

Mary's story

This story involves a large national charity concerned with the interests of children and young people. In our city, they are commissioned by the Local Authority to manage the Sure-Start Centres where the parents of babies and toddlers can find support, advice and a range of services. At the time we are considering, one of these centres was being managed, on a temporary basis, by Mrs. Cannybody who is not a qualified social worker but who has done both voluntary and contract work for the charity for many years and has great experience.

The same charity also delivers another service in the city. This provides counselling, therapy and support to children and young people who have suffered sexual abuse or exploitation. Clearly, this is a specialised service which is not widely publicised. Clients are referred by professional practitioners.

Finally, our charity also works with the police, probation service, courts and social services of a town at the other end of the region in a programme of initiatives to control prostitution, which is seen as a particular local problem.

Mary is 17 years old and is a single mother with a 6 month old baby. She has been attending Sure-Start but recently, Mrs Cannybody has noticed that she has become withdrawn and unhappy. She can not, however, get Mary to discuss her problems and, as a result, is concerned about her well being.

Unbeknown to Mrs Cannybody, or anybody else in Sure-Start, Mary is also attending sessions at the counselling service because, a year ago, she was relocated into our city by the *Prostitution Response Programme* as part of an action to close down a particular prostitution ring. The pimp who ran this ring was sent to prison and, in the initiative to support the then pregnant Mary, she was relocated and a number of services activated to help her rehabilitate herself and build a new life. She made it clear that she wanted to put her previous experiences behind her, and that she was only prepared to discuss them with her individual counsellor at the support service.

Meanwhile, Derek, her erstwhile pimp, has been released on parole, after serving 12 months, on condition that he attends one-on-one and group counselling sessions for ex-abusers. These sessions are also run by our national charity. While in prison, Derek converted to Christianity. He claims to be the father of Mary's child and says he wants to do what is right by her and support them both. The relationship between Derek and his counsellor in the local

rehabilitation service is not one of supervision and control but is intended to be therapeutic and supportive.

So, within our single, national charity, we have three professionals or workers. Two of these have a relationship with Mary while the third has a relationship with Derek, whose records may have an historical, indirect link to her, for example via the various police records. The question we are faced with concerns how and where Mary's identity and here relationships are represented in the case management, recording and reporting systems of the Charity.