

2024

**NO RECOURSE TO
PUBLIC FUNDS
(NRPF)
POLICY
BRIEFING**

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1. Introduction

Bawso is the lead organisation in Wales that provides practical and emotional support to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and migrant victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, Modern Slavery and Human trafficking, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and honour-based abuse (HBA). Our vision is of a future when all people in Wales are free from abuse, violence, and exploitation. Bawso supports over 7000 people annually and has supported a quarter of a million people since inception in 1995.

Bawso offers culturally and linguistically diverse services that meet the needs of service users. The capacity building programme in place that includes recovery toolkit builds the confidence of service users to not only protect themselves and their children from future abuse, but to also make informed decisions and choices in the future. The program gives service users a voice to advocate for their own rights.

2.0 Violence against women from a minority ethnic background

Women experience multiple forms of abuse and violence from intimate partners or family members. Violence experienced by victims is always entwined, complex and difficult to tackle (Domestic abuse, female genital mutilation-FGM; forced marriage, honour-based violence and modern slavery). Abuse often manifests as coercive or controlling behaviour which can easily be construed or mistaken for love from women who have normalised abuse by witnessing female family members experience similar forms of abuse, which makes it difficult for victims to recognise it as abuse and seek help.

In England and Wales, for the period ending March 2023, domestic abuse statistics showed that abuse rates among women from minority ethnic backgrounds was higher than those from mainstream white women. The data illustrates that there were 1.7 million women who experienced domestic abuse and violence during the reporting financial year 2022/2023. Abuse experienced by those who identified as belonging to the mixed heritage was 8.7%; Asian or Asian British at 3.9%; Black or Black British at 5.9%. while the rates among British white women was 5%. Within the above data, we take cognisance of the fact that a significant number, approximately 32,000 of the survivors of violence, would be women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) as highlighted in a report by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner; status before safety (2021).

Women from minoritised communities experience violence from multiple perpetrators who include, husbands, partners, and family members. Of the domestic abuse cases that are reported, 54% of those cases are carried out by multiple perpetrators (SafeLives, 2017). The common cause is attributed to patriarchy, cultural and religious beliefs that empower men and make them a dominant gender while women play a submissive role. The power imbalance between the genders enables men to maintain

their power and control in the community (Smith et,al 2015). Other determinants for abuse include refusal to enter a forced marriage.

Victims face numerous barriers to accessing support. For example, language, lack of understanding of the UK system (Banga and Roy, 2020), lack of understanding of violence from a minority ethnic perspective by service providers, lack of information on available support services, insecure immigration status, systemic racism, and intersectional discrimination (Safelives, 2017; Sisters for Change,2017; Dyer, 2015). These barriers make it difficult for victims to navigate a complicated support system.

Victims fear to report abuse due to fear of bounty hunters or families locating their whereabouts which can lead to harsh punishment that includes honour-based abuse or death in some cases. (Enabling Change Rebuilding Lives (EACH), 2012). Victims with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) find it difficult to seek advice and support for fear of being deported by immigration enforcement agencies or the risk of experiencing further abuse by perpetrators. Once victims leave the relationship, the risk is too high, they cannot return to their homes.

Domestic abuse and violence (DAV) have serious and harmful impact on victims. This includes emotional, physical, health and socio-economic harms, and fatality (Addis and Snowden, 2021). Other negative consequences on victims include, financial poverty, stigma, isolation, trauma etc. Victims are more vulnerable and at increased risk of further abuse, perpetrator instigated suicide, homicide and honour-based violence.

3.0 No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

The Senedd (the Welsh Parliament) has powers to legislate on key areas such as Education, environment and health among other devolved functions, but justice policy and immigration remains under the jurisdiction of the UK government (Westminster). No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is a UK Government condition on visa for migrants including those on spousal visas that allow victims to stay in the UK at no cost to the public¹.

NRPF condition renders women victims of violence homeless, destitute and unwilling to disclose abuse for fear of deportation.

