

SAFEGUARDING MIGRANT SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

7-MINUTE BRIEFING ON THE MULTI-AGENCY GUIDANCE

1 - BACKGROUND

Migrant survivors have rights and entitlements, despite what their perpetrators may tell them. There are specialist services locally and nationally who can help; and there are things statutory services can and should do to respond in the safest way to survivors who are subject to immigration control who may, or may not, have recourse to public funds.

ANY SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS SHOULD BE REPORTED DIRECTLY TO THE APPROPRIATE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

2 - WHY IT MATTERS

Migrant survivors of violence and abuse can be extremely vulnerable to continued abuse. The UK's Immigration policy (including NRPF - no recourse to public funds) means many survivors have no choice but to stay in the abusive relationship.

Helping them access specialist support as early as possible is key. There can be significant negative impacts on survivors if their information is inappropriately shared with the Home Office / Immigration Enforcement. This undermines their trust in statutory services and pushes them further away from support due to fears of deportation if they come forward and report their abuse. Migrant survivors must therefore be treated as victims first and foremost. Migrant survivors have rights and entitlements. Everyone should have their human rights upheld and protected, regardless of their immigration status.

3 - INFORMATION

Immigration abuse is a form of perpetration that uses the 'insecure', 'uncertain' or 'unknown' immigration status of an individual (or their dependents) to threaten, coerce, exploit and/or subjugate them (or their dependents) as part of a pattern of control and/or abuse and violence.

4 - BARRIERS

Migrant survivors face many **barriers** to reporting and seeking help. This makes it harder to leave an abusive relationship. A key signifier of immigration abuse is the inability of survivors to explain their immigration status or be able to access their documentation.

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5 - WHAT TO DO

Helping a survivor access third party independent advice from either an immigration legal advisor and/or from a 'by and for' specialist VAWG service (such as the [Angelou Centre](#)) as early as possible is seen as safe good practice. They can:

- Help survivors work out what their immigration status is, and help them regulate it where eligible.
- Tell them what their rights and entitlements are to access housing or other support and/or remain in the UK; and
- Effectively challenge if they are not provided with the support to which they have a legal duty to access.

6 - WHAT ELSE TO DO...

All responses must be done safely, and in partnership with local and/or national organisations who specialise in supporting migrant survivors, interpreting services, and other relevant support organisations. This ensures victims have access to a safe space to disclose any abuse and seek specialist support.

7 - KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Any safeguarding issue should be reported into the appropriate local authority.
- Survivors with insecure status should be treated as victims first and foremost.
- Addressing a victim's vulnerability is the priority.
- Any immigration issue should be treated as a secondary matter.
- Key signifiers of immigration abuse are the inability of victims and survivors to explain their immigration status or be able to access their documentation.
- The safest course of action is to support victims to access independent immigration advice as soon as possible and to help them engage with specialist 'by and for' organisations.
- Read the Northumbria multi-agency guidance and toolkit around responding to migrant survivors of violence and abuse [here](#)