

**Name of project: Specialist Refugee Network**

**Lead partner: Ashiana Network**

*"I was born in a small Kurdish area in North West of Iran in a normal traditional family. I had FGM practiced on me when I was around 10 years old. It was done by a woman at my home. I was very scared. I can remember how she cut me and my cousin with one razor, without anaesthetic, and without properly cleaning the razor.*

*I married at 18 with my own choice. My family were not agreed, so they told me if I divorced I would not allowed to go back to them. I insisted and my parents agreed, but they disowned me and didn't speak with me for around a year. Soon I found many problems in my marriage and I couldn't ask for help from my parents. So I got divorce. I have a 13 year old daughter from that marriage. My parents and her father were not allowing me to see her. Legally, I could see my daughter once a month, but her father didn't want that. They were living in another city. It is more than 2 years that I haven't seen my daughter, which is very painful.*

*My first divorce made my relationship with my parent worst. My brother beat me badly that I admitted to hospital. He told me we asked you not to come back to us if you got divorce. I have still the marks of stitches on my face.*

*My parents forced me to marry my cousin 3 months after my divorce finalised. It was March 2019. He was living in London. I married him before I got a chance to know him. I moved to London in 2021. The controlling behaviour started from the beginning. Whatever I was doing should have been with his permission. Why I went here or there, wore this or that. He didn't even come to pick me from airport, only sent the address. With no language, it wasn't easy for me to travel, but I managed.*

*My husband was abusing me financially, emotionally, and sexually, but was very careful about physical abuse and not leaving any marks on my body. He was jealous and wouldn't let me socialise or meet with people, even with his friends freely. He was constantly comparing me with other women. .... He was most of the time drunk and I think was also taking drugs. He kept telling me if I call the police, they can deport me as I am in the UK on spouse visa and dependant to him.*

*In the last incident, he had locked the living room and wouldn't let me go out. I first was scared to call police as he have told me I have no right, but I called the police as I had no other choice. He was questioning me why I had taken £30 from his account after I did shopping. He said you are not my wife. He pushed me and I fell on the sofa handle. My hand was bleeding. Police came and took me to the police station.*

*Police accommodated me with the support from [Southall] Black sisters, and then asked me to get support from Ealing council, but they couldn't do anything for me. I didn't know what to do. In the end I found IKWRO by google search. I couldn't believe I could get support. The advisor on the phone was kind and gave me hope. IKWRO supported me to stay in the hotel for 2 weeks, until refuge became available and I moved to the refuge.*

*I moved to the refuge earlier this year.*

*Since I have moved to the refuge I feel safe and emotionally stable. I have received these supports:*

*DDV concession was applied and I have received biometric card.*

*I have been referred to immigration solicitor to support me with ILR application.*

*Benefit was applied.*

*Bank account was opened for me.*

*I have been receiving £60 weekly allowance until benefit starts.*

*GP registered.*

*I will be enrolled for ESOL soon*

*My support worker will refer me to family solicitor for Divorce.*

*She will refer me for counselling.*

*I will have regular keyworker session with my support worker to identify and provide all support needs.*

*I took part in outing with the group to summing pool. I really enjoyed it. My support worker is planning to take us to Kew Garden in April. I am looking forward to it.*

*I feel I am in a right place for support. I couldn't imagine there is such a place that will help me to rebuild my life and support is available in my mother language and by women who are aware of the culture that I was born."*