“You are under my control and with one phone call, I can cancel your visa, and you will be alone in this country. You will be on the street” (Bawso ex- service user).

¹ No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) applies to: A person who is subject to **immigration control**; and Has **no entitlement** to welfare benefits, public housing or Home Office asylum support; and most often does not have the right to work*

*People granted leave as spouses or civil partners are permitted to take up employment. (section 115 of the immigration Act).

“When I left there was another problem waiting for me, that now my spouse visa got cancelled, there was no place for me to go in England, not a single refuge wanted to accept me” (Bawso ex-service user).

4.0 Policy context

UK and Wales policy

4.1 Welsh Government’s Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy 2022

The Welsh Government has clear strategies in place that illustrate the government’s commitment to tackling violence against women. The strategies make provisions for support to all victims of abuse without discrimination and regardless of their immigration status.

Welsh Government set out an ambitious five-year plan to end violence against women as highlighted in the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) strategy 2018-2022 in Wales under the duty established by the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015. The 2018 strategy was reviewed in 2022 and retained the same commitments to address violence against women and girls through a blueprint approach. The main purpose of the Act is to improve prevention, protection and support to victims of violence. Through the Act, all public bodies are required to implement strategies that prevent VAWDASV.

In her statement during the launch of the second VAWDASV strategy (2022-2026), the minister for Social Justice and chief whip, Jane Hutt re-affirmed the Welsh Government’s commitment to ‘making Wales a safe place to be a woman.’ In the minister’s response to a report on Gender based violence, the needs of migrant women by the Senedd on 7th December 2022, the minister also had this to say:

“The Welsh Government is committed to supporting all victims and survivors of VAWDASV. This includes migrant victims and those with no recourse to public funds. We are working hard with key partners across Wales to ensure that these groups don’t fall through the gaps in strategies designed to support women experiencing abuse.”

Bawso acknowledges the positive developments, commitment and legislative direction on ending violence against women and girls in Wales. We are also aware that there remain legislative challenges and gaps in the implementation of government legislation when it comes to providing support to women victims of abuse with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Objective 6 of the VAWDASV strategy (2022-2026) thus states: To provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs – led, strength – based, intersectional and responsive services across Wales.

The Welsh Government funds Bawso for the provision of refuge accommodation and outreach support services. There are 170 units of floating support in all the four regions in Wales. These accommodation units and key services provided by support workers are all from public funds. Women victims of violence on spousal visas or asylum seekers cannot access public funds due to a No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition.

The Welsh Government's VAWDASV strategy 2022 falls short of being explicit on how victims of abuse with NRPF can gain access to support services. This is acknowledged in the Senedd enquiry report (October 2022) which makes a recommendation (15)².pp46; for a review of the Act to ensure that the needs of women and children who are victims of abuse with NRPF are captured in the Act.

4.2 Home Office Support for migrant victims (SMV) pilot project

Home office through Southall black sisters has been piloting a project since April 2021 that provides funds which organisations such as Bawso access to support victims of violence with NRPF. The Support for Migrant Victims Scheme (SMV) enables organisations to provide support to victims for up to 12 weeks within which survivors should have received a decision on their application from Home Office that qualifies them for Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC). If there is a delay in decisions, which happens in some circumstances and extends beyond 12 weeks, the victim is more likely to miss out on support and become homeless.

Under the scheme, priority is given to survivors who do not currently have an established route to settlement although in some exceptional circumstances bridging support is available to those who are otherwise eligible for the destitute domestic violence concession (DDVC), asylum support, local authority or other state assistance.

