

Sandwell Anti-slavery Partnership

Striving for a Slavery Free Sandwell

June 2023



Deep Dive: Modern Slavery in the Care Sector



Redefining Freedom:
Striving for a World
Without Slavery

Lin's story

- Lin's story offers valuable insights into the realities of modern slavery within the care sector.
- By examining Lin's experience, we can identify important indicators and challenges related to exploitation in the industry.
- Lin's perspective provides a relatable narrative that sheds light on the hidden aspects of modern slavery.
- Through her story, we will explore the indicators of exploitation and the crucial role of due diligence.
- Let's delve into Lin's journey and uncover the signs and challenges associated with modern slavery in the care sector.



Lin's Journey Begins

- Lin, discovers a promising job opportunity as a care worker in the UK.
- Excited about the prospect of pursuing her passion and embarking on a new adventure, Lin eagerly explores the opportunity.

Lin's Initial Encounter:

- Lin is approached by an external party offering financial support to cover the costs of applying for the job and relocating to the UK.
- Overwhelmed by the generosity and the promise of a better life, Lin gladly accepts the financial assistance, believing it to be a helping hand towards her dreams.
- She has no caring experience and undertakes a brief online caring course through 'ALISON' to get the desired qualifications.

Thrilled to Come to the UK:

- As Lin prepares for her journey to the UK, she envisions a fulfilling career, the chance to contribute to society, and the hope of a brighter future.
- She envisions the opportunities that lie ahead and the chance to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those she will care for.
- Lin has no idea that she is about to become a victim of modern slavery.



Unaware of the Hidden Trap:

- As Lin arrives in the UK, she slowly discovers a shocking truth. The money she received to apply for the job was not a generous gift but rather a deceptive tactic, plunging her into a cycle of debt bondage.
- Lin realises that she is now trapped, obligated to repay the debt she unknowingly incurred, creating a vulnerable situation.

Increasing Pressure and Demands:

- Over time, the pressure from the external organised crime gang behind the debt increases. Lin finds herself caught in a web of coercion and manipulation, forced to work longer hours and exert herself beyond her limits to meet the mounting demands.
- The debt bondage restricts Lin's freedom and leaves her feeling helpless, as the gang capitalizes on her vulnerability and exploits her situation.

Impact on Financial Stability and Living Conditions:

- The burden of the debt leaves Lin with limited financial resources. She struggles to make ends meet, barely having enough money for basic necessities such as food and personal expenses.
- Additionally, Lin is forced to live in shared accommodation, often in overcrowded and substandard conditions, further compromising her well-being and quality of life.



Who are the exploiters?



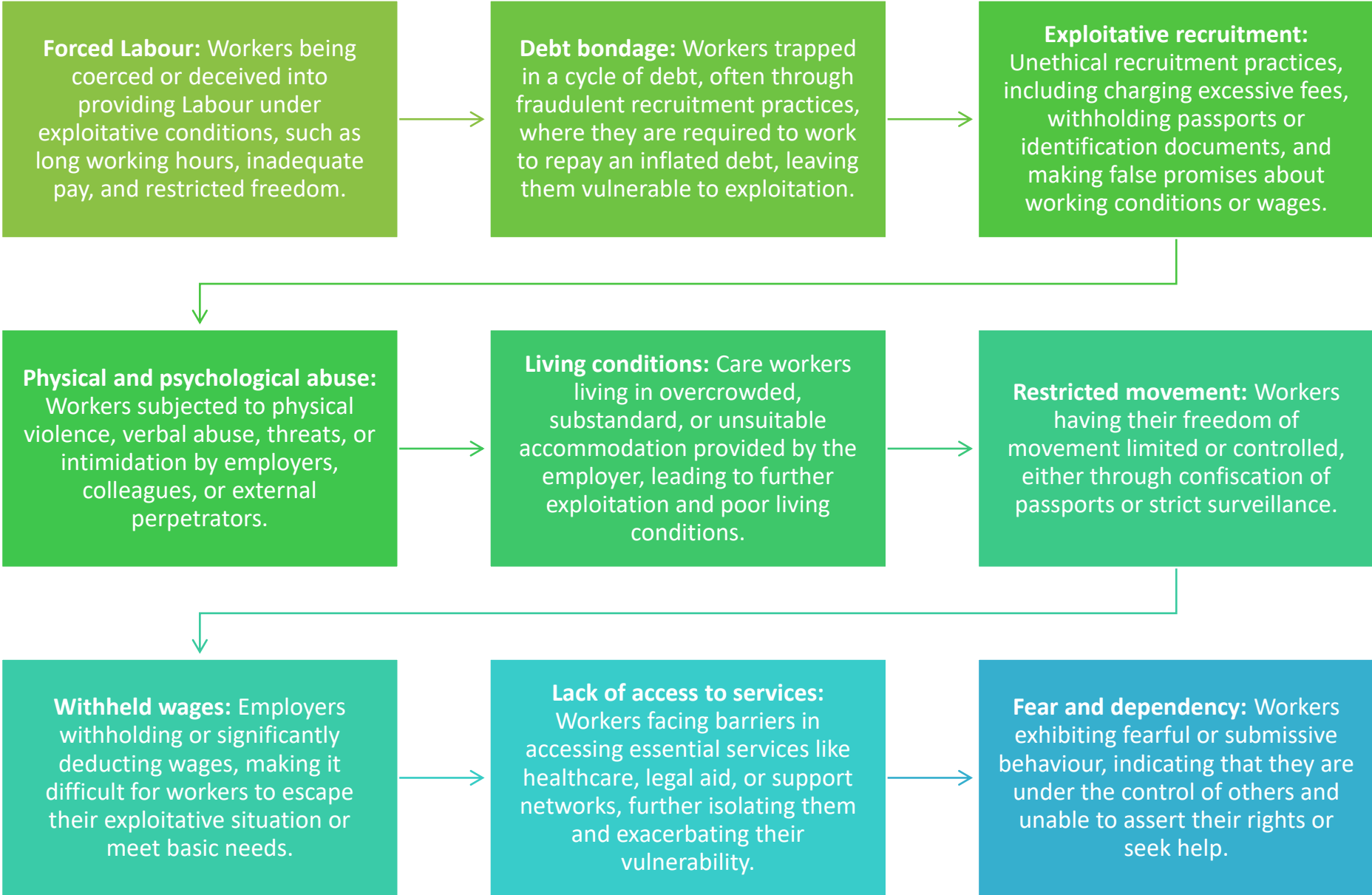
Agencies: Some care agencies themselves may be involved in exploiting workers. This could result from inadequate oversight, poor Labour practices, or a deliberate intention to exploit vulnerable workers for financial gain. Caution should be exercised when engaging with such agencies.

