
Making Safeguarding Personal Toolkit

Case Example 11:

Domestic abuse, trafficking
and slavery



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This tool is adapted from Botting A, Elliott T and Olivier S (2017) “Palermo to Croydon: Modern slavery and Human trafficking - Seeking best practice on a new frontier of safeguarding” in Cooper and White (Eds) *Safeguarding Adults under the Care Act 2014: Understanding Good Practice*. London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.



Case Example

A young woman, a migrant with a right to work in the UK, presents at the local domestic abuse drop-in centre for survivors. She has care and support needs due to a physical disability, and has mental capacity to understand the risks which are salient in her situation. She tells of leaving her homeland with her male friend, and that they ended up living together as partners. She describes how their relationship has been characterised by abuse including physical violence. When asked for her desired outcomes, she chooses to be assisted to return to her home country and for no further action to be taken.

In this situation a local authority’s Modern Day Slavery response was accompanied by a strategy meeting under Section 42 (*Care Act, 2014*). The woman was interviewed at the domestic abuse centre by a specialist abuse advocate as well as a safeguarding social worker. It was only when the domestic abuse came to light that the narrative of potential trafficking was exposed. Had the narrative not been explored with a full chronology it may have been treated as a domestic abuse case alone. This shows the value of establishing the length and breadth of the issue and matters which may predispose the risk, not simply addressing the precipitating factors and existing risk. Rather, practitioners are encouraged to look at the motivating factors of the person thought to be causing the harm and examine the full context when formulating a plan to support the person who has been harmed.

It seems the young woman saw her passage into the UK as an act of kindness by a friend. During the joint assessment elements emerged that exposed the ‘kindness’ as a conduit for her to be both domestically abused and sexually exploited. What appears to the woman to be a friendship which then becomes an abusive sexual relationship may well, with a more critical view, be the outcome of the perpetrator’s plan to initially befriend her, pay for the flight and then abuse her. However she may identify as a victim of domestic abuse, but not of trafficking. As an adult with capacity her wishes and desired outcomes need to be respected.



Reflective exercise

In this situation would you be required to take any action in relation to Duty to Notify procedures (Home Office, 2016)? www.gov.uk/government/publications/duty-to-notify-the-home-office-of-potential-victims-of-modern-slavery

“When supporting a person who may be a victim of MDS it is vital to focus on the exploitation, and the support which can be provided, rather than issues relating to their immigration status or any crime which they may appear to have committed whilst in slavery. The Modern Slavery Act (2015) sets out a defence for crimes which may have been committed by victims of MDS whilst under duress from their trafficker.” (Botting, Elliott and Olivier, 2017:230).

In situations such as this, practitioners could consider a local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) working in parallel with Modern Slavery procedures.