The pilot project provides support to only 75 victims of violence with NRPF, which falls short of meeting the high demand for safe accommodation and support. The Welsh Government fund has enabled Bawso to support women victims of abuse, which has seen a steady increase in the number of victims seeking support. Bawso has supported 704 victims of abuse on NRPF between April 2021 and September 2024. We support on average, 15 women on NRPF monthly. There were 20 women and 15 children being supported by Bawso as of 26th September 2024. Victims receive support to access temporary accommodation in hotels, BnB's, Airbnb and hostels. They also receive financial allowance. The increase in referrals evidences the need for long term support and sustainability, which fits in well with Welsh Government's VAWDASV strategy 2022/26 commitment on sustainable commissioning enabling Bawso to provide a service that is consistent.

In July 2023, the minister for social justice and chief whip, Jane Hutt announced funding of £150k to meet the shortfall in the SMV project as a response to the Senedd enquiry recommendations on NRPF and aligned to the VAWDASV key strategic objective 6. In her statement during the launch of the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund (MVASF) which was published on 4th July 2022, the minister acknowledged the

² [Gender based violence: the needs of migrant women \(senedd.wales\)](https://www.senedd.wales)

difficulties women victims of abuse with NRPf face in accessing support and emphasized the Welsh Government's "No victim left out" approach in addressing violence against women.

The Welsh Government crisis fund enables Bawso to support additional 15 victims of violence and provide top up funds to meet budget shortfalls in the SMV project towards accommodation and weekly financial allowances. The funds also provide support for an extension of duration after the 12 weeks expiry under the SMV project to prevent further abuse and homelessness.

The Welsh Government fund was in response to an enquiry carried out in 2022 by the Equalities and social justice committee at the Senedd. The committee findings highlighted the difficulties that women victims of abuse with NRPf face accessing advice and support, for example, refuge accommodation and finances.

One of the recommendations from the enquiry was the need for the Welsh Government to create a crisis fund that could allow NRPf victims of violence being supported by Bawso to access financial support and accommodation.³

The recommendation was based on the Scottish model of ending homelessness in Scotland ('safe in Scotland')⁴. Under the scheme, all people in Scotland are eligible for accommodation regardless of their immigration status.

It is important to note here that whereas the Home Office SMV pilot project has the good intentions of providing financial support to victims of abuse with NRPf and eligible for support under DDVC, the same government (UK government) has created a new legislation that causes confusion within the domestic abuse (DA) services on how to support victims especially those with NRPf condition on their visas.

Reference is hereby made to the new changes in legislation that took place on February 16th, 2024, creating the Migrant Victim of Domestic Abuse concession (MVDAC) formerly known as Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC). Under the new rules, victims of domestic abuse who are partners to a UK migrant worker or student or graduate can apply for recourse to public funds to escape abuse and receive support for 3 months. On expiry of 3 months, survivors must explore alternative immigration routes for further support or exit the UK.

Victims on spousal visa and who were initially eligible to apply for support under the DDVC can also apply for support under the MVDAC. Those eligible for indefinite leave to remain and on spousal visa can proceed and make application for indefinite leave to remain (ILR). The rest do not qualify and have to apply for asylum or explore other immigration routes if they qualify before the expiry of 3 months.

The changes in legislation have seen confusion in the way MVDAC is applied. All victims with NRPf are eligible for support for up to 3 months but not all of them are eligible to apply for Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain (DVILR) as before under Destitution Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC); (DDVC operated parallel to DVILR and was an automatic application). Application for support under MVDAC cancels previous visa permanently. Without proper legal advice, applicants under the new scheme are likely to find themselves stateless and homeless as they no longer hold any visa or right to stay in the UK after 3 months. Victims with children are referred

³ [gen-ld15523-e.pdf \(senedd.wales\)](#)

⁴ [SAFE IN SCOTLAND](#)

for support to local authorities under Section 17 of the children Act 1989 as discussed below.

It is also important to note that there is currently a long waiting list for appointments to see immigration solicitors. Any delay in accessing legal advice leads to delay in submitting applications for asylum or any other legal routes that may be available to victims.

