

## Case Studies collated for the Fairness Commission January 2010

Over 70 different case studies have been collected from individuals, voluntary sector agencies and Islington Council research projects. Thanks go to everyone who has shared their experiences with the Commission. Each case study has been anonymised using pseudonyms and as they are written in people's own words we can not accept responsibility for any factual inaccuracies or opinions expressed.

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### **Case Study 1 – Kate a mother**

Kate lives with her partner and their two children. Although her partner works, his wage does not allow them to afford a mortgage and their two-bedroom council flat is quickly becoming overcrowded as the children get older. Being at home all day is making Kate miserable, especially now that her children are at school and don't need her so much.

Kate has only had a few, short-term, casual jobs. She would like to start working again but struggles to identify work that could fit around school hours. Having been out of work for so long, she also lacks confidence about her skills and is nervous about being 'the new girl in the office'. Kate didn't do well at school and now regrets not studying harder. A second income might enable Kate and her partner to qualify for a mortgage and would certainly help with the catalogue debt that she can never quite get rid of. She tries to pay it off during the year but every Christmas it grows again when she buys presents for the family. Kate has been to some Parent House courses and really enjoyed them. The laid back atmosphere and small classes were fun and less intimidating than one-to-one sessions.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

### **Case Study 2 - Sam a mother with ill health**

Sam was born at the Royal Free in Islington and – just like her mother and grandmother - has lived in the area all her life. She has a young son and lives with her husband, who, following a serious accident, is on Incapacity Benefit. Sam was recently diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and has struggled to get her insulin dosage right, suffering at times several hypoglycaemic fits a day. This has forced her to leave her part-time job on a market stall and rely on benefit income. It has also made her life chaotic and left Sam feeling frightened about the impact of her condition on her life and her future.

Sam is still friendly with the people from her old job and has an open invitation to go back to work when she feels able. She was the co-chair of the PTA (she shared the position with another mother because she was worried about taking on sole responsibility with her diabetes) but has recently resigned as she felt poorly qualified for the role.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

### **Case Study 3 – Leah a mother with mental health issues**

Leah is a lone mother with two young children: one primary school aged and one a toddler. She has lived in Islington for 12 years. She and her children currently live in a studio flat. Leah has not worked since the birth of her youngest child. Previously she was doing several courses, including one on music production. She hopes to resume the course once her youngest is a little older, providing she can find affordable childcare.

For most of her adult life Leah has suffered from mental health problems including depression. Her housing situation – three people in a studio flat – exacerbates her feelings of anxiety and stress. Ideally, she would like to move abroad for a few years but she doesn't feel able to explore this possibility until her health improves.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

#### **Case Study 4 - Diana a mother with ill health and mental health issues**

Diana is a lone parent of two children: her son is now an adult whilst her daughter is still at primary school. She also has a young grandson. Diana has lived in Islington since she was ten years old. She has never worked and, as a result of her ill health and mental health problems, receives Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit.

Diana's son was stabbed several years ago and, whilst he survived, the experience has increased her fear and sense of isolation. She only leaves her flat to take her daughter to school and for her daily visit to her mother for a meal. At the weekends she and her daughter do not leave the house. Diana describes her house as "her world" and, although she knows she is in a rut, she does feel able to live any other way at the moment.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

#### **Case Study 5 - Mohammed a man in his 40s/50s**

Mohammed has lived in Islington with his wife and five children for ten years. His wife does not work and he receives benefits. He was a cook in a take-away restaurant but lost his job six months ago and is now on Job Seekers Allowance. Every day he visits local restaurants looking for work, so far without success.

Mohammed does not speak English. The Job Centre helped him to attend English classes but he stopped going after six months when the location changed and he felt that the second place was not as good. Mohammed recognises that his poor education has prevented him from finding a good job and he is very concerned that his children get a solid education. His lack of English also stops him from engaging with key services; he has stopped going to the doctor as he finds it too difficult to explain his problems.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

#### **Case Study 6 - Paul a man in his 40s/50s with ill health/disability**

Paul came to England from Zimbabwe 20 years ago. He has two teenage sons who live outside London. Having lived all over the capital, he recently moved to Islington, initially, following a stroke, to stay with his cousin. Before his stroke, Paul worked with people with learning difficulties. Since his stroke he has struggled to cope. His visa has expired and he is not entitled to any benefits. He got in touch with the Mary Ward Legal Centre which helped him to find accommodation. He waits to hear from the Home Office about his immigration status.

Over the period of this research Paul had two more strokes, which have affected his outlook on life profoundly. At the beginning of the study he was focussed on getting back to work and continuing with his training, now he is simply concerned with getting the right medical support.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

#### **Case Study 7 - Connor a man in his 40s/50s with mental health issues**

Connor has lived by himself in Islington for 20 years. His parents died when he was ten years old forcing him to grow up very quickly. He has no partner or children, he does not see the rest of his family, and, after a relationship ended badly some time ago, he does not have any contact with friends.

Connor has severe dyslexia. He is not currently working and receives benefits. Managing his day-to-day life is a struggle and he finds everyday tasks very challenging. He has developed informal support arrangements (such as asking his GP to read letters for him) but he would like more formal assistance. Connor is currently doing a foundation course in English at a local college.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

### **Case Study 8 - Richard a man in his 40s/50s with ill health and mental health issues**

Richard lives on his own; he is single and does not have any children. His father and brother live nearby and his mother lives in sheltered accommodation in South East London. Richard has lived in Islington since he was a young boy and, as an adult, he has lived in sheltered accommodation, hostels and council properties.

Richard thinks that Islington is changing rapidly; he feels that it has lost its sense of community and become much more individualistic. He was violently mugged in 2000 and has not been able to work since, relying instead on Incapacity Benefit and Disability Living Allowance. Richard is meant to attend physiotherapy and pain management sessions in Kentish Town but does not go because he does not like the area. Locally, he is well-connected to advice and support services and knows where to go for help and assistance.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

### **Case Study 9 - Peter a man over 60**

Peter was born and raised in Islington but emigrated to Canada. He returned to the borough 20 years ago, initially staying with family. His son and ex-wife remain in Canada but his daughter is in England. Peter lives in council housing and loves living in Islington, which he sees as unique with a real sense of community.

Until a few years ago Peter worked either as a truck driver or a cab driver but, following an accident, he stopped. He has found not working frustrating and struggles to make ends meet on the Pension Credit he has received since he turned 60. He relies on his local pub for a free evening meal, the local day centre for a cheap, hot lunch and his family for support at the weekends.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

### **Case Study 10 - Rebecca a woman over 60**

Rebecca is 84 and has lived in Islington all her life. She lives by herself in social housing and has done so for over 20 years. She was married twice and has three children. Her two sons live outside London but her daughter lives across the street and she sees her every day. Rebecca worked all her life as a seamstress. She also took on cleaning jobs to make ends meet after her husband died. Despite being 'London born and bred', she would really like to live in the country, partly to be nearer to her son.

Rebecca has been going to a day centre for just over a year now and she thinks it is 'marvellous' because of the cheap, healthy lunch it provides and the variety of entertainment and classes on offer.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

### **Case Study 11 - Anna a woman over 60 with ill health**

Anna is 68 and has lived on her own in Islington for 23 years. She moved to the borough after a long-term relationship failed. She doesn't have any children but she does have two older sisters who live outside London. Anna was signed off work ten years ago when she was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, a chronic condition that causes fatigue and muscle and ligament pain. She now receives a pension.

Anna has to manage her illness which reduces her ability to go places and to use different services. Despite her condition she is still active, regularly visiting a community garden and various community centres within the borough. She is well linked into health and social care services although she often finds them inflexible in meeting her needs.

*Cripplegate Foundation – Invisible Islington*

### **Case study 12 - Dorothy a mother and full time carer**

Dorothy has lived on her estate for many years. Acting as a full time carer for her ill husband meant that Dorothy was unemployed and on benefits for a considerable time before she was in touch with Connect. Through her son, who showed anti social behaviour, she was also in contact with the local authority and social services on a regular basis. Things came to a head when Dorothy's husband died. Though it took her a while before she visited Connect, mainly as she felt let down by services in the past, the trigger was her friends telling her how effective Connect had been at helping solve their problems.

Since then, Connect has worked alongside local services to ensure that Dorothy's son is at a school that meets his needs and that he has had courses to go on over holiday periods. This has been a huge relief for Dorothy. Cripplegate have also helped Dorothy with household maintenance which has meant that she can live more comfortably, with the necessary provisions. Connect has also offered Dorothy other support, particularly in the form of pointing her in the direction of courses that will help her on the path to employment.

Dorothy is due to begin two courses later this year, which she says will help 'better my life and change my way of thinking so that I have the motivation to get out there and do something'. Above all, she considers that she has a brighter future as she is busier now, which helps stop her from getting depressed. Dorothy says she doesn't have a bad word to say about Connect or Cripplegate. She has found both to be supportive and is thankful for having found people that will listen to her.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 13 - Hannah looking for work**

Hannah describes herself as unemployable before she met Connect. With no formal qualifications or training she felt that securing her dream job was unobtainable. This was coupled with feelings of negativity about life generally.

It was not until a neighbour recommended Connect that Hannah visited the team. She describes her first meeting with Connect as a huge turn-around point and says that she felt highly supported. Following referral to a series of Connect's partners, Hannah received funding for a course related to the job she wanted to be in, as well as a benefit check.

