**Megan’s family**

Megan (15) lived in a happy, stable, home. Despite this, in a few short months she fell prey to sexual exploiters. In October 2007, Megan’s parents observed changes in Megan after she associated with a girl (16) known to have been groomed by abusers.

By December Megan was:

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| * truanting
 | * changing her appearance
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| * being aggressive
 | * disrupting classes at school
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| * stealing things from the family home
 | * receiving calls and threats from unknown men
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| * losing her possessions
 | * going missing, returning home late drunk and/or drugged
 |
| * going off with men in cars
 | * being secretive
 |

She was bruised and bitten on her body and would lie about her whereabouts, switching the phone off when her parents rang. Police even questioned her about an incident involving a missing child. Megan said that she had been with a group of men in their cars drinking alcohol and that the men had dropped her off and driven off with the missing girl.

Megan’s parents also reported Megan missing over 20 times, telling police about grooming, drugs, sexual activity with older men, places, girls involved, car registration and mobile phone numbers. Social workers also visited the family home.

Megan continued to get drinks, drugs and mobile top-ups from her abusers. She was excluded from school for taking drugs. Her parents struggled to interest her in education and taking exams. During short spells when she did not associate with the men, she showed interest in going to college.

The abusers took control of her life again and her family were threatened by them. Megan’s family spent sleepless nights looking for her, trying to understand what was happening struggling to keep up with work and keeping a healthy and secure home life for the other children. Megan would come home briefly. She did not have a meal at home in weeks. Her sister Millie (20) found it extremely difficult to cope. Her brother Matt (14) could not sleep, staying up all night waiting for her, his school work was affected and he suffered taunting at school.

Her family lives in fear of hearing that Megan has been raped or found dead. They feel early intervention when Megan began to associate with the perpetrators could have been effective.