Bawso acknowledges the positive impact that the (SMV) pilot project and Welsh Government funds have contributed to the lives of victims who have benefited and notes that the pilot is only a stop-gap measure that does not provide a long-term solution to victims or prevent destitution. The pilot is scheduled to come to an end in March 2025. We are not aware of any plans by the Home Office to either extend the pilot period or initiate a different scheme. What is needed is for the UK government to remove the reservation placed on Article 59 of the Istanbul convention and allow all victims of abuse to access public funds and regularise their stay as stipulated in the Article.

A report by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2021) 'status before safety' highlights the difficulties migrant women with NRPF face in accessing refuge and any other form of accommodation and support. The report further states that most victims do not always access support for their children under the Local Authority Section 17 Support for Children. The findings on children not receiving support evidence what Bawso staff have always said when it comes to accessing support for children.

All government legislation (Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; MVDAC 2024 Act, Social services and Well-being Act 2014) places the duty of care of children under the responsibility of local authorities, but it is difficult for victims to access support.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989⁵ puts a duty of care to Local Authorities to "safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need." The Act also requires Local Authorities to support, provide accommodation and financial subsistence to families with children in need, even if they have NRPF. It is clear from the Act that victims of abuse with children and those who are on NRPF condition are eligible for local authority support, but this is not always the case in practice.

The DAC, 2021 status before safety report also notes that 32,000 survivors of violence are likely to report abuse to local authorities out of which 7,700 would require refuge or accommodation. In the light of the stark findings of vulnerable women who are made homeless due to violence, the report recommends access to DDVC and DVILR to all victims regardless of their immigration status. Access to DVILR would enable survivors to regularise their stay and live a fear free life.

4.2.1 Challenges with current funding for NRPF

There still exists shortfalls in the administration of the SMV pilot project and the Welsh Government funds. The funds pay for accommodation and allowances equivalent to Universal credit. Bawso places women and their children in bed and breakfast, Airbnb, because they cannot access publicly funded safe accommodation in the refuge. We

⁵ [Children Act 1989 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

know from our forced marriage report⁶ and other available credible research reports that victims of domestic abuse from minority ethnic backgrounds experience honour-based abuse in addition to other forms of violence that they have been subjected to. Leaving an abusive marriage is considered a betrayal of the family and breaking of an honour code. It is also considered a cowardly act that deserves punishment (Dyer, 2015). Hotels are public spaces that cannot be monitored for safeguarding purposes, making it difficult to guarantee the safety of women.

Victims do not always realise that their phones are tagged or monitored by perpetrators and are at increased danger of being located. Refuge space is discreet and offers maximum safety for victims but also, an enabling environment that creates opportunities to build relationships with women in a similar situation, share experiences that helps them to deal with trauma, anxiety, fear and mental health and reduce social isolation. Survivors draw social support from each other knowing that they are not alone.

Bawso does not have the capacity to monitor guest entries to hotels or Airbnb. Whereas some hotels are happy for the police to put markers on their property, this cannot be said of other types of accommodation. Therefore, the safety of survivors is paramount and needs to be considered when decisions are being made on the suitability of hotels, to house victims of domestic abuse.

Hotels do not also have provisions for cooking facilities and therefore, unsuitable options for accommodation especially for women with children. Laundry services are not always available throughout the day, and the queuing system to wash is not favourable to women with young children. These are important issues for women with children.

There is a need for the fund to provide adequate funding for staffing. Staff support is key in providing the needed assistance from liaising with the police, social services with referrals, to arranging accommodation in hotels or available accommodation units, picking up survivors from train stations, settling them down, to navigating a complex UK system that include; solicitor appointments, GP appointments/online GP assessments; making asylum claims, Home office appointments; communication with different service providers including social services, housing and referrals to other service providers for example, mental health and counselling. Without a full-time support staff, survivors would be stuck in the system, slip through important support services and take longer to get through their cases. The impact would be an added workload on services such as social services, the police and health to provide the direct support highlighted above.