Hannah has since found a full-time job in her chosen career and says she is happier, healthier and more confident as a result of her experience with Connect and their referral partners.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

#### **Case study 14 - Maggie a woman with ill health and financial worries**

Maggie has lived in Islington all her life. Following the death of her husband, she lives alone. Some years ago, Maggie was taken ill. She has since found that she has limited mobility and does less in the community than she used to.

A friend first mentioned Connect to Maggie. At a later date, Maggie found herself in a difficult situation with household bills. At the time, she says she couldn't sleep for worry about the house and the bills. Feeling reluctant to talk to her family about the problem as she felt it would put a strain on them, she turned to Connect. They promptly referred Maggie to House Warming Islington who helped her secure legal aid to resolve issues with unpaid bills. Since then, Maggie has also been put in contact with the Joint Visiting Team, who assessed her benefits. Both experiences were very positive for Maggie, and have meant that she feels she can seek help from Connect whenever she needs to.

Maggie now says that she has peace of mind. She describes Connect and their referral partners as second to none and says that she doesn't know what she would have done without them.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

#### **Case study 15 - Tim a man living alone and unemployed**

Tim was living alone and unemployed. For some time, he felt cut off and unable to communicate with other people. As a result, Tim had very little contact with his local community but would speak to neighbours from time to time. Following the death of his brother, Tim describes how he went into a state, became depressed and did not know who to turn to.

It was at this point that he received a visit from Connect advisors undertaking door knocking on the estate on which he lived. Although he was initially wary, the friendly nature of the advisors meant he quickly relaxed. On that first day of contact, Connect suggested to Tim that he should see his GP – he agreed and an appointment was made that day. Tim was then referred to a psychologist. Following a subsequent action planning appointment at his local Connect office, Tim was referred to grant making charity The Cripplegate Foundation, who provided him with household furniture to replace models which were falling into disrepair; Tim would not have been able to pay for this without support.

The assistance provided by Connect's referral partners exceeded Tim's expectations and he was pleasantly surprised at how quickly he was able to access help. Since his initial referrals for support, Tim has maintained his contact with Connect. His relationship with his advisor and Connect's referral partners has given him greater self-confidence and the knowledge to access services when he needs them. He now gets out more often and is even contemplating doing voluntary work – something he would not have considered before meeting Connect.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 16 - Carrie a woman looking for work**

Carrie describes how she bummed around for five years following the completion of her GCSEs. Though she left school at fifteen, she found herself without a job at the age of 20.

Carrie first heard about Connect through a friend. Following an initial meeting in the Connect offices, there was weekly contact with a Connect advisor. Connect referred her to Islington Working, Dress for Success and City and Islington College. Carrie was very pleased with the help she received. The services provided help with her CV, and set up and provided suitable clothes for job interviews. It was only a matter of weeks before Carrie found herself in a full-time job. Though she has not been in the job for long, Carrie says she is enjoying it.

Her job initially prevented Carrie from enrolling on a City and Islington College course, but she is now thinking about taking part in an evening course. This is something that she says she wouldn't have previously thought about doing.

Connect and the referral services exceeded Carrie's expectations – they responded to all the issues I wanted them to. As a result, Carrie says 'I'm a lot happier now as I've got things to look forward to, like going on holiday and being able to pay for it myself!

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 17 - Matthew a man with limited mobility**

Matthew has lived in Islington nearly all his life. However, in more recent years, he found himself getting out and about less. He attributed this to getting older and having limited mobility. Though he previously accessed a handful of community services, he found that changing personnel had a negative impact.

Matthew feels very lucky to have met Connect. He describes how fortuitous it was that they came knocking at the door when he was having difficulties with local builders as they were then able to help him with this situation. Since that moment, he says 'Connect has helped me a lot. If I'm in trouble, I'll go to them'.

Over time, Connect have helped him elsewhere, for example through putting him in touch with the Cripplegate Foundation (who provided a grant for an orthopaedic bed) and helping him become a member of a local community group, who have taken him on day trips to seaside resorts. Through regular attendance at this local community group and contact with Connect, Matthew feels that his life has changed for the better.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 18 - Louise a woman suffering from stress at work**

Louise lives and works locally. Two years ago she found herself in a difficult situation at work which she explains was causing her immense stress.

Louise describes herself as being very much a part of her local community and it was through an informal conversation she had in passing with a Connect advisor that she came to hear about Connect. She describes the service as 'relaxed, sympathetic and helpful'.

Connect referred Louise to several services, including Islington Mind and Islington Law Centre. Louise accessed the services simultaneously yet found the process very smooth, quick and managed well. She was particularly pleased with the service that the Law Centre provided on practical steps she could take to find a solution to the difficulties she was facing at work.

Louise's life has improved considerably as she has since left the job that was causing her problems and feels confident that with the help of the referral services the situation was dealt with appropriately. Though Louise is not currently employed, she is enjoying being on a nutrition course and is considering her future job options. She is certain that once she has made up her mind about her career that she will go back to Connect for advice on getting a job.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 19 - Daryl a man with financial difficulties and looking for work**

Daryl lives with his mother. He was unemployed when he was first in contact with Connect and both he and his mother were having financial difficulties. Though he was determined to get a job, he realised that he did not know how to go about it or which services existed to help people find a job.

Feeling in real need of help, Daryl went to see a Connect advisor. Connect referred Daryl to Brokerage Citylink, who offered help with CV preparation and advice on 'selling himself' to employers. For the first time, Daryl got more of an idea about how to go about job searching and how to match his skills to the requirements of prospective employers. On a practical level, he was also able to use the phones and computers at Brokerage Citylink during his job search.

While on the hunt for a full time job, Daryl was helped to secure part-time work by Connect and Brokerage Citylink so that he could afford to contribute to household bills. Connect referral partners also funded a training course, which gave him good experience of the workplace.

Daryl felt that both Connect and Brokerage Citylink gave a clear explanation of the support they could provide and he found the referral process quick and efficient. Subsequently, Daryl has secured a full time job. Not only does he enjoy it, but the financial independence it has given him has been a huge help.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*



### **Case study 20 - Deanel a man looking for work**

A few years ago, Deanel became unemployed. He was on Jobseekers Allowance and struggling to apply for other jobs. Though Deanel had enrolled on a government employment training course, he did not feel he was getting the support he needed to search and prepare for a job, such as setting up interviews and interview techniques. On top of this, there were parts of his house that needed fixing and he was without some staple elements, such as a cooker and fridge.

Deanel describes how at first, he was very embarrassed to share his situation with anyone. However through the supportive nature of Connect advisors, he was referred to the Cripplegate Foundation, who provided him with a very efficient and friendly service and supplied him with a cooker. Since getting in contact with Connect, Deanel has registered with a GP and started accessing counselling. This is something which he says he would never have done previously.

Deanel is now confident that he will get back into work and will visit Connect again once his current course has finished. He praises Connect for continuing to send him ideas on jobs to apply for. He says that Connect is the first place he comes to if he has a problem and that they have given him invaluable job advice.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 21 - Doreen a woman suffering with depression**

Doreen describes how 'job and life used to get me down'. She cites feelings of depression, stress and being withdrawn as being a direct consequence of the job she had. This period, in which she found herself constantly tearful, lasted six months.

Prior to her initial contact with Connect, Doreen said she did not know about any local services as she did not have the need for them. In every other aspect of her life – housing, family and friends, and finance – Doreen felt content.

As someone who always kept leaflets that come through the letterbox, it was when she found herself at rock bottom that Doreen sought out the Connect leaflet. Upon reading it, she decided to go and investigate what the service had to offer. An informal conversation with one of the advisors outside the offices persuaded Doreen that Connect was a service that could help her.

Over time, Doreen said that Connect talked to her about more and more services. Though having a job at the time meant that Doreen was not eligible for some of the schemes on offer, such as Dress for Success, Doreen said she found it very useful to hear about these services and that she would use them in future. She also found the help she was given by Work Topics to develop her CV to be very helpful.

More than anything, Doreen was keen to emphasise that the most important thing were the 'informal chats and support [with Connect] that have helped re-build my confidence'. She also commented that 'each time I left the office, I felt a bit better about myself'. Without this, Doreen says she would not have left the job that was the cause of her problems so quickly.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 22 - Nigel a man with financial problems and depression**

Nigel used to work in the public sector. Following redundancy in 2006, Nigel found himself facing multiple problems. No longer able to support himself financially, he became depressed. Though he was able to take out a loan, which helped him out in the short-term, he then struggled to repay it. Subsequently his housing situation deteriorated very rapidly, as did his sense of loneliness and helplessness. In fact, Nigel had to do all he could just to prevent himself becoming homeless and find clothes that were fit to wear. Nigel described this three year period as 'a living hell' and says he was on the verge of a breakdown.

It was through volunteering work at his local community centre that he first heard about Connect. Though at this time Nigel did not feel comfortable talking to people about his situation, he describes it being different with the Connect staff – he felt he could talk to them openly. Nigel describes his first meeting with Connect as 'a turning point'.

