

# Iona's Story



**Iona's story is an example of how children can be exploited by those who are already known to them and can be trafficked to be exploited by others. It highlights the significant impact that exploitation can have on both the physical and emotional wellbeing of victims.**

Iona's story is about the sexual exploitation of children by their family members. It also shows that Iona was not recognised as a victim until she disclosed the abuse, despite her displaying many of the vulnerability factors associated with CSE.

Iona is 14 and lives with her parents. They are very strict about who she can see outwith school but Iona is close to her older cousins Jake and Cammy, who seem to be very protective of her. As her cousins are family, her parents allow them to take Iona out or they come round to the family home with her aunt and uncle. Iona also has two good friends, Mara and Shannon.

She can only be with them at school as her parents do not allow her to socialise with them and she is not allowed to have a mobile phone or access to social media. Iona is a good student and is rarely absent but her teachers are becoming concerned about her. She has come to school with bruises and, when questioned, was unable to give plausible explanations for them.

Iona then presents at A&E with a fractured wrist. The hospital contacts the police as Iona cannot give a credible explanation for the spiral fracture, that they consider is the result of force. The police interview Iona who is adamant the injury was caused by an accident whilst she was with her cousins; this is supported by Iona's parents account.

Despite these assurances, the police submit a child concern report to the Children's Reporter. As Iona and her family have never been known to services and there are no other concerns, the Reporter decides that statutory measures are not required.

Not long after Iona's 15th birthday, her school notices a change in her appearance; she often comes to school not in her uniform and/or with unwashed clothes or hair. Her guidance teacher tries to speak to Iona but she refuses to talk.

A few months later Mara and Shannon go to the guidance teacher to tell her that they have heard Iona in the toilet being sick and crying. The guidance teacher broaches this with Iona, who says she's okay and refuses to say more, only that she's meeting her cousins. Iona does not attend school for the remainder of the week; her parents say that she is on a family holiday.

On returning to school, Iona appears very tired and avoids speaking to her friends. Her school work starts to deteriorate. The school approaches her parents who advise that Iona has been feeling under a lot of stress recently, which is why they allowed her to go on the short break with her cousins.

A month later Iona goes on an overnight school trip and appears to be her old self, laughing and joking with her friends. But that night she takes an overdose of paracetamol and ibuprofen.

She is found unresponsive by her roommates Mara and Shannon who immediately get a teacher who phones an ambulance.

Upon admission to hospital, it's found that she is pregnant. Iona is very upset and confides to a nurse that she knew she was pregnant and she doesn't know who the father is.

When the nurse questions her further, Iona explains that her cousins have been taking her to their friends' houses and she has been made to have sex with their friends. She says her parents do not know.

She also says that one of her female cousins has been made to do the same along with female relatives of the other men, whom her cousins have sex with. The police are contacted and an investigation begins.

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