

Case Studies



Razia

Born and brought up in Rochdale, Razia is a 39 year old Muslim woman of Pakistani origin. She is married and has four children – a son aged 17 years and three daughters aged 16, 9 and 8 years. She lives in Ashton opposite the Community Centre.

Razia describes a happy childhood, the eldest of five children with four younger brothers. Her mother was a laid back, homely person and her father a market trader. They lived in a mixed area of white and Asian families and her Muslim community was relaxed and liberal in terms of dress and religious observance.

Razia is an intelligent woman and progressed from GCSE's to taking 'A' levels, obtaining a place at Preston University to read Law. However when she should have taken up her place, her mother decided it was not a good idea for her to go (her father was in Pakistan at the time) and it never occurred to Razia to challenge her mother's decision. Instead she signed up to the KYP Apprenticeship Academy and did office work, as well as telesales and working at Asda – all, it would seem, well below her intellectual capabilities. But Razia was happy – she had a large group of friends and they were having fun.

When Razia was 20 years old, she entered into an arranged marriage and came to live in Ashton where her husband's family live. Life was good. After the births of her first two children, once the youngest started nursery, Razia began to look for work. Razia therefore got a job with Age Concern and her self-confidence began to return.



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When she became pregnant with her third child, Razia was happy to be at home again. However, following her fourth child's birth (after 10 days)- occurred the death of her mother at only 52 years of age and Razia, grieving and unhappy, felt depressed and lacking in self-confidence. At this time, she turned to her religion and began to research her faith. She felt enlightened, more content and started to dress modestly.

About this time, Razia was befriended by Hasna Kahn (Outreach Worker at the Community Centre) when both their daughters started nursery together. Hasna, asked her to volunteer in the Community Centre where the newly formed Ashton Women's Group was launched and a Mums' and Tots' Group set up. Razia soon recognised the need for education of the women in the community. Initially her husband did not like her doing voluntary work and wanted her to get a paid job but when the People, Place and Presence Project was launched and he realised there was the opportunity for paid work, he encouraged Razia to apply for one of the two Outreach Worker posts and she was successful in her application.

Now that the project has been running for 12 months, Razia is feeling much more confident. She feels valued both at work and at home and is very much enjoying her job. She hopes to be trained up to acquire as many skills as possible in Community Development which she can carry forward into any future employment. She hopes that the Community Centre can continue to grow and to change the lives of women in the community by enabling them to put into practice what they have learnt at the Centre in terms of their use of English, IT skills, helping their children with their homework and exercise to keep themselves healthy. She feels her work has helped to empower her which, in turn, has enabled her to empower other women.



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