From this moment on, things became more positive for Nigel. He began seeing Connect on a monthly basis and was referred to services like the Cripplegate Foundation, who assessed his housing situation and provided necessary furnishings, and Islington Council, who helped replace his door. Islington Working also put him on customer care courses which he found enjoyable. Nigel says 'I don't know where I would be now without Connect'.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 23 – Susan a woman finding it hard to make ends meet**

Susan says she has always liked to do things on her own and, although she was finding it hard to make ends meet before getting in touch with Connect, she was trudging on.

Susan heard about Connect through her daughter, who came across the local office after being made redundant. When Susan went to visit Connect for the first time she was quite nervous, and wondered if she should be going. She hadn't been in contact with support services before, and felt quite sceptical about their relevance for her.

However, Susan soon found this impression to be incorrect and, following an initial discussion with her Connect advisor, she was surprised and relieved to hear about what support was available. Susan was referred on to a variety of partner agencies, and was very satisfied with the service she received from each. She also felt reassured that Connect were following up to make sure that partners had been in touch with her.

Following an initial house check, the Cripplegate Foundation provided her with a grant for a new sofa, and she was able to purchase one with a higher back which is better for her arthritis. The Joint Visiting Team helped Susan fill in forms for her and her mother so she could secure the benefits they were eligible for, including Pension Credit and Disability Living Allowance. She was also visited by House Warming Islington's Energy Doctor team, who provided insulation for her radiators, and the London Fire Brigade Safety Checks team who installed smoke alarms.

Susan says she is 'more than pleased' with the help she's received through Connect and its partners. With the extra money she's secured through accessing the right benefits, she'll be able to heat her house properly this winter for the first time in many years.

*Help on Your Doorstep – Evaluation Report 2010*

### **Case study 24 – Gayle a 71 year old with mobility problems**

Gayle is a 71 year old woman who lives on a housing estate in Finsbury Park. She has some age related mobility problems and uses a mobility scooter to get around. Her husband is 73 years old and the couple have 3 adult children and 2 grandchildren.

'Help on your doorstep' visited Gayle and identified that whilst Gayle was dependant on a mobility scooter, she was not registered as disabled and not receiving full benefits she was entitled to. A referral was made to the Council's benefits team to visit Gayle at home and discuss options and entitlements with her.

'Help on your doorstep' also provided Gayle with a referral to the energy doctor to undertake an energy efficiency check which could save Gayle and her husband some money. Additionally, she was provided with energy saving devices such as a stand-by device and energy saver light bulbs. Gayle and her husband were also provided with a 'help-in-a-bottle' to store all their medical information in case of an emergency. Finally as the cooker they had was over 30 years old, a referral was made to Cripplegate Foundation for Gayle to receive a new cooker that was more energy efficient but also safer for them to use.

*Help on Your Doorstep - 2010*

### **Case Study 25 – Sangeeta a mother worried about the health of her husband**

Sangeeta is Bengali woman who has limited English and often needs a translator for meetings. She lives with her husband and is a mother of seven children.

Sangeeta's benefits were recently stopped and so she had to attend the benefits office but they did not provide a translator so the meeting had to be rearranged. It took three weeks to get the benefits reinstated and during this time she had to borrow money from relatives.

Sangeeta is also very concerned about her husband as he keeps forgetting things such as his door keys. They recently paid a visit to the hospital for a mental health assessment. The Doctor felt there was nothing wrong with her husband. Sangeeta is very frustrated about this response as she is convinced that her husband is forgetting things and may have dementia. Sangeeta is feeling very anxious about having to look after him as well as the children.

Sangeeta does not know who to talk to or how to get help, she is aware there are organisations that may be able to help but does not know how to explain the situation to them due to her limited English.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Parent Diaries 2010*

### **Case Study 25 – Kat a mother and recovering drug addict**

Kat is a recovering drug addict who lives in council flat on her own. She has children of school age who live with their father. As a result of her drug addiction she spent over 20 years on the "dole", her family broke up and she lost custody of her children. She explained that it was made all the harder to get help when the children were young as she did not want to talk about her drug addiction when they were around.

With support she has got herself off the drugs and has since stabilised her life. She now feels she would be able to look after the children and have them living with her but also feels that it is important to have a job as part of getting her life back on track.

Prior to getting a job she became part of a service user council, a group of service users who represent the views of addicts to the council and health service. Kat got support from a group called Addaction which helps service users gain skills to work with and support other addicts. As a result of both these experiences she has got a temporary job working in local government. Kat was very concerned that during the transition from benefits to work and her first payday she would have to manage on £40 per week.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Parent Diaries 2010*

### **Case Study 26 - Abdul a father concerned about his children being bullied**

Abdul is a Somali man who is currently employed. Abdul's family live in social housing and he has five children whose ages range from 13 to 20 years old. Abdul's family are new arrivals in England and therefore their English is very limited. Three of his children attend secondary school however Abdul is concerned that his children are being bullied.

Abdul has raised his concerns with the head of year at the school, although one month later no progress has been made.

Abdul feels helpless and angry as his command of the English language is limited and he is unable to communicate properly with the school although assistance is being provided by the Family Support Worker.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Parent Diaries 2010*

### **Case Study 27 - Basil a father having difficulties with services**

Basil is Spanish man, married with two children aged 10 and 15. Basil's family live in social housing and he currently works part-time to provide for his family.

Basil had a hospital appointment with a consultant and due to his limited English an interpreter was required. His wife provided his details to the hospital interpreting service. However on the day of the appointment the interpreter did not arrive, this caused a problem as the appointment could not be rearranged, therefore Basil had to see the consultant without completely understanding what was being said to him. The hospital had not called his wife to inform her that it was not possible to book an interpreter, if they had Basil's wife would have arranged to get time off work to attend the appointment and assist her husband. Basil feels that the hospital interpreting service is not flexible enough to assist people who need the help from there service and that people should be informed earlier when the service is not available so that other arrangements can be arranged

Basil's guttering around his accommodation was broken, he reported the problem to the housing office, and an appointment was made for the contactor to carry out the work. However the guttering was not repaired on the due date. Basil contacted the contractor he informed that the work was not carried out as the property was three stories high and scaffolding would be required and that a report would need to be made to the Housing Association. It took several calls and a month later the guttering was fixed. Basil and his family were annoyed and frustrated, that it took this time to get the guttering fixed.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Parent Diaries 2010*

### **Case Study 28 – Rajnai a mother having difficulties with benefits and training**

Rajnai is from Bangladesh. She is married and has two children ages 5 and 8. The family are living in social housing and Rajnai is currently unemployed.

Rajnai recently applied for Housing Benefits, she was informed that her husband's payslips were required, the payslips were sent directly to the housing office, benefits section. After a few weeks Rajnai received a letter stating that the benefits section had not received the payslips and that her benefits would be stopped. After a number of phone calls to the benefits office the benefits were calculated however the benefits section informed Rajnai that an overpayment of benefits was previously made and would have to be paid back on a weekly basis which is currently happening. The family feel that the benefits office didn't listen to them and that if procedures were more efficient this sort of problem would not occur in the first place.

Rajnai has been searching for a Child Care training course. Almost all the places have advised her to come back in the new year however one training centre took her details and advised her return on the following Monday. Rajnai was shown to a class room with other students, Rajnai was advised she could sit in on the class but would not be enrolled as the course had started a few weeks previously. Rajnai said she was "upset and annoyed as I had sat around for two hours and not one person spoke to me but gave me those looks" "the teacher approached me and said for me to turn up next week and laughed".

Rajnai doesn't have a clue what to do or why she bothers or try's! Rajnai is currently getting support from her Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities trainer, who will get a list of courses for the New Year.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Parent Diaries 2010*

### **Case study 29 – Ashaki a single mother looking for work**

Ashaki is a Somali woman and a single mother of five children aged between 13 and 19. Ashaki is currently unemployed but looking for work. Ashaki makes regular visits to the JCP, she feels that the job centre are not supporting her to find a job as her English is very limited. Ashaki is desperate to find a job and doesn't know where to get help from other than JCP, she has spoken to the head of JCP, "but he tells me there is nothing he can do"

She feels stressed, helpless and sad because she feels people judge her because she can't speak English that well.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Parent Diaries 2010*

### **Case Study 30 – Deepon a woman who has limited English**

Deepon's husband is claiming benefits for them both. He doesn't give Deepon any money and is treating her very badly.

Deepon has contacted the benefits' office to make a claim for her self and get the money paid into her account; this will enable her to be more financially independent of her husband. On the occasions she has contacted the benefits section the phone has been put down on her, she feels this is because her English is limited. Deepon feels angry, up set and alone as she is heavily pregnant.

Deepon is currently being supported by her children's school learning mentor and the schools parent champion, both have contacted the relevant people/services to assist Deepon. Deepon is currently waiting for the changes to happen, she feels like a burden has been lifted from her.

Deepon says "it is very important to have dual language speaking people representing your organisation as it makes life much easier". "I realise that if I could communicate properly then it's easier to be heard"

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Parent Diaries 2010*

### **Case Study 31 – Sheena living with 5 children in a 2 bedroom property**

Sheena and her 5 children were living in a 2-bedroom property. The living room was being used as a bedroom and Sheena was sleeping on the couch in the living area. Her husband had moved out to stay with relatives due to the overcrowding as there was nowhere for him to sleep in the home. The situation was affecting their relationship due to the lack of privacy. Sheena wasn't bidding for properties regularly as the family had no access to a computer and Sheena only speaks Bengali and requires support from friends and family to bid for properties.

