



Podcast Case Study

At the age of 5, I lost my father and was taken by his sister to live with her. It was a comfortable but emotionally unhappy upbringing. Then I met my ex-husband online aged only 17.

By the time I was 19, I was living in the UK with him and carrying his child. The controlling behaviour started almost as soon as I arrived. He would give me specific orders not to go out, or speak to anyone. He would regularly travel abroad for work and I would complain that I needed essential food items. So he gave me a credit card under his name and would go through the bill at the end of each month and would question me about purchases. If he wasn't convinced, I would be hit. The abuse became intense and random. It multiplied in all forms, physical, emotional, financial etc.

When 8 months pregnant, I was pushed against the wardrobe resulting in me bleeding and needing to go to hospital. They were suspicious but I denied the abuse. I don't think the hospital was convinced, but nothing was done about.

Something changed after that incident. He became extremely attentive and when the baby was 9 months old, he suggested that I needed a break and that I should consider going to my native country to stay with family. I was happy. We were going on our first holiday as a family. when we arrived at my family's home, he told me to stay with my aunty and that he will be back for me. I asked for my passport and that of our daughter, including my biometric card and he responded that he didn't have them, and they could be just in the buggy.

Once settled, I looked for my documents and found nothing. I called him and that's when he said he had taken all three and destroyed them and that he had no intention of having me back. He also said he would be contacting a lawyer to start the divorce proceedings.

With no money, no support, no documents, I was stuck. My visa was expiring three months from that time. I was scared, stressed and became unwell. I still had to breast feed which had a negative impact on my baby too. I only weighed 35kgs.

My aunt took me to a psychiatrist because of my low mood and depression. The psychiatrist reached out to Al Hasaniya MWC who then contacted me. They worked hard to support me and my daughter to obtain alternative documents, including a temporary visa to enter the UK based on Violence and I know that was NOT easy to obtain.

Once in the UK, Al Hasaniya MWC continued to support me as social services did not feel there were any safeguarding issues or risks.

I know that Al Hasaniya worked hard in making sure they accessed their resources to make sure I had a roof over my head, food and essentials for my baby. I was supported to seek legal advice and apply for the DDVC which I was granted. They then helped me to find a refuge to which I moved into.

I had more challenges. Not only adjusting to this new way of life, being a single parent, my physical and emotional health but also with UC which took over three months as I didn't have a NINO and had to wait 16 weeks for that on its own.

I know that had it not been for Al Hasaniya's help, I would have been lost in Morocco with my daughter.

I'm proud to say that I am now in my own accommodation with my daughter, she has her British passport, I have my ILR. I had plans and dreams of studying at university and have applied and am studying Business Management.

Al Hasaniya has helped me from being a victim to a victorious survivor.

Question to Jess Phillips:

- How can there be better support for victims of abuse who have been stranded abroad?
- We've seen with this example that the VS had to wait for a long time to obtain her NI which has an impact on her entering a refuge and applying for benefits
Where there is evidence of violence, why doesn't the DWP as they did before issue an urgent NINO to allow payment and therefore prevent serious destitution