**Name of project: Ending Harmful Practises**

**Lead partner: Asian Women’s Resource Centre (AWRC)**

**Delivery partner: Women and Girls Network (WGN)**

I’ve had a very difficult life. I experienced FGM when I was young back in Africa. I was a happy carefree child until that happened and after that I lost my spirit.

I married young to keep my family happy, it wasn’t forced but I had no choice if you see what I mean. My marriage was terrible from the beginning he was a bully and beat me and our children all the time.

I was referred though my social worker for counselling at Women and Girls Network (WGN). At first I felt very shy talking to this stranger about things I never told anyone but I was eager to go and the more I talked the easier it got. I talked about my childhood and the child sexual abuse I experienced in my village. I spoke about losing my sister who died from FGM. I spoke about how terrified I was for years and the pain of FGM which continues to hurt my body and reminds me every day of what I have been through. My counsellor has taught me many great things ... like how our mind keeps bad stuff alive with memories and how to calm myself down with grounding exercises. I like the mindfulness as where ever I’ am and when I’m getting stressed I can just disappear to my safe place where I can find peace and calm.

I have spent a lot of time talking about my husband. I can see now that he was unkind and unfair he was disappointed with his life here and he thought he was worth more. So he took out his anger on me and the children we could never have prevented or caused him to act in this way.

My counselling has ended and I miss the sessions a lot but I also know that I’m ready for my life now, I am more confident, happier and joining the experts by experience group at WGN where hopefully I can find my place in the world and help other women like myself to lead better lives.