Major works had been carried out in the property to upgrade the central heating but works had been left unfinished as pipe work had not been boxed in and there was a hole in the exterior wall in the living room that you could see right through, letting in cold air. The housing officer contacted repairs and arranged for the repairs to be completed.

The housing officer arranged for the Home Connections advert to be sent directly to her and agreed to help her to place bids as well as suggesting properties on a regular basis. Additionally, housing officers arranged for a leather metal action sofa bed to be provided for Mr and Sheena to sleep on. This created space in the living room during the day which could be used as bed at night.

Due to the lack of larger sized properties available in the home connections advert Sheena and her family were considering separating and moving some of the family into a three-bed sized property, although this was not what they wanted. A few months later Sheena and her family accepted a five-bedroom property. The family are now suitably housed and happy in their new property.

### **Case Study 32 – Anne and Robert, a couple caring for their son who has autism**

Twenty five years ago Anne and her husband Robert fostered a three month old baby, Anthony. When there was no chance of him returning to his birth parents, they decided to adopt him.

Although there had been no apparent problems when he was a baby, by 18 months he had developed difficult and worrying behaviours. He could not bear to be touched, particularly on his head, and would have screaming tantrums outside the house. They suspected he was autistic, and their fears were confirmed by Great Ormond Street Hospital. The problem for Anne and Robert, as for so many parents in their situation, was not just the challenge of supporting Anthony, whose autism and learning disability caused him deep distress, fear and anger. It was the constant struggle to be heard, to have their knowledge of their son, and their ability to make the right choices for him, recognized, as well as the huge demands on them of the care he needed.

“We’ve had to battle with the authorities at every stage” Anne says. “We had to do the work to find suitable schools for him, only to be turned down each time”. What made the difference for them, and helped them to win their case three times, was the support of other parents, and the Family Advocacy Team at Centre 404.

When Anthony reached adulthood they discovered Social Services were not going to take over automatically from the Children’s Team. “ILD (Islington Learning Disability Partnership) said he did not have a global learning disability, his IQ was too high, and was not their responsibility. They sent his case over to the Mental Health Team, who sent it back. We found a college in Hillingdon that would take him for two years, and still had a fight over who would pay for the transport”.

Any funding for support and services now is only allocated on a yearly basis. Anne and Robert’s hopes for Anthony are a home of his own in Islington, and paid employment with the right support. They know his mental health is fragile.

“I want him to be independently settled while I am still alive” Anne says. “But often it’s like looking over the edge and seeing nothing in place. There’s always another challenge, and another – we’re in this for life”.

*Interview by Clare Palmer, Family Carer Representative on the Learning Disability Partnership Board.  
2010*

### **Case Study 33 – Gayatri and her husband caring for their son who has autism**

Gayatri and her husband have three sons. When the youngest, Rayesh, aged 25, was born, he was often in Great Ormond Street Hospital with health problems. He was not thriving physically, although he learnt to walk and talk.

When he was 15 months old, he had his first epileptic seizure. “He lost so much of his development, it all seemed to go backwards” Gayatri said. “When I tried to explain this to the professionals, I was fobbed off. ‘Every child is different’ I was told”.

“Our main support for a number of years was a small group of parents of learning disabled children. From when Rayesh was 7 or 8 we were convinced he had autism as well as a learning disability, because of his repetitive and compulsive behaviour. But the paediatrician refused to accept this; she said his behaviour was due to his epilepsy. I didn’t have a voice then, I couldn’t stand up and contradict her.”

Gayatri and her family struggled on through Rayesh’s childhood and adolescence. Looking back they can see if they had had the correct diagnosis they would have had the help they needed to give him the right support and understand his behaviour, and he would have had a better experience at school.

When he left school and moved over to Adult Services, two things happened. The psychologist and psychiatrist at ILDP (Islington Learning Disability Partnership) immediately saw that he had autism. “We were right all along – professionals should take on board what parents are saying”. Gayatri and her husband were offered only 3 hours of support a day. They run their own business, a shop, and Rayesh needs one-to-one support at all times.

“As an Asian I had no idea what we could ask for. It wasn’t till my son Kamal became a medical student that we found out we didn’t have to take sole responsibility for him. Thank goodness for Centre 404 and other family carers. With their help we got a package of support so that Rayesh is looked after in the day and we can keep the business going. Through Centre 404 I have found my supportive community of other family carers. Rayesh’s situation tore us apart, but the Asian community does not understand disability and can be very judgmental.

My hope for the future is that Rayesh is settled in the community with the right support – and that I can once again read, go to the theatre, do normal things.”

*Interview by Clare Palmer, family carer representative on the Learning Disability Partnership Board.  
2010*



### **Case Study 34 – Margery caring for her grandson who has a learning disability**

Margery lives on her own with her 13 year old grandson who has learning disabilities and attends a special secondary school, she also has a part time job.

Margery's grandson needs a lot of support and can not be left alone, at times he can be aggressive. In order to get her grandson to sleep in the evening she will often have to go to bed in the same room as early as 8.30pm to keep him calm.

Margery feels that there is not sufficient support outside school time, she is unable to have any evenings or weekends off, with the exception of one evening a week where he attends centre 404 but only until 7pm. This is the only day she can get to do shopping and house work. Margery still has to carry out all the care needs when he gets home. She worries if she goes on a trip during the day in case she is late back and does not get home in time to meet grandson of the bus.

Margery attended Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CMAHS), they have attended this service regularly for a number of years. Margery has been asking for a short break a couple of hours a week and would like help at the weekend but she has heard nothing.

Margery lacks confidence in social service as they just give advice when she knows what works for her grandson and what does not. Even though she works in the field of Learning Disabilities she feels patronised by social workers when all she wants is some practical help.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Parent Diaries 2010*

### **Case Study 35 – Amanda a single mother with a child with autism**

Amanda is a single parent and has three children, Billy aged 5, another boy of 14 and a girl of 18 years old. The family are currently in four bedroom council house which is located opposite a park.

Billy was assessed and confirmed with autism in June 2008, it took 18 months for Billy to be assessed and during this time no support was provided. Amanda was told that the waiting period was long due to staff shortages and other children taking priority.

The family received family counselling as Billy condition had an effect on the other children, this worked very well. Billy attended Goodridge Nursery but now attends Hungerford School (mainstream). The Nursery assisted with the transition from Goodridge to Hungerford. Billy has a full time statement and therefore he receives all day support, provided by two people who change over during lunch time. Billy's school have added additional locks both inside and out.

The School is only 15 minutes away and therefore Billy and his mother walk to and from school - this is the only walking Billy will do. They also have an agreement with school for Billy to start half an hour earlier than other children to get settled, Amanda works in school which helps. After school Billy is entitled to four hours a week and Billy could attend 'Haywood after school & holiday'. Billy used to be up until 11pm or 12pm, however he is now on medication which helps as he now goes to bed at about 7:30 and the family are able to eat dinner together. During the summer Billy was able to go away for two weeks this was funded by the Family fund; they have also been given a computer and washing machine.

Homes For Islington (HFI) have been very quick in making adaptations, putting locks on doors and cupboards. HFI have also changed the back garden gate, so Billy can not get over it and are coming back to replace the front gate. Payments have been covered by the mobile repairs unit.

Amanda says that "more services needed for children's with disabilities and what is available needs to be advertised more widely". "Archway Swimming pool very good and the staff lovely, Centre 404 is good for information and they organised a Christmas party for parents and children which was really nice".

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Disabled Children Project 2008*

### **Case study 36 - Stella cares for her 12 year old disabled son**

Stella has a son called George who is now 12 years old and was diagnosed at 2 years old. George has sensory issues, non-verbal and delayed speech. His parents were able to keep him at home and put him on an AVA programme which they paid for. For a period of 5 years (age of 2-7 years old) no visits were made to the family, as George has got older more problems have arisen and the family felt the need to go to the council. George obtained his statement at 7 years old.

Stella said that she talks to other parents to obtain information and find out about things to do. She has joined the parents group where information is shared. She states that 'The borough does a fantastic job, lots to offer for disabilities, the Bridge School is the best you could hope for and his secondary school focus on the right things'.

Stella feels that to get better treatment you need to lie to get what you are entitled too. She feels that speech and language therapists are in short supply and what is provided by the NHS and school is not joined up. Stella felt that there was too many senior staff and not enough junior staff to do the work and that the therapists were not consistent.

Weekends as a family are difficult as activities need to be well planned. Stella's other son Jack, 13 years old, gets embarrassed and therefore only go for walks as a family to Clissold Park, Hampstead Heath or Highbury Fields, George likes the swings. She felt that George needed weekend and holiday help as well as after school activities.

Stella is not looking forward to process of adult care, therefore she is looking into services now, change over will happen 14 -15 years old. It is a terrible problem, feels that council will not provide necessary information.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Disabled Children Project 2008*

### **Case Study 37 – Louise a single parent with three children, one has learning difficulties**

Louise's children are all female aged 23, 19 and 8. At the moment, the 8 year old (Emily) is the only child living with Louise on a full-time basis.