Individual Workers within Agencies: In certain cases, individual workers within care agencies may exploit their colleagues or subordinates. These individuals, often in positions of power or influence, take advantage of their positions to exploit vulnerable workers for personal gain.

Recruitment Agencies: External recruitment agencies, both within the source country and the UK, may contribute to modern slavery in the care industry. These agencies may engage in deceptive recruitment methods, charge excessive fees, or create situations of debt bondage and exploitation.

External Individuals or Gangs: Modern slavery in the care sector can involve external individuals or criminal gangs who operate independently or in coordination with agencies or recruitment networks. These perpetrators use physical or psychological coercion, wage withholding, or exploitative working conditions to subjugate vulnerable workers.

Modern Slavery in the Care Sector: How It Presents Itself



Signs to Look Out for When Visiting Accommodation



Occupants and Living Arrangements: Take note of who is present in the accommodation and their relationship to each other. Pay attention to signs of overcrowding, multiple individuals sharing small spaces.



Agreement or Contract: Inquire about the existence of a written agreement or contract outlining the terms and conditions of the accommodation. The absence of a contract or an agreement that restricts residents' rights may raise concerns of exploitation. Pay attention to any indications that the landlord may be complicit in or benefiting from the exploitation. Determine if the employer is providing the accommodation.



Health and Safety Standards: Assess the general state of health and safety within the accommodation. Look for signs of neglect, hazardous conditions, inadequate sanitation, or lack of basic amenities that could jeopardize the well-being of the residents.



Payment and Financial Arrangements: Inquire about the cost of accommodation and compare it with market rates. Excessive charges or unreasonably high rents could indicate exploitation. Verify if the residents have control over their own finances or if their wages are being controlled by someone else.

