



Case study four: Maria Vignette

Maria, 24, lives with her 15 month old daughter, Sophia, and Sophia's biological father, Graham (34). Maria came to live in London from Greece at the age of 18. Maria's teenage years were difficult as her father was emotionally and physically abusive towards her and her mother. Maria took a business studies course and was involved in the University Diving club. She met Graham at the club and they have been together ever since.

When she was 20 equipment failure during one of the dives caused Maria to sustain a spinal cord injury. Maria was rehabilitated from hospital. With professional support she was able to regain much of her independence although she suffers from chronic pain as a result of the injury, and anxiety and depression related to this. She uses a wheelchair and was allocated an accessible ground floor flat owned by a local housing association. Maria was advised that giving birth could further disable her but she was determined to have her baby.

Graham moved into Maria's flat when she told him that she was pregnant. Shortly after this she cancelled her contract with the domiciliary care agency. She said that Graham was able to do everything that she and the baby would need. Graham took time off work to be present at every ante-natal class. He works full time at a race track. He sometimes has to work late and he doesn't always know until he gets there how long the shift will be.

There has been a referral to adult services from children's services. Children's services have been alerted to concerns raised by health staff about Sophia's lack of development, low weight and being frozen in her emotional responses. Maria is reported to seem tired, wary and dishevelled and potentially in need of social care support to be an effective parent. The housing association had had complaints from neighbours about the family's dogs' waste covering the shared "play" area and that they seemed dangerous. Graham is reported to be offended at the idea that they are not coping as he now manages the household as well as working.



How would you make a safe enquiry with Maria?

Who will meet with her?

Where?

How will you contact her to arrange the meeting?