Emily has learning difficulties in all areas of development and has particular problems in the areas of expressive and receptive language, attention, listening and play skills. Although she can speak in short sentences, her words are often muddled and cannot always be understood. Louise commented that her daughter's mood can be very volatile, changing between aggressive/angry and playful/happy very quickly. Louise also said that Emily sometimes hurts herself or others when she is frustrated. She has also been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Emily did not have any problems at birth, and seemed to be developing well. However, when she was 18 months old, Louise realised that something was wrong, as her daughter started to become aggressive in order to get attention. When Louise took her to the doctor, they originally thought she was autistic but she has never been officially diagnosed with autism. Louise believes that Emily has autism and has been told by other parents (whose children have been diagnosed with autism) that they also believe she is autistic. When Emily was three and a half years old, she was also diagnosed with epilepsy, and it was around this time when the council finalised her statement of Special Educational Needs.

Emily initially attended Hargrave Park Grove, a mainstream school in Islington, where she received individual one-to-one support in the mornings, and joined the rest of the class in the afternoons. However, although Louise was very happy with her development and with the school, it was feared that she was unable to keep up with the other children in the class and that the one-to-one support was segregating her from her peers.

The council recommended that Emily was moved to the Samuel Rhodes School, a special school in Islington. Although Louise was reluctant to put her daughter into a special school, she did decide to take the council's advice, and Emily was transferred to Samuel Rhodes School at age 7. After moving to Samuel Rhodes School, Louise felt that Emily's behaviour and condition began to deteriorate. Louise was unhappy that the council had originally recommended that her daughter be moved to a special school, but that nobody from the council had checked her progress and so she felt the council were not aware that Emily's condition had deteriorated since moving school.

Louise took Emily out of the school as they had allegedly commented that she could not attend the school unless her mother came to school with her. Louise had to stop the voluntary work she was doing, but felt that if she had to attend the school each day, then she may as well look after her child from home. However after a visit from educational welfare, Louise chose to put her daughter back in school.

The Disabled Children's Team (Family Outreach Team) provide a carer for the family on Wednesday evenings for 2-3 hours. Louise is delighted with this service, and with the carer, the respite service provides her with a great opportunity to go to the shops or go for a short walk where she can relax. She believes this respite is really valuable and gives her time to calm down and get ready for the rest of the week. From January onwards Emily will attend Lough Road for 3 hours on Friday evenings. Louise has heard positive comments from other parents about Lough Road, and she is looking forward to the additional respite.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Disabled Children Project 2008*

### **Case Study 38 - Florence a single parent who suffers from depression**

Florence has two children, aged 13 and 5 both girls from different fathers. Florence is a single parent who suffers from depression and has been awaiting treatment for two years. As part of her condition, on occasions she doesn't want people to talk to her and at times finds it difficult to leave the house or deal with paper work. The family are currently living in a one bedroom flat.

Florence's daughter Akqua was diagnosed with severe skin eczema at six months and was under the care of Whittington Hospital, it was so severe that Akqua was not allowed around other children as they could become infected. Her skin is better now however her back is getting bad again. Florence felt that due to the eczema and Akqua not being diagnosed until three she was not able to access to other facilities such as mother & baby sessions and relevant information.

Akqua now attends The Bridge School which is walking distance from her home. Akqua does not speak and communicates by making noises. Akqua is making good progress at school and can now interact with both male and female staff and she can now run. However Florence is not happy with the individual learning plans as the school is not consulting her, she does not know what the school is currently focusing on, when she requested a copy she was told one would be sent out but she is still waiting.

Florence should receive six hours respite care, when an out reach support person takes Akqua out for four hours on a Saturday – they go places such as museums, parks and libraries (activities are planned with mother). Florence says that on occasions they will get a call, saying support worker has been called to an emergency and the hours are not reallocated.

Florence's other daughter is also carer at the age of 10 she was able to attend Islington's Young Carers group however now that she is 13, this is not possible. Florence has a Taxi-card service now using and also pictures card which allows them to go out as a family. Florence is in heavy debt with credit cards however she does save.

Florence feels information is not forthcoming and that she doesn't know what help is out there. Florence doesn't go long to parents group meetings due to her depression and also feels that parents compare their children with others which makes her feel uncomfortable.

Florence thinks that the register of families with disabled children should be used to send out information via the most accessible way for each family. Florence does not have access to a computer, and therefore would like information by post. Centre 404 do contact regarding meetings via text or ringing, however on some days she is not able to communicate and therefore does not attend meetings, no feedback is given of issues discussed. Florence suggests that the creation of mentors would be useful; these mentors could be parents who are able to assist other parents who are less able, to share information and have an understanding of issues.

Florence has issues with housing and the HFI direct line always engaged when she calls. Florence's other daughter is suffering due to lack of space, she needs her own area to do homework and keep it safe away from sister. The family are currently in the bidding process to be re-housed. They viewed a property last week with ideal location as five doors away from family member, however at time of viewing the property was having repairs carried out i.e. wires every where, no kitchen units and garden full of rubbish. HFI said if she took the property any repairs left would be her responsibility and collection of rent would start straight away. HFI wanted an answer from Florence straight away but because of the repairs and lack of information she turned it down, perhaps with more information, time and assistance she would have accepted the offer.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Disabled Children Project 2008*

### **Case Study 39 - Sandra a single parent with five children one of whom has Downs Syndrome**

Sandra a single parent with five children, four of which currently live with her. Her children are 28, 21, 15, eight and five years old. The eight-year old child (Emma) has Down's Syndrome, a heart condition and suffers from attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Emma is able to walk without assistance, but regularly trips over and so she is very cautious and walks slowly.

Sandra previously owned her own property in Islington, but her house was repossessed as she was unable to pay the mortgage. As a result of the repossession, and due to other family issues, Sandra was classified as homeless by the council, and was provided with temporary accommodation. Sandra is not currently working, but is about to start some voluntary work at the Holloway prison during the week.

Emma currently attends St Marks School in Islington, along with her younger sister who is five years old. St Marks is a mainstream school just off Hornsey Road, which is over 9 miles from the temporary accommodation currently provided by the council. Sandra was keen for her child to attend a mainstream school as she wanted to ensure she was integrated in to society and had the opportunity to mix with her peers. Sandra has visited some special schools in the borough, but commented that her daughter learns a lot from socialising and communicating with other children, and as a result feels that her daughter would not benefit from attending these special schools where many children have speech and communication disorders.

Emma spends some time with the rest of the class, but is also removed from the class on a regular basis for individual work. Sandra was concerned that the teaching assistant who provides one-to-one support for her daughter does not know enough about her disability and is often unaware of how to deal with her in the most appropriate way. Sandra said that she often receives calls during the daytime from the teaching assistant, asking how to respond to a certain situation. Sandra believes that the assistant has not received enough training on her daughter's disability.

As a method of monitoring her daughter's progress, and sharing information between the parent and the school, Sandra suggested that the school provide a daily log of the activities her daughter had done during the day, how she had got on with the activity, and how she had reacted to certain tasks. On the way to school in the mornings, Sandra writes a note in the log for the school, commenting on how much sleep her daughter had got the previous night and what kind of mood she was in that particular day. Sandra felt that this has worked very well for both parties.

Sandra said that she has had difficulties with other parents and children who attend the same school as her daughter. She does not feel that other parents understand her child's disability and are unaware of what to do or what to say to her, particularly around visiting friends' houses and when invites are sent to children to attend birthday parties

Sandra feels that some services only take the child's disability in to account when they are assessed before being allowed to access the service. She felt that the family situation should also be considered, as it is a respite service, and the respite should also be for siblings of the disabled child. Sandra commented that her five year old daughter lives with Emma and also attends the same school, and that the family would benefit from some additional respite care, where the mother can spend more time with this younger child. The family visit the Archway Leisure Centre on Saturday afternoons to attend the swimming session that is specifically designated for people with disabilities and their families. Sandra feels this is an excellent weekly service, but would prefer it to be extended.

The temporary accommodation currently provided for the family is a three bedroom house. As the mother currently has four of her children living with her, her fifteen year old daughter (currently doing GCSEs), her five year old daughter, and the eight year old daughter who has a disability are all sharing the same room. The mother was initially told that her 21 year old son (who currently lives with her and has his own room) was not taken into consideration when deciding the number of rooms to be allocated because he was over 18.

#### **Case study 40 - Katie a single mother of two children with learning difficulties**

Katie has two children a 12 year old boy (Ed) who suffers from Autism and a 14 year old girl who suffers with slight dyslexia. Both children live with Katie in a council owned property; Katie does not have a partner.

Ed was diagnosed with Autism, through their doctors, at the age of 3 ½ years. He has since been found to have Sensory Auditory Processing condition. He doesn't look physically disabled but needs constant attention; he can communicate verbally but not coherently because he can't process things quickly or retrieve words. Katie has been very active in researching her son's condition and has set up support groups, within the community, to help parents in a similar position or who feel afraid to contact or use the services available.

Ed attends the Bridge School, previously Katie was unhappy with the way that her son was being educated and took him out of the school. Since September she has been paying for a support staff to attend school with him and provide him with one to one support in class.

Katie's daughter attends a mainstream school but is relied on heavily to help the mother care for her brother. Katie feels that her daughter suffers because she is constantly supporting her mother and Ed. She doesn't have many activities of her own to do, the services that are provided for 'young carers' are not cool and have limited appeal. She would like to do more activities but not typical 'carer' organised ones – she wants to integrate with other 'normal' children in the community. Katie suggested that Cognitive Therapy would possibly be a good option to offer to young carers. It is important to understand the difference between children that care for parents and children that care for siblings – they should be offered separate and different activities.

