

Social Work Online Team Training (SWOTT) toolkit

Strengthening social work practice with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

CASE STUDY 1: DARINA

Darina is an older Irish Traveller woman; she and her family come from Ballinasloe, a village in County Galway. Darina lost her husband to cancer fifteen years ago and since this time has lived and travelled in the UK with her two sons, their wives, and five grandchildren. Since the introduction of the Police Crime and Sentencing and Courts Act, the family have been forced to move into a bricks and mortar housing, away from their wider family and community.

The family home is privately rented and has three bedrooms. It appears to be in poor condition with fraying carpets, visible mold on the walls, and poor lighting. It also appears that the property is overcrowded, with Darina sharing a small bedroom with two teenage grandchildren. There is a large statue of the Virgin Mary on the living room wall. Darina recently became known to social services following a referral from a health visitor who has been visiting one of the children.

The health visitor reported that Darina appears to walk aimlessly around the house, praying, pulling at her clothes, the walls, and the furniture. The health visitor also noted a strong smell of urine on Darina's clothes. Her daughter-in-law, Maria, has said that she walks all night, "up down, up down," and that she "can't listen." The front door is locked during the day to stop Darina from leaving and walking onto a busy road in front of the house.

When Maria was asked by the health visitor if Darina has always acted this way, she replied, "No, two years; it's getting worse". The social worker is visiting Darina for the first time and finds Maria very stressed and upset because Darina appears more agitated; she is refusing to get fully dressed, is hitting out at anyone in her way, and is trying to leave the house. Darina is very pale and appears unwell. The social worker calls the GP, who is arranging an urgent hospital admission, and they also discuss whether an urgent authorisation under the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (2007) will be needed to prevent Darina from trying to leave the hospital.

