

MEGAN'S PATHWAYS

Megan, aged 14

Megan lives with her mum and stepdad who is violent towards her and her mum. For a long time she doesn't tell anyone but eventually she cannot cope with it anymore. She phones the police after a particularly violent episode and the stepdad is removed from the home. *'I was like, I have got to speak to somebody because it was just killing me'*. She gets support from a youth worker and is able to talk about sexual abuse perpetrated by the stepdad.

Task 1: At the first point, Megan realises that the violence towards her is wrong but it takes several years before she tells anyone about it. It is not until a crisis that she finally calls the police. The important point to get across is that we need to think about Mary's thoughts and feelings in relation to what is happening and she clearly knows that the violence is wrong. However, she may also know that the sexual abuse is wrong but does not tell about it until the police and youth worker get involved. It is likely that Megan would not have told about the sexual abuse if the violence had not escalated.

Megan, aged 16

Megan meets a boyfriend and starts using drugs and alcohol. She moves out of the family home and the relationship with her mum deteriorates. The boyfriend is violent towards her and she knows that she wants to leave him: *'...it took me a while to realise that I don't want to be here'*. Her mum recognises that Megan is being abused and seeks help from children's services on her behalf.

Megan is reluctant to engage with her social worker and youth worker but over time she recognises that her situation was abusive: *'I shouldn't have left my family, because he was no better than what I went through in my younger life'*.

Task 2: Megan does not, initially, realise that the relationship with her boyfriend is abusive. She appears reluctant to recognise that she is in need of help and her focus remains firmly on her drug and alcohol use. She gets help from children's services and because of her earlier positive experience of help, she is able to recognise the abuse and engage with the support from social worker and youth worker.

General points about the case study: Due to Megan's earlier positive helping experiences, she engages with social workers once her mother arranges for her support. It is important for children to have good experiences of support as that enables them to seek future support.

Plotting Megan's journey at different points in time allows us to think about what sense she is making of what is happening throughout her adolescence. The initial issues for school staff to consider may be how and whether to make a referral when they encounter a safeguarding concern i.e. what to do when a child discloses. However, thinking about the child over time allows school staff to explore their ongoing role in working with extremely vulnerable young people.