Katie feels that the housing department have been very helpful and because of her son's disability she has been treated better. She was in temporary accommodation for 8 months but was then moved to a nice house with a shared garden so that her son can play outside to release his high energy levels.

They have been on 3 'Carers Breaks' and they have been really good. Ed likes to go to 'Lough Road' because they have fun activities and they are more aware of issues and problems relating to Autistic children so they have staff that are better qualified to deal with them. Ed also likes other activities such as swimming and horse riding, but these are things that Katie has to pay for and she can't afford it. She feels that more things should be provided by the council as her son's needs aren't being catered for through council services.

Katie was one of the first to receive Direct Payments and thinks that they are really helpful, however the accounts side of it can be confusing and sometimes frightening to deal with. Everything needs to be justified and she is conscious of losing a receipt. But she feels that *'The Direct Payments team are one of the best in the council. They will help her with her accounts by coming to her house and taking time to help and show her what to do. They are very supportive, respectful and understanding.'*

Katie is very independent and likes to find out information about her sons condition. She feels that it is easy to go undetected if you don't make contact with the council, they will not chase you. She states that *'You scream and shout or you give up...the ones that shout get the service, the ones that give up are left to suffer'*

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Disabled Children Project 2008*

#### **Case Study 41 - Mary a mother and grandmother caring for her son**

Mary has two children, a nineteen year old daughter, and a sixteen year old son. The daughter has a two year old boy of her own and is currently living with her mother, but has been trying to apply for council housing from Islington. The son also lives at home with his mother. He attends the Bridge Secondary School. The mother is not currently in employment, but has recently started studying a university course.

Mary is very happy with The Bridge School in every aspect. She commented that there were not many activities for children in wheelchairs during school holidays and that it would be nice to receive information on such activities or events that specifically stated that they were okay for children with disabilities to attend, rather than them receiving the generic information for children in general. Mary believed that the Lough Road and Transcend clubs were very good and that her son seemed to enjoy attending.

Mary lives in council accommodation, and is generally happy with the standard of housing that she has been provided with by the council. She felt it was in a quite area, good for accessibility and with it being close to Upper Street, was great in terms of transport and local amenities.

However, Mary mentioned that her daughter has been trying to get council housing for two years since the birth of her son. She commented that her disabled child does not like having young children around and can get very upset when they scream.

Mary commented that the entitlement to care hours had changed recently and that the number of hours that her son was entitled to had been reduced by half. Although she understood that the reason for the change was so that the service could be extended to a greater number of children, she felt that a reduction from 24 to 12 hours was dramatic, and made a significant impact on the well-being of her child and of herself. She felt that it should not affect those that were already being provided with a certain level of care. In addition, Mary commented that she had not heard anything about the change from the council, but first heard about it through Centre404 and Lough Road.

Mary commented that they used to have a designated social worker, but that families no longer receive this unless the child is 'at risk'. As a result, the parent felt that requests for information or help often fall through the cracks between different social workers and that the team do not get back to you with the promised response. Mary commented that when calling the Disabled Children's Team, parents have to speak with the duty social worker, who tends not to know anything about the child or the family, and doesn't seem to be able to easily access any information. She believed it was *"a great ploy to make people give up"*.

Mary stated that she had not heard anything from the Disabled Children's Team or from Adult Social Services to learn who will be responsible for the handing over of her son from Children's Services to Adult Social Services. She did not know who she should speak to in order to ask any questions. The mother is currently speaking with Connexions to try to get her son into a residential college when he turns eighteen.

Mary stated that the council do communicate with parents through the school, but that it is a generic letter or booklet that is aimed at all children. She thought that it would be a good idea to get information targeted at families with disabled children, or that these documents highlighted certain activities or events that were suitable for children with additional needs.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Disabled Children Project 2008*



#### **Case Study 42 - Margaret a single parent caring for her 18 year old disabled son**

Margaret has a son called Guy who is 18 years old and suffers from quadriplegic non-verbal cerebral palsy and is a wheelchair user. Margaret is a single parent living in council accommodation, which is now looked after by a housing association.

Guy attends the Acland Burghley School, which is a mainstream school. Although the council felt Guy should attend a special school, Margaret wanted him to attend a mainstream school. He does not receive free transport as it is within walking distance and therefore his mother is expected to take him and collect him.

Guy has achieved four GCSE's at grade 'B' and one 'A' grade at AS-level. Margaret believes this is a remarkable achievement for her son's level of disability and was interested to know whether the council had an award scheme to reward him for his efforts.

Margaret did not feel that the council provided an adequate short breaks service, and commented that she had never received any information about short breaks from the council. The only information she had received was through the Islington Carer's Forum.

Margaret believes that housing provision in Islington is very poor for people with disabilities, and thought that the council should provide some single-storey, purpose-built flats for wheelchair users.

Margaret commented that facilities in parks are not up to an adequate standard in the borough to cater for the needs of children with physical disabilities. The mother commented that although her child is now 18 years old, he still enjoys using the swings at the park, but can no longer use them safely. The mother did recognise that there was a playground specifically for disabled children (the Hayward Centre), but that she has not had particularly good experience with the centre in the past and does not think it is suitable for all children.

Margaret commented that *"unless a family is very wealthy before their child is diagnosed with a severe and complex disability, it does not take long before they begin to fall below the poverty line"*.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Disabled Children Project 2008*

### **Case study 43 – Stephen a father of two, one of whom has severe learning difficulties**

Stephen has two girls aged nine and six. Following complications during pregnancy, the nine year old daughter (Cathy) has severe learning difficulties and a mild visual impairment. She has global developmental delay and cannot walk or stand unaided. The family are currently living in privately-rented accommodation while their house is undergoing a number of major adaptations to assist the disabled child with mobility issues, and to help her to learn how to live more independently.

Cathy receives free transport to and from her school Richard Cloudesley School. Stephen expressed that he was very happy with the school and the work that they do. Stephen works very closely with the school, and he commented that they are providing an ever increasing programme of weekend and evening activities for the children that attend the school. Although these activities and clubs have been successful, the father expressed his concern that many families do not use the clubs because they are unable to collect their children afterwards.

The family had positive comments about out-of-school activities at Centre404 and the Transcend Club. The family did recognise that some families are unable to access the club, because of the lack of transport provision after it ends. The family commented that their daughter particularly enjoyed visiting Freightliner's Farm and thought that this might be an educational and fun trip for the council to organise for children with disabilities and their families.

Although the family own their own house, the house is a listed building, and as a result, the listed buildings department refused applications to install a lift as it changed the interior character of the building. After several months, the issue was finally resolved, and a solution was negotiated following the actions of a senior councillor.

Stephen explained that the confusion and anguish is overwhelming when your child is first diagnosed with severe learning difficulties, "particularly if you have had no experience of learning difficulties in the past". Stephen believed that information and support from social services was non-existent when his child was first diagnosed. They felt that there was a lack of information from the council following diagnosis and that it would have been beneficial to have been provided with a named social worker to discuss their situation.

The family are keen to encourage both of their children to learn outside of school and are regular users of the South Library on Essex Road. The family feel that the library is not suitable for wheelchair users and commented that the lack of provision caused them great difficulty in using the service. The father believed the council should be setting an example for the community and private organisations by making buildings accessible for everyone and thought that in the modern era, all public buildings should be accessible to those with disabilities.

Stephen raised concerns about his daughter turning eighteen, and the transition from Children's to Adult Social Services. He commented that he knew it was not something to investigate at this stage as his daughter is only nine years of age, but already identified that this would be an important period of time in his daughter's life.

Stephen said that *"Islington are actually pretty hot at providing information for children in general if you're prepared to look for it"*. The family believed that information was available (on the internet, at the council offices and in some schools), but that it is only accessible to those who know where to look or are prepared to search. Stephen suggested that the council produce a 'very basic' black and white newsletter specifically for parents of disabled children, reminding them of basic services; charitable organisations, activities and events; and any specific activities that the council are running at weekends or during school holidays. He felt it could be very low cost and if distributed through schools, could also reach parents who do not speak much English. The family also wondered whether the council had, or could have a small committee involving schools, parents, carers and council officers to discuss issues such as the provision of information or other difficulties such as those considered in this project, to brainstorm ideas to resolve the particular issue.

#### **Case Study 44 – Meyram mother who moved here from Turkey and has difficulty with English**

Meyram's son Murat has severe learning difficulties with autistic features and communication, behavioural, social and self-help difficulties. He does not interact with other children and engages in solitary play. Murat is not aware of danger and requires constant supervision. Murat will walk for short periods depending on his energy levels and motivation. At other times he uses a wheelchair. Murat is generally healthy and he has no hearing impairment, but there are concerns about his vision.

Murat is one of five children. He has a 20 year old sister who has learning difficulties and attends a special school. The other children attend mainstream schools and do not have learning difficulties. However, two of the children do have minor physical impairments. Murat's family moved from Turkey in 2003 where he did not attend school. He attended a school in Enfield from 2004-2006 when he moved to Islington and started attending the Bridge School and also attends Lough Road resource centre on Saturdays. His mother Meyram would like this facility to be extended to Sundays.