4.3 Welsh government's strategy on ending homelessness in Wales.

In 2019 the Welsh Government embarked on an elaborate plan to tackle homelessness at all levels and ensure that no one in Wales is made destitute or homeless. The government's key outcome is captured in the vision set out in the strategy, that states thus:

⁶ [Understanding Forced Marriage: A Critical Analysis \(bawso.org.uk\)](https://www.bawso.org.uk/understanding-forced-marriage-a-critical-analysis)

“A Wales where everyone has a safe home that meets their needs and supports a healthy, successful and prosperous life. A Wales where we work together to prevent homelessness and where it cannot be prevented ensure it is rare, brief and unrepeated.”

Homelessness is defined in the strategy as a situation where, “a person lacks accommodation or where their tenure is not secure. Rough sleeping is the most visible and acute end of the homelessness spectrum, but homelessness includes anyone who has no accommodation, cannot gain access to their accommodation or where it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy accommodation. This would include overcrowding, ‘sofa surfing’, victims of abuse and many more scenarios. A person is also homeless if their accommodation is a moveable structure and there is no place where it can be placed.

The Scottish government has implemented their homelessness strategy (2018) on which the Welsh Government’s Migrant Victims of Abuse Support Fund is modelled. The move by the Welsh Government is commendable and it shows the Government’s commitment to addressing NRPF through a homelessness strategy ensuring that no one in Wales is destitute and lacking a home. A further step to embed this commitment into the homelessness strategy and implemented by local authorities in Wales would be a huge welcome to Bawso and the victims who need protection and a safe home.

4.4 Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

The SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 came into place in 2014 and aims to provide guidance to local authorities on providing a person-centred support to adults and children identified to be at risk of abuse or neglect. The Act is meant to improve practice and ensure that those at risk are identified as soon as possible, and their needs assessed and supported within a holistic approach system.

Whereas the Act may be working for majority of vulnerable adults and children, evidence from our frontline work suggests that the Act has not been effective at the operational level when it comes to victims of abuse from minority ethnic backgrounds with insecure immigration status. Support for children has been skewed and is not standardised across all Welsh Local Authorities. The Act has been left to regional interpretation on the nature of support that local authorities can provide.

The SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 part 7; section 126: thus states ‘An “adult at risk”, for the purposes of this Part, is an adult who—

- (a) is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect,
- (b) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs), and
- (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Part four (4) of the Act places duty of care on social services and local authorities for vulnerable adults who are at risk of abuse or neglect. The Act does not however

provide clarity on whether victims of domestic abuse with NRPF can be supported by social services.

Part four (4) section 46⁷ of the Act makes it very clear that there are exceptions in the terms of support provided. People who are subject to immigration control do not meet the eligibility criteria for support. Those identified as needing support because of destitution or due to physical effects or anticipated physical effects of being destitute do not also qualify for support.

Any anticipated support from social services is therefore at the discretion of individual local authorities. The lack of policy direction is a matter of concern to Bawso and has contributed to women, victims of domestic abuse inability to trust professionals and come forward to disclose abuse and ask for support. It is therefore difficult for Bawso staff to advocate for support for victims from social services with a legislation that is not clear and left to different interpretation. We know from available research findings that victims of domestic abuse with NRPF are more likely to be destitute and homeless (safe Lives, 2017) yet they continue to be turned away when seeking support.

We acknowledge the findings from the Senedd, 2022 report on their recommendation for the Welsh Government to undertake a review of the Social Services and well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to ensure that women can be supported. See details below:

Recommendation 5: The Welsh Government should undertake a review of implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to see what impact it has had on migrant women with No Recourse to Public Funds and their children. The review should be carried out within the next six months and should explore ways of ensuring the Act is implemented consistently across Wales.

Recommendation 6: The review should include an evaluation of the guidance provided to local authorities on implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and its role in supporting migrant women and children with No Recourse to Public Funds, to ensure that it is fully reflective of the legal position. This evaluation should also consider options for effective roll out of revised guidance to ensure that it is consistently understood across Wales.

