

# Case Studies

## Hasena

Hasena is a 32 year old Bangladeshi Muslim woman, although her passport states that she is older than this. This is because she was born and brought in one of the most deprived areas of Bangladesh where births are not recorded and where her marriage to a much older man was arranged when she was only 14 years of age. Following the birth of her first son when she was 16 years of age, she and her first husband came to Britain and in the immigration and passport process, 5 years were somehow added to her age. Hasena now lives in Ashton with her second husband, the two sons from her first marriage aged 16 and 14 years and the two daughters from her second marriage aged 8 and 2½ years.

Hasena's first marriage was far from happy. Although she and her husband were living in the Holy Trinity area of Ashton where many from their village in Bangladesh had settled, Hasena's husband kept her a virtual prisoner in their home, refusing to let her out unless accompanied by him. Following the birth of their second son, her husband began to be physically abusive to the older child and to Hasena. During one distressing, violent episode, neighbours called the Police and Social Services were involved. Hasena was told that unless she left her husband, with the children, then the children would have to be taken into care. Hasena, therefore, was found a place in a hostel for women suffering domestic abuse in Oldham and was subsequently rehoused in a flat in Oldham. However she was desperately unhappy living there – with no English and living away from her kinsfolk, she felt isolated and lonely. Through the intervention of Social Services and Sure Start, Hasena and her sons were brought back to Ashton and she settled once more in the Holy Trinity area, although not near to where her husband was living, whom she subsequently divorced.

Some time later in 2009, a marriage between Hasena and her current husband took place. Although again older than Hasena, he is a gentle, calm man and is parenting her two sons in a loving and caring way, as if they were his own, as well as being a very “hands on” father to their two daughters. She has now been married for 9 years and is very happy. Her husband has always encouraged her to “go out and about” and to attend any classes that were on offer for women like her, who had no command of English but Hasena never felt she learnt much from them. Then when the “People, Place and Presence” project started, Hasna Khan (one of the outreach workers) invited Hasena to the Centre (their husbands are friends) and Hasena joined Hasna's group in the ESOL cafe. Hasna works with the most vulnerable of the attendees – the early learners. Hasena had no education in Bangladesh at all – never even learnt to write her name – so she has never learnt “how to learn” and so is an absolute beginner. Her knowledge of the Quran was gained from attending the Mosque.



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Hasena is now a regular attender at Holy Trinity Centre and comes each Tuesday and Friday to learn and improve her English and she also attends an English class at Holy Trinity School each Wednesday and a class at Cavendish Mill on a Thursday. As a result Hasena can feel her confidence growing in speaking English. She can now make appointments at the doctor's without help and understands the value of money, which she feels has changed her life. She feels comfortable in the Centre and therefore comes to everything that is on offer there. She has taken her notebooks from the Centre, home with her to show to her sons and their response? - "easy peasy"!

Hasena's hope is to be able to understand her children's homework and therefore to be able to help them. She wants so much to be able to converse with them in English and perhaps ultimately to gain employment – perhaps as a midday assistant at Holy Trinity School.



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