At present there are no extended family members that can assist with childcare so any respite care would be welcomed. Meyram would also be keen to access leisure facilities for all of her other children. It would be useful to undertake activities that all of the family can participate in. Meyram was also interested in short breaks for all of her children.

Meyram has recently moved to a new property but is unhappy with the level of support and assistance that she has received to date from the council. She has received a voucher for £80.00 from Homes for Islington to assist with decorating expenses but also needs a number of alterations done. For example a ramp needs to be fitted to the front door as there are currently three steps which proves major accessibility issues as it is difficult to get Murat in and out of the property in his wheelchair. Meyram was advised to contact occupational therapy for assistance in regards to replacement of the windows to double glazing to stop Murat breaking them. Due to language barriers her daughter Aysel assisted her with this enquiry. At the time of interview this was an issue that needed to be followed up.

Murat is collected in the morning and brought back home in the afternoon by the school transport bus. Meyram is concerned that she does not have a key for the main entry gate of the estate. This results in her not being able to let the bus into the estate so that Murat can be dropped off outside of her house. Instead she has to do at least a five minute walk to the road and then endeavour to get Murat back to the house in his wheelchair. Meyram is unable to see the school bus on its arrival. However good practice is that the driver will give her a telephone call to advise her of his arrival both in the morning and afternoon.

Meyram advised that since her move less than a week ago she now has no access to a GP. Her current GP is based in Essex Road but she needs urgent assistance to register with a new GP within closer proximity to her current residence. No access to a GP will have a detrimental effect on Murat as his prescribed course of medicine was completed over two weeks ago. Without access to a GP Meyram is unable to ensure that Murat gets the medication that he needs. This can have a detrimental effect on his behaviour.

Meyram advised that she does not currently have a social worker assigned for any of her children. Additional support from social services was also requested. Meyram would like to find an easier mechanism for accessing council services. As English is not her first language she would like to request that an interpreter is present at any meetings that she may need to attend. Meyram wanted to express gratitude to her neighbours who had helped her with getting furniture into the house.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Disabled Children Project 2008*

#### **Case Study 45 - Amanda a single parent experiencing difficulties with childcare**

Amanda is a single parent with two boys aged 6 and 2. She has been out of work since the 6 year old was born. Amanda comes across as determined to work, she says JCP have not been much help up to now, and have not been very supportive. She says 'you have to pressure them to pass you on to other organisations' and that they don't mention the help that's out there and available'.

Amanda says that she's been desperate to work for some time now, but is finding it quite a struggle. At first she was thinking 'I'll take anything', but she says her advisor from IWP has helped her to focus and think through what she really wants to do. Amanda has no help with childcare from friends and family, so her advisor helped her to see that she needs to think about how she will manage in the school holidays if she's working. She decided to try to get into being a teaching assistant and then later she hopes to get into teaching.

The biggest barrier Amanda has found so far is that childcare is not available for most courses she wants to do, so it's difficult to do the training. She is also clear that if affordable childcare was available for school holidays she would have a much wider range of careers open to her. Teaching Assistant / teaching would not necessarily be her choice.

Amanda waited for six months to get onto the level 1 'Working in Schools' training at Parent House. It's very much in demand because it has a crèche attached. She then had a great deal of difficulty trying to organise a level 2 'Working in Schools' training course. There is no childcare attached to the course, so Amanda applied to the Job Centre to get funding. She had a meeting with them to make her case. Her advisor at IWP explained to her that she would have to put together a strong case and they would consider her request if they could see it was likely to lead to a job. She did her best to make a serious case, including getting a confirmed placement at a primary school which was a requirement of the course. However, a few weeks later, JCP confirmed that they were not able to meet her request for funding for childcare.

Her advisor then suggested that Amanda apply to the LBI Children's Services Childcare Strategy Group for a Childcare Bursary. Amanda said she felt like giving up and maybe trying again in January 2011, but her advisor encouraged her to persevere as the course/funding may not be available in January. They made the application to LBI and it was turned around quickly and was ultimately successful. However there were two last minute hitches which Amanda found extremely stressful. Firstly LBI said the childminder's rate was too high, so Amanda had to get the childminder to agree a lower rate in order for the bursary to be agreed, and secondly the placement that Amanda thought she had secured at a primary school fell through, and the bursary was conditional on providing evidence of a placement. Amanda did manage to find and confirm another placement at the last minute by ringing round every school in the area. At the time of writing, she has just started her course.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

#### **Case study 46 - Charli a mother who lacked confidence to go for jobs**

Charli is 35 and married. Her husband is in full time work. She is working part time 10 hours a week, soon to go up to 20 hours a week. She and her husband have two children aged 9 and 4. They are white British. They have a good local family network providing good support with childcare.

Before her first child, Charli worked in accounts. She described it as a well paid job. She was made redundant while she was pregnant as the firm relocated to the south coast. After her first child, Charli didn't want to go back to full time work because she didn't trust childminders, childcare was too expensive and she said that she didn't have a child to hand her over to someone else.

However she did want a part time job, and she was offered a job by the head teacher at her daughter's school as a cleaner. It was 4-6pm so she didn't need to get childcare because her husband could get home to have her daughter so she could go out to work. She gave up the job in 2005 before she had her second child.

When her second child was nearly four she decided she'd like to go back to work and her old boss offered her the cleaning job again, which she was pleased to take. However, what she really wanted was to work during the day while her daughter was at school, especially as her son was now entitled to free nursery education. This would allow her to be with her family at tea time.

She was daunted by the prospect of finding childcare for her son, and also feeling a lack of confidence in her ability to find anything more than a cleaning job. One of the mums at school suggested she go and see an advisor at EC1 Help on your doorstep. She dropped in, and he really boosted her confidence. He gave her the belief that she could do what she wanted to do. He said he would take care of finding a childcare place. He quite quickly got her son into a local nursery. She mentioned to her boss (the head teacher at her daughter's school) that she would ideally like to work during the day, and the head teacher suggested she apply for a role at the school, helping out with lunchtimes and support the teachers with classroom activities during class time. This is what she is now doing 10 hours a week, and will be increasing to 20 hours a week next week.

If it hadn't been for the advisor, Charli feels that she would still be just cleaning, and missing out on seeing her kids at teatime. Charli said 'I want my kids to have what I didn't have, that's why I want to work. And I want them to see that I work, not just sit around watching Jeremy Kyle'.

Charli described the barriers to work that she had experienced: lack of confidence, because of being out of the world of work and only talking to Mums about kids, lack of confidence, because of age – Charli is 35 and feels this is old to be going back into the job market, getting in touch with the right people.

It helps so much to have an 'intermediator' like the advisor at Help on your doorstep. If she hadn't had that she would have been put off by not knowing where to start with childcare, 'JCP won't tolerate me because I'm not on benefits because my husband works. I don't think it's right that all the help goes to single Mums'. Charli thinks JCP would not be interested in helping her because she's not on benefits or a single Mum. She also feels there is a lot of help in general that she can't access because she's married. Charli thinks JCP would not have been able to give her the personal service she got with Help on your doorstep. 'They're like cattle up there' (at JCP) was how she put it. School holidays are a big barrier to work, or rather, the lack of jobs where you can take time off during school holidays combined with the lack of affordable childcare during school holidays. Charli said 'play schemes are very dear'.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

#### **Case Study 47 – Frank a father who wants to set up a small business**

Frank has a partner and two children and was made redundant. Frank's partner met up with Help on your doorstep as they can help with childcare but they also offered to help Frank look for work. They put him in touch with Ingeus and Islington Working. He gets regular information and job vacancies from both organisations, Ingeus helped with a CV and can contact Islington Working for support.

Frank is keen to set up his own business but said 'the small business support is not up to scratch'. He asked JCP about self employment and they put him in touch with Business Link who have taken his details but not sent through any information yet. Frank also contacted an organisation called Prevista (who help people set up in business) but has not heard back from them either. He finds it very unhelpful when he hears nothing from 'these organisations'. He says he would prefer they let him know even if it is to say they can't help.

Frank has also found services slow to provide initial help after he was made redundant. He says 'it took me 10 months to learn about writing a CV and doing application forms - knowing where to access services is an issue. It's important to put services in front of people so they know how to find them particularly when they have just been made redundant'

Frank found JCP 'very unhelpful'. They asked him to use the online touch screen job search service at the JCP office, but he can do a similar search at home. He found the treatment 'appalling' and that advisors 'looked down on him'. He told us that some of the Jobs advertised in JCP have premium 0845 number 'you get put on hold or the phone rings for ages - it feels like a dead end'.

Frank felt the main barrier to work was childcare both in cost and availability. He and his partner have been quoted £280 per child per week. He feels that the cost of childcare should be 'regulated' as 'it's difficult to get a job that would pay enough to cover the childcare costs'.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

#### **Case Study 48 - Jane a lone parent who feels she is in the benefit trap**

Jane is a lone parent with two children. Prior to becoming a mother she had worked from the age of 14, in various service and retail jobs. Her most recent job was as a Manager at Starbucks. She lives in temporary accommodation in a two bedroom flat costing £388 per week, which is covered by housing benefit while she is unemployed.