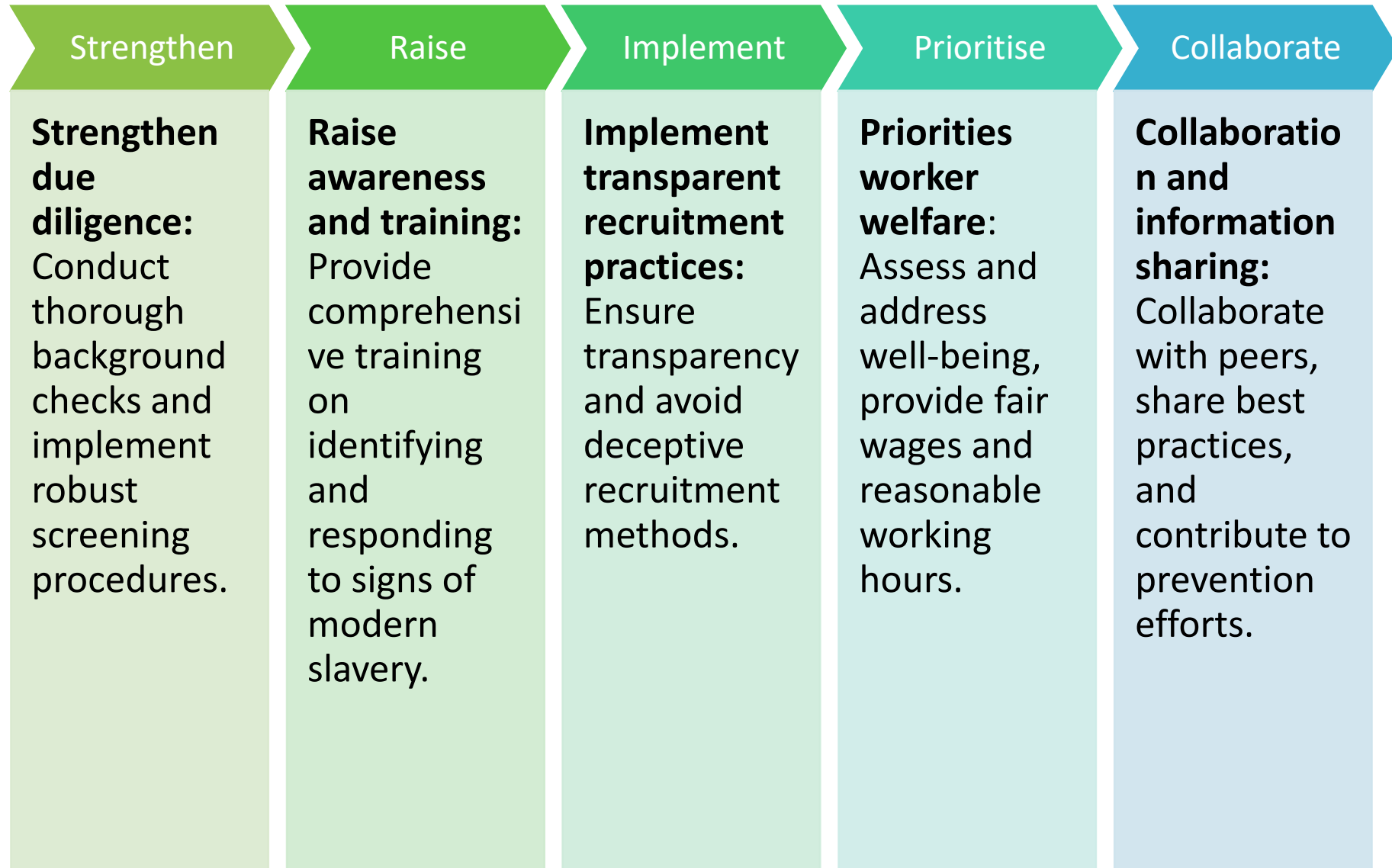


Care Agency Uniform: If the accommodation is associated with a care agency, observe the condition of the uniforms worn by the residents. Uniforms in a state of disrepair or signs of mismatched or inappropriate attire could indicate poor working conditions or forced labour.



Identification of Individuals: Request identification from all individuals present in the accommodation. Check if identification documents are being withheld or controlled by someone else. Be attentive to any signs of fear, anxiety, or coercion when residents provide their identification.

Improving Practices in Care Agencies



Enhancing Practices among Commissioners

Conduct

- **Holistic assessments:** Conduct comprehensive assessments that go beyond paperwork, focusing on worker welfare and well-being.

Foster

- **Collaboration with stakeholders:** Foster partnerships with care agencies, law enforcement, and NGOs to share information and address modern slavery.

Training

- **Training and awareness:** Provide training to commissioners on recognising indicators of modern slavery and ensuring effective response.

Implement

- **Regular monitoring and inspections:** Implement routine inspections to identify potential instances of exploitation and take necessary action.

Engage

- **Engage with workers:** Actively listen to workers' experiences, concerns, and feedback to improve oversight and protection.



The Role of SHOP (Slavery and Human Trafficking Operational Partnership) in Combating Modern Slavery in the Care Sector



SHOP is a dedicated partnership of law enforcement agencies, local authorities, and NGOs working together to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking.

SHOP plays a crucial role in addressing modern slavery within the care sector, focusing on prevention, identification, and support for victims as well as pursuing perpetrators and disrupting locations.

The partnership works closely with care agencies, care homes, and local authorities to raise awareness, provide training, and implement effective safeguarding measures.

SHOP facilitates information sharing and collaboration among its members, enabling a coordinated response to combat modern slavery in the care sector.

Through intelligence gathering and joint operations, SHOP targets organised criminal networks involved in exploiting vulnerable individuals in the care sector.

The partnership also supports victims by providing safe accommodation, access to healthcare, counselling, and legal assistance, helping them on their path to recovery and empowerment.

SHOP actively engages with communities, stakeholders, and the public to raise awareness about modern slavery and encourage reporting of suspicious activities or concerns.

By working together, SHOP and its partners strive to create a society where modern slavery has no place, protecting the rights and dignity of all individuals in the care sector.

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