The recommendations were accepted by the minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt on welcoming the report findings and made a commitment to instigate a process of review as recommended. We wait for the Welsh Government to implement the commendations as highlighted in the Senedd report.

4.5 The Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015

The Act compliments other Welsh Government policies and the government's commitment to address violence against women and girls and enable provision of support to victims/survivors. Freedom from violence and abuse is one of the key components of the Act.

⁷ [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

4.6 Relevant International legislation

There are several international legislations that the UK government is a signatory to, including the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). We will focus on the Istanbul convention for the purposes of NRPF.

Istanbul convention

The Istanbul Convention formally known as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of ministers on 7th April 2011. The UK signed the convention on 8th June 2012 and ratified the convention on 1st November 2022 but put reservations on article 59 that restricts support to victims of domestic abuse on spousal visas.

Article 59 – Residence status

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims whose residence status depends on that of the spouse or partner as recognised by internal law, in the event of the dissolution of the marriage or the relationship, are granted in the event of particularly difficult circumstances, upon application, an autonomous residence permit irrespective of the duration of the marriage or the relationship. The conditions relating to the granting and duration of the autonomous residence permit are established by internal law.

Governments that have ratified the Istanbul convention are obligated to contribute to the purpose of the convention through provision of support to all victims of violence without any discrimination and regardless of their immigration status, to keep women safe.

The UK government is non-committal on removing the reservation on Article 59. In the event of expiry after five years, the UK government can still renew it for a similar period, according to the provisions under Article 78 (2) and (3) of the Istanbul convention.

4.6.1 The Purpose of the Istanbul Convention

Article 1⁸ of the convention states the core purpose of the convention to prevent and combat violence against women. These include:

- Protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence.
- Contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women.
- Design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence.

⁸ [Istanbul Convention: Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence - House of Lords Library](#)

- Promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.
- Provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

5.0 The impact of SMV and Welsh Government on service users

The SMV and Welsh Government funds have been a lifeline to hundreds of women victims of abuse on NRPF condition. Knowing that there is support to access accommodation and financial allowances to live on has seen an increase in the number of victims who have escaped abuse and sought support. The support has also prevented cases of extreme mental health and the risk of honour-based abuse. Service users have reported feeling safe, experiencing an improvement in their wellbeing and feeling at peace knowing that they are in a safe place and their needs are being met. See Annex 1 for case study.

6.0 Bawso recommendations

There is need to:

- ✓ Implement Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 by all local authorities to make provision for all victims of abuse regardless of their immigration status.
- ✓ Remove reservation on article 59 of the Istanbul convention by the UK government.
- ✓ Review the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (2024) legislation.
- ✓ Review the Welsh Government's VAWDASV 2022-2026 strategy to include the needs of migrant victims with NRPF.
- ✓ Review the Social services and well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to extend support to migrant victims of abuse with NRPF.
- ✓ Review the Welsh Government's homelessness legislation 2019 to embed the needs of victims of abuse with insecure immigration status.

7.0 Conclusion

The report has evidenced the need to support victims on NRPF through a clear legislative direction that guarantees victims of abuse safety, protection, support and an easier system to navigate. It has also highlighted key legislation that the Welsh Government has put in place to protect and support victims of abuse in Wales. The report emphasises the need to harmonise all legislation relevant to meeting the needs of migrant victims of abuse with insecure immigration status and make it work for victims.

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Annex 1: Case study

Background

This is to introduce an African woman who was identified by Bawso as a very high-risk victim of domestic violence perpetrated by her husband. The victim met the British Citizen husband when he was working in Africa. They both began a relationship and knew each other for four years before getting married. The husband used to travel a lot between UK and Africa and stayed with the victim. The husband owns businesses in Africa and has much influence with police in Africa. The victim and the husband married under the Islamic law in Africa.

