



Case Study Reflections

Background

- **Arranged marriage:** "I was constantly walking on eggshells, especially after a heated argument; the fear was overwhelming,"
- **Asylum:** I arrived in London seeking asylum and lived there for seven years with my friend. However, after all those years, the Home Office refused my asylum claim.
- **Mother's journey:** In 2018, a mother arrived in the UK as a refugee, seeking safety and a new beginning for herself and her three daughters. Just a year and a half later, the COVID-19 pandemic added further challenges to an already difficult transition.

Background

- **Returning Member:** Y first came to RWoB as an asylum seeker several years ago, seeking support during a difficult period in her life. With RWoB's support, Y was able to rebuild her life, start her own business, and secure full-time employment.
- **Domestic violence:** “My life was controlled by my husband. He isolated me, chose my friends, stopped me from learning English, and dictated what I could wear, eat, and do.”
- **Family reunion:** “I arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker during the challenging COVID-19 period. With my family left behind and no familiar faces around me, I was placed in a shared house with women from different parts of the world.”
- **Trafficked:** “Desperate to escape, I left for Libya, hoping to reach Europe and find a better future. Instead, I was trafficked.”

Issue

- **Arranged marriage:** Financial control, emotional and verbal abuse
- **Asylum:** “I felt scared and lonely, as I didn’t know anyone in the city and couldn’t speak the language. The stress of my situation affected my health, and I was later diagnosed with migraines.”
- **Mother’s journey:** One of the most painful experiences occurred when her eldest daughter began high school and became a target of severe bullying. As a result, her mental health declined significantly, eventually leading to a hospital stay for mental health support.

Issue

- **Returning member:** As Y's son, who has autism, approached his 16th birthday, she was advised by his school to apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) on his behalf. However, the complexity of the application process left her feeling overwhelmed.
- **Domestic violence:** "I wasn't allowed to speak to my family, and my husband threatened that if I left, I'd never see my children again. Over time, I lost myself."
- **Family reunion:** "No one in the house spoke my language. I struggled to communicate even the simplest needs. Without a support network or a way to express myself, I felt invisible and isolated."
- **Trafficked:** After being placed in a hotel in Bristol, "For a moment, I felt safer, but the trauma came rushing back. I avoided everyone, especially men. I felt like I was breaking inside."

Outcome

- **Arranged marriage:** RWoB's support enabled her to leave her husband and find temporary accommodation while a more long-term solution was being arranged.
- **Asylum:** "For the first time since arriving in the UK, I joined an English class, which helped me build confidence and feel more connected to my new community."
- **Mother's journey:** RWoB's support helped her regain confidence and strength; it also positively influenced her daughter's recovery and outlook. Her daughter is now feeling more confident and is preparing to attend college and take more English classes.

Outcome

- **Returning member:** With RWoB's help, Y's son's PIP application was successfully approved. The relief was immense. Y described it as having a huge weight lifted off her shoulders.
- **Domestic violence:** “When I decided to leave my husband, the HWC supported me every step of the way. She connected me with housing and legal support and helped me navigate the complex systems.”
- **Family reunion:** “After I was finally granted asylum, RWoB didn't disappear. Instead, they stood by me, referring me to a partner organisation that assisted with my family reunion, which eventually led to my family joining me in the UK.”
- **Trafficked:** “She referred me to counselling and art therapy, helping me face my trauma and begin to heal. Her one-to-one support helped me find my voice and rebuild my self-worth.”

Impact

- **Arranged marriage:** “I am beginning to realise that domestic abuse is a cycle, and it takes time to break free and heal.”
- **Asylum:** “Without RWoB’s support, I don’t think I could have handled all this pressure.”
- **Mother’s journey:** This case highlights the importance of culturally sensitive support networks for refugee families. Access to community organisations like RWoB plays a vital role in helping individuals rebuild their lives, overcome trauma, and thrive in a new environment.
- **Art & Wellbeing:** “The art and craft sessions have truly made a meaningful difference in our lives, providing us both with opportunities to grow, heal, and embrace change in a nurturing environment.”

Impact

- **Returning member:** Y's story highlights the lasting impact of RWoB's support network. Even after achieving stability, members know they can always return for guidance when new challenges arise.
- **Domestic violence:** "Today, I am confident, know my rights, and regularly attend coffee mornings and the Women to Women group at the drop-in centre. I have my confidence back."
- **Family reunion:** "Now, my daughters are enrolled in ESOL classes at RWoB. Seeing them learn and adapt fills me with pride. Inspired by the compassion and support I received, I decided to volunteer with RWoB."
- **Trafficked:** "Now, I'm taking ESOL classes, making friends, and working towards becoming a nurse. Tuesday is still my favourite day; it's a reminder of how far I've come and the support that helped me get here."

Art for Women

- This initiative focuses on the transformative power of art and art therapy to enhance the mental health and overall well-being of individuals displaced by conflict, persecution, and poverty. At the drop-in centre, art serves as a vital outlet for emotional expression, especially for those who struggle to convey their feelings through words.
- At Refugee Women of Bristol (RWoB) drop-in sessions, we offer workshops designed as an emotional outlet, enabling individuals to cope with stress, anxiety, and depression through artistic endeavours.
- This artistic initiative revitalises our shared space and strengthens the bonds within the community by elevating feelings of inclusivity and collaboration. The connections fostered through these creative activities serve as a powerful antidote to social isolation, a significant factor impacting mental health.