



A Story of Trafficking ...

Sabina arrived at an Essex port in 2017. She was discovered by security officers walking around and appeared alone and unaccompanied.

Border Force is a law enforcement command within the Home Office, which is responsible for securing the UK borders by carrying out immigration and customs controls for people and goods entering the UK.

Security officers contacted Border Force, who attended and took Sabina to their holding facility to enable them to establish her circumstances.

Sabina was reluctant to talk to them or give them any information, showing distrust of authorities. She appeared in good health and the clothes she was wearing were in good condition. Her demeanour was described as quiet, but officers were mindful that this could have been due to her being tired and hungry.

Sabina gave a confused account of how she had arrived in Essex and it was believed that she had been travelling for two months to get to this point.

She spoke of staying with strangers on the way but could not give any names or details of anywhere she has been.

Sabina said she had travelled with others at some point who were unknown to her, and she was unsure where they were going and why. But she wished to stay in Essex even though she reported she did not know what country she was in, and did not wish to return to her home country.

Sabina had no money or passport and disclosed that she only had money that her parents had given her to buy food, but this had been used. Sabina was found with a phone on her which rang at least ten times whilst with the border agency. It was noted that the number came up as 'Entrant'. Sabina denied anyone was meeting her and stated she knew no-one in the country.

As an 'unaccompanied minor', Border Force contacted Essex Children & Families and she was placed in the care of the local authority.

But while at her placement, Sabina managed to make contact with unknown people. Police were contacted when a vehicle with a man and two other people inside were seen acting suspiciously near the placement address. The vehicle was not traced and due to the concern for Sabina's safety, she was moved to a different home.

However, contact was again made with Sabina at the next home, therefore she was moved a third time and her phone removed.

Within a few hours of Sabina arriving at her third placement she left. Sabina gave no indication of where she was going or with whom. Sabina was reported as missing.

At no point did Sabina disclose that she was in the UK due to exploitation or debt bondage.

It was clear that Sabina had made a concerted effort to get to her expected endpoint, and was keen to leave her placement and continue on with her journey; for Sabina the reason was never established but what was clear was that there was assistance in doing this by unknown people.

Hundreds of children are trafficked across UK borders and many are caught up in exploitation and modern day child slavery. The Home Office and the Department for Children, Schools and Families have produced joint guidance on safeguarding children who may have been trafficked. The guidance states that a child may be briefed by the trafficker to make contact with the local authority so that their immediate welfare and care needs are met, then once this has been accomplished the child is briefed to leave the placement to meet the 'facilitator'.

Further help and support:

Anyone affected by these issues is asked to contact Essex Police on 101 or 999 if they are in immediate danger.

Modern Day Slavery Helpline on 0800 0121 700

The Salvation Army has a 24-hour confidential Referral Helpline on 0300 3038 151 or can be emailed at: ATMS@salvationarmy.org.uk

More information can be found on the [Essex Police website](#)