The victim travelled to the UK in 2024 on a visitor visa to join her husband who had promised the victim a wedding ceremony before the expiry of her visa. However, on the victim's arrival to UK, the husband cancelled their wedding plans.

Abuse Experienced

On arrival to UK, the victim was picked up by the husband from the airport to his house. On the first night, the husband did not buy food for the victim and when the victim asked the husband responded that people in the UK do not eat a lot like Africans. The victim started experiencing domestic abuse from the onset, including emotional. The husband would shout at the victim all the time which caused her headaches. There was also coercive control where the victim was not allowed to go out. When the husband would go to work, he would lock away all the documents, TV remotes and take away the keys. The victim felt lonely and isolated. The husband did not allow the victim to talk to friends or family and was not allowed to have any social media group. Whenever, they went for shopping, the husband would lock the victim in the car and do all the shopping.

On one occasion an old lady knocked the car door after seeing the victim crying from a locked car. Immediately, the husband came and drove off the car. The old lady informed the police who followed them to their house. Police asked whether the victim was okay, and the husband informed the police that the victim was unwell, and he would take her to hospital.

The victim attempted suicide in their bedroom while the husband was on the bed watching TV. He asked the victim to go and commit suicide outside his house. The victim tied a cloth on the bedroom lamp stand, put it around the neck but the lamp stand was not strong enough.

Later, the victim called the family in Africa and explained what was happening to her. Her family sent her a contact number of an African woman they knew lived in the UK and who could help her. The victim was thus referred to Bawso by the woman. The victim went to the toilet to pick a call from Bawso staff while the husband was in the living room watching TV. The victim ran out immediately and walked 4-hours from the husband's house to catch a train to Bawso in Wales for safety and support as advised by Bawso staff. The victim had no money, no bank account and did not know anyone in the UK who could help. The victim was fearful of calling the police because the husband had threatened to kill her if she did.

The victim reached the nearby train station, and a well-wisher bought a train ticket for her. The victim could not be accommodated in the refuge due to a No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition on her visa. She was therefore admitted to a B&B Bawso supported accommodation in April 2024 under the Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) pilot project by Home Office and Welsh Government funding for NRPF.

Bawso Support

The victim continued to receive support with practical, emotional issues and safeguarding. She was supported to access medical services such as GP registration and to attend appointments including immigration advice. This support is in line with the victim’s individualised support plan as assessed on her first contact with Bawso.

The victim received financial assistance for accommodation and a weekly subsistence allowance. Bawso supported the victim to apply for Turn2us Emergency and Well-Being Grant for personal basic needs and access to private counselling to overcome the trauma she had suffered. She was also supported to claim asylum and she is waiting to relocate to Migrant Help accommodation for further support.

Challenges

The victim came to UK on a Visitor Visa with no access to Public Funds but financially being supported by Bawso NRPF Project. The victim was not aware that the husband had applied for a visitor visa to UK with 6-months expiry. This caused stress, depression and suicidal thoughts most of the time to the victim. Bawso referred the victim to Mental Health Crisis Team Intervention for support.

Outcome

The victim is financially independent and is able to budget for her own money. For the first time when the victim was given £80.00 Bawso NRPF weekly Subsistence Allowance, the victim cried and said, “is this money mine”.

The victim has reported feeling safe, better and has made friends in the community. The victim plans to go to college to study and she has completed private counselling sessions and attends all medical appointments. The victim is engaging well with Bawso and her confidence has improved. She feels comfortable attending organised social events and service user events, for example, the launch of Bawso oral stories that took place in September 2024 at St Fagans.

Annex 2: Abbreviations

DAV	Domestic Abuse and Violence
DDVC	Destitution Domestic Violence Concession
DVILR	Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain
MVASF	Migrant Victims of Abuse Support Fund
MVDAC	Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
SMV	Support for Migrant Victims
VAWDASV	Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence



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Contact your nearest Bawso office

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