

Name of Project: Specialist Refuge Network

Lead partner: Ashiana Network

Borough: Waltham Forest

“I was born in Bangladesh where I resided with family. I completed my high school education and was keen to progress onto higher education. Whilst studying, I started my YouTube channel where I video blog about various events and things that I would explore around my city. However, my family decided that I should marry at an early age. I then met my husband through our families and got married. I was nervous and excited at the same time when we got married. I did not know him very well, but I had grown up in an environment where the husband is given the utmost importance. When we first began to live together after I arrived in the UK, he was very nice towards me. I was excited to begin my life with him.

Soon after we began living together, I noticed that he was very possessive towards me and I did not comply, he would behave aggressively towards me. He would not allow me to talk to my friends or my family in Bangladesh. I quickly began to see a different side to him as he started to force me to take sleeping pills. I was not working and was wholly financially dependent upon him. If I wanted to talk to my family, I needed his permission before doing so. He had access to my mobile phone, emails, and YouTube. He also deactivated my Facebook account without my permission. I was not allowed to study and work. He told me I needed to make sure all the household chores and cooking was done every day. I was also not allowed to visit the doctor on my own as he accompanied me everywhere.

I then became suspicious that he was cheating on me. I overheard many conversations that he had privately, during which I was convinced he was talking to a woman. When I confronted him about this, he became angry and verbally abused me.

When I told him that I would speak to his parents about the matter as I felt he was lying and cheating on me, he immediately began to physically assault me and kicked me out of the house. I was afraid and out on the streets alone in a foreign country. I kept walking around crying and eventually managed to get to a bar from where I used the phone. My in-laws then arrived to take me to their house. Eventually my husband arrived at the same house and demanded to know why I had got his parents involved. He began to threaten me, and I felt incredibly scared. After he left, I was still shaken about what had happened. After getting the courage, I decided to call the police as I was scared that my husband would carry out his threats and his family would not be able to protect me. I was eventually escorted by the police out of the house and then put in touch with Ashiana Network.

I was scared at first to speak about what happened as I was now being threatened over the phone from my husband and his family. Ashiana Network were able to provide me with a space at their refuge and support me with my immigration matter. They assisted me with initially accessing public funds and thereafter gathering evidence in support of my settlement application. I am now waiting for the decision on my application but have security knowing that I have been provided with the right guidance and assistance. I feel positive that I will receive a good decision. With the help of Ashiana Network, I am now working towards rebuilding my life and finding my lost confidence. I have also now resumed my YouTube channel which was of huge importance to me and my independence. “