2006 and made her first on @-@ screen appearance in July . Fitzgerald 's mother commented on her daughter 's casting : " Personally , I feel I want to show how proud we are of her and to thank everyone who has prayed for her and helped her in any way . At first , it is just the look they go for . Then it is more intensive and she had to read from a script . By the second audition , she was still up against 60 or 70 people . You start thinking about it when she gets to the third audition , but when the agent rang up and said she had got the part it was an overwhelming feeling . You don 't know what it means until that point " . Fitzgerald was offered the part about three months after her final audition . As Fitzgerald was only 10 years old when she got the part , she was required to balance her filming requirements with schooling in Northampton , and learning lines . In 2012 , she told Inside Soap that she thought she had messed up her audition , and did not realise how big the show was until she was older . In 2014 , she told BBC Radio 1 that when she met Wood and Joyner , her on @-@ screen parents , she realised it did not matter that she had messed up her lines in her last audition , because she looked like them both . Fitzgerald was required to cry on her first day of filming , and admitted in 2014 that this was embarrassing , and she was unable to produce tears , but was " just making noises " . Fitzgerald was chaperoned by her mother until she was 16 .

Abi has been described by the official EastEnders website as the family 's " golden girl " compared to Lauren , hinting that she knows how to get her own way . She has been described as " bubbly " and " self @-@ assured " with a nose for mischief . She has also been described as having the biggest heart in Walford , bringing out the best in the people around her . Jane Simon of the Daily Mirror said that Abi is a " real soft touch " . Jon Wise from The People said that after Abi received a makeover in 2010 , she " actually turned out to be quite pretty " . In 2012 , Fitzgerald told Inside Soap 's Laura @-@ Jane Tyler that Abi has grown up in her first six years on screen , and is now sensible , " like a mother hen " and has had to mature quickly because of the dramatic situations she has been involved in . Tyler added that Abi is the most level @-@ headed and sensible member of the Branning family and " puts her [family] to shame with her mature approach to [their problems] " .

= = = Early development = = =

Abi 's earlier storylines consist of her parents fighting for custody of her and her siblings , being injured in a collision with Deano Wicks ' (Di Angelo) car and helping her friend Ben (Jones) with his abuse from stepmother Stella Crawford (Thompson) In February 2011 , Abi was involved in a car accident with Max and would suffer severe injuries after their car collides with a lorry on the way to Tanya 's wedding to her new partner Greg (Booth) . The crash scenes were filmed on 6 March 2011 and aired on 14 April 2011 . After these minor storylines , Joyner said that Fitzgerald should be involved in more complex storylines in 2012 . She said , " I think it 's going to be an exciting year for Lorna . She 's been a natural on the show ever since she was younger , and I think she 's one of our best actresses . What 's lovely about this year is that she 'll be doing her GCSEs , and then once that 's out of the way , she can get something that 's a bit heavier and a bit bigger . She 'll be old enough to work longer hours , so I think they 'd be mad if they didn 't give her something to sink her teeth into at some point this year " .

In November 2010 , after sister Lauren was recast to Jossa , Jossa stated that she enjoys working

with Fitzgerald , adding the two have a lot in common . Jossa , in 2012 , wanted Lauren and Abi to bond more . She commented : " I think realistically they would when they 're going through a family problem like this . It would bring the family a little bit closer . I think they are quite close already and they have a lot of family banter ! They may not like each other as people , but they love each other as family " . In December 2012 , Fitzgerald conducted her first magazine interview and spoke of a storyline where Abi comforts Lauren over a relationship break up , saying " It 's nice to see the little [sister] taking care of the bigger one . "

= = = Jay Brown and Ben Mitchell = = =

In March 2011 , Abi starts a relationship with Jay (Borthwick) . Borthwick admitted that he is enjoying filming Jay and Abi 's relationship . Speaking of Jay and Abi 's relationship , Borthwick told Inside Soap , " I think Abi and Jay are a good couple , " he said . " Jay 's a right one - he 's already had a crack at Abi 's sister Lauren and now he 's going for the younger one . He 's got an eye for the Branning women " . Fitzgerald said that Jay and Abi are " cute together " but she cringes at Abi because she is " lovey @-@ dovey " . The couple split in 2014 and Abi begins a relationship with Ben , knowing that he is gay but dismissing this and branding it a " phase " . Speaking of his role , newcomer Harry Reid stated that Ben would " manipulate " Abi in his attempts to prove that he is straight .

= = Reception = =

Fitzgerald was nominated for the " Best Young Actor " at the 2010 Inside Soap Awards for her portrayal of Abi though lost out to Coronation Street 's , Alex Bain , who plays Simon Barlow . Fitzgerald won the award for Best Dramatic Performance from a Young Actor or Actress at the 2012 British Soap Awards an award which Tony Stewart from the Daily Mirror said was " well deserved " . Fitzgerald said she did not expect to win the award . In January 2012 , Kate White of Inside Soap praised both Fitzgerald and her character , saying " In Fitzgerald , EastEnders has the brightest young star in soap . The rest of her family are getting all the juicy stuff right now , but Abi 's destined for great dramatic things . Mark our words " .

Stewart said , due to Max 's past events with his family , what Abi might say when Max objects to her relationship with Jay , " It won 't be her setting a gerbil on him " , calling her a " goody @-@ two @-@ shoes " . A writer from the Western Mail said that the Branning / Mitchell Feud makes Abi and Jay feel like " Walford 's answer to Romeo and Juliet " . Two writers from the Daily Mirror mocked the storyline where Abi turns down the trip to Costa Rica . One said , " An extreme case of soap agoraphobia as brilliant Abi sensibly turns down the chance to spend eight weeks in the tropical paradise of Costa Rica . But in the tiny micro @-@ world of EastEnders , even the three @-@ mile odyssey from Walford to the West End is considered an epic journey . So Central America is simply out of the question " with another saying , " Abi was a little girl arranging tearful funerals for her pets . But now she 's a young teenager , secretly engaged to boyfriend Jay and planning to run away together . He then gives Abi an ultimatum : him or her trip to Costa Rica . Best pass her the suncream , then " . However , Abi , along with the younger members of the cast were thought to be the blame of declining ratings for the show ; " In the last two months , viewers have seen lots of Lauren , Lucy Beale (Hetti Bywater) , Whitney Dean (Shona McGarty) , Fatboy (Ricky Norwood) , Ben Jay , Abi and Anthony Moon (Matt Lapinskas) - but not nearly so much of the classic characters " . Inside Soap noted that Abi and Jay 's relationship was popular with viewers .

The 2016 storyline in which Abi lies that she has suffered a miscarriage to cover up a pregnancy lie was criticised by Zoe Clark @-@ Coates , co @-@ founder and CEO of The Mariposa Trust , who said , " To regularly see TV shows using fake miscarriages as light entertainment could make people question genuine losses . "