Jane is very keen to work, and bored and frustrated by 'the benefits trap'. She did take up work for eight weeks recently, however the loss of housing benefit led to a rental bill of about £3,000 which was later revised to £1,400. However, both outstripped the level of earnings thus making work financially not viable. So her biggest barrier to finding a job is the cost of her temporary accommodation. At £388 per week she feels she would need to find a job paying over £30,000 a year to be as well off as she is currently. She thinks this is unlikely to happen.

She is hoping to do a level 3 nursing access course to then get onto a nursing degree course. However, childcare availability is a major issue with this. Also Job Centre Plus (JCP) would only fund level 1 and 2 courses. Jane feels that people with higher skills/qualifications are 'in a sort of limbo'.

Jane has found JCP 'not very helpful', and noticed that the majority of the jobs advertised there were paying in her view lower than the market rate. The Help on your doorstep service was useful as it pointed her in the direction of services like Islington Working Parents (IWP) and Islington Families that she did not previously know about. IWP were friendly and gave advice, however they were unable to help her with childcare. They gave some support around finding voluntary work.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

#### **Case Study 49 - Jaliyah a lone parent facing language barriers to getting a job**

Jaliyah is a lone parent with four children aged 8, 5, 3 and 1. She speaks five languages but feels very limited by her level of spoken and written English, both in terms of getting into work and in terms of supporting her children with their education and development. She comes from the Phillipines and has been in the UK since 1993. She previously worked as a private nanny and housekeeper but at that time she did not have the right to work legally. In 2002 her relationship with the father of her first child ended and that's when she had to give up work. She has not worked since. Jaliyah appears articulate and intelligent, but emotionally at a low ebb.

Jaliyah started two different courses at City and Islington College in 2007. One was 'Step into Childcare' and the other was 'Health and Social Care'. She found them both too difficult because of her level of English. This seriously knocked her confidence. Since then she has been thinking that she would like to do an ESOL course, but not doing anything about it. She feels pressurised by JCP to get a job, and believes they are threatening to take away her benefits if she doesn't. She feels they don't understand that the first step for her is to improve her English, but just keep putting pressure on for her to look for a job now.

Jaliyah thinks the main barriers to her getting into work are lack of affordable childcare, being out of education for so long and low level of English make it hard for her to learn and being on her own and having to do all the daily tasks that need to be done for four children; it takes time and energy.

Jaliyah met the Learning Centre Manager, at the Primary School where her children are at school. She told the Learning Centre Manager she'd like to improve her English, and was signposted to the learning centre. She received follow up calls to remind her to attend. If she had not called to remind her, Jaliyah thinks she probably would not have come to the enrolment day.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

#### **Case study 50 - Anita experiencing the failure of organisations to make referrals**

Anita has three children aged 12 and 10 years and 9 months. She is living with her partner who works, but she has been out of work since the 12 year old was born.

She attends a work focus interview at a Job Centre Plus office once every six months, and they recommended a Children's Centre. At the Children's Centre she met the learning centre manager who gave her the details of the enrolment session.

Anita told us that she was 'shocked' that in 12 years of going for interviews at the JCP office they had never mentioned this Learning Centre. They just asked her 'how are you getting on looking for work?' but didn't put her in touch with such a good training service right on her doorstep.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

### **Case study 51 – Adjoa and the impact of not knowing the system**

Adjoa is from Ghana and has been in the UK for six years. In Ghana she worked in a petrol station but in the UK she has never worked. She has one child aged four. They live on the Peabody estate.

Adjoa has been going to JCP since she first came to the UK. She goes in, prints off jobs, phones them up and has phone interviews. She didn't get any help from JCP with preparation for phone interviews. She felt disappointed by them, because in her view they didn't boost her confidence, and they didn't make referrals to any other useful organisations.

Five years later, she was recommended by a friend to go to Parents House. They do lots of useful courses on computers and literacy. They referred her to Personal Best. Going to Parents House 'opened lots of doors'. They also helped to boost her confidence and self esteem.

Adjoa is concerned about childcare being too expensive and this being a barrier to work. This is a barrier that has effectively stopped her from working until her child goes into school this September 2010.

Adjoa feels that on her arrival to the UK six years ago, not knowing the system was a big barrier, and JCP really didn't help with this by not referring her to other organisations. She also feels there is not a lot of information for foreigners with a lack of English.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

### **Case study 52 - Annette and the dis-incentives to take short term work**

Annette is a mother of two children aged 22 and 14, and has one grandson. She didn't work while the children were young. Since then she has had lots of jobs in schools, including voluntary work. She has been unemployed for 13 weeks. Before that she had a temporary contract as a Learning Support Assistant. The contract ended because the child left the school. Previous to that she was unemployed for five months.

She has been referred to Ingeus by the Job Centre in the past and found them very helpful for updating her CV, workshops and help with job searches. This time when her contract ended she asked JCP to refer her straight away, especially because she wanted help getting her CV updated.

Annette described the experience of getting back into work after being out of work for five months as 'a nightmare'. Because she had only been unemployed for five months she didn't get 'run on' payments for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. As soon as she started work she was 'bombarded' with letters asking her to pay rent and Council Tax. But she didn't get paid by her employer for almost two months.

She was in crisis and had no money to feed herself and her 14 year old. JCP would not help, but Ingeus gave her Tesco vouchers to help her till she got paid. She said it took her almost six months to sort out the changes in her Council Tax and Housing Benefit entitlement. She has had similar problems in the past when going in and out of work. She says 'when you're in and out of work, dealing with benefits is never smooth. It takes months to get it sorted out and then things change again for you so the paperwork starts again. It's never-ending'.

Annette said that knowing the stressful problems she's had with benefits when going in and out of temporary jobs, she would now think very carefully about taking a job after being out of work for only five months. She'd probably wait till she'd been out of work for six months so she would get 'run on' payments for HB and CTB, and would definitely hold out for more permanent jobs rather than taking temporary jobs.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*



**Case study 53 - Naresh a parent with learning difficulties trying to maintain a steady job**

Naresh is in his thirties and has a learning difficulty. He is claiming job seekers allowance, disability living allowance and child tax credit. He lives with his wife, children and his wife's Mum and Dad.

Naresh works two hours a week in a paid job. It involves working with other people with learning difficulties. Naresh has had 4 or 5 jobs in factories, packing, warehouses and retail. He lost each job because he didn't like the job or he had problems that meant he couldn't work. His most recent job was working part time for one year with a supermarket. He started suffering difficulties at home and as a result he spent all night out and didn't go into work a few times because he was too tired. This caused problems between him and his employer and ultimately led to him losing his job.

He is looking for a job in packing/factory/warehouse. He says his learning difficulty makes it hard for him to get a job, and then when he gets a job, he always has a problem and loses it. He says it is hard to find factory jobs. You often need a forklift license which he hasn't got. Naresh says he would really like to keep a job for a long time, but he doesn't know how to. He really liked working. He earned more money and got working tax credit too.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

**Case Study 54 - Edita and the impact of not having a permanent home**

Edita is living in a refuge in Kings Cross with her four year old son Rodger who was due to go to school this September but is not yet in school. Edita separated from her ex-boyfriend in July. He used to support them financially but he doesn't anymore.

Edita is from Lithuania and first arrived in the UK in 2002. When she first arrived she did a one year ESOL course at a college near Covent Garden which she paid for herself. Edita talks very quickly and has a strong accent and a lack of English vocabulary. She came here alone and met her Lithuanian ex-boyfriend here. She worked in a hotel from 2002 – 2004, at that time she was working under a different name as Lithuania was not in the EU. When Lithuania joined the EU she took a job in a shop in addition to the hotel job. From 2004 – 2007 she worked in the hotel 8am – 3pm and then in the shop 5pm – 11pm. She then took maternity leave to have Rodger, but didn't go back to work after that.

Edita is now looking for a job in a shop. She says she likes to work, it's good to meet people. It's not a problem for her to get a good reference. She is still in contact with her old manager from the hotel who said she can apply for a job there, but she doesn't want to work in a hotel again, she's had enough of it. She started looking for a job before she split up from her boyfriend. They were living in Barking so she went to a job centre in East London. She went every Monday but didn't find anything. She would really like to improve her English and maybe do a computer course, but they couldn't help with that.

Edita hasn't got a home at the moment. She is hoping that the council will find her a place soon. Once she knows where she will be living she will be able to put her son into a school and find a job. But right now she doesn't know where she will be living so she's worried if she finds a job and puts her son into a school she'll have to give up the job and change his school when they move.

Edita says it's hard here in England. She doesn't have family or friends. People here are just looking after themselves. They work long hours and don't have time for other people.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Getting a job 2010*

### **Case study 55 - Josette a single mother with a teenage daughter and new born baby**

Josette moved to the UK from St Martins in Jamaica a year ago to get her daughter into a good secondary school and pursue her career as a teacher. Josette immediately acquired a National Insurance number and started claiming JSA whilst she looked into getting a teaching job. Josette found a privately rented 2 bed flat through the JCP who were able to provide a list of landlords who accept people claiming benefits. Her partner in Jamaica was able to pay the deposit and sign a guarantor agreement.

The JCP advised Josette that she might be eligible for Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) and directed her to the Holland Walk Area Housing Office (AHO) down the road. The officers at the AHO were very helpful and friendly, Josette commented 'I love going to Holland Walk'.

Three weeks into life in Islington Josette found out she was pregnant with her partner's child. Although this was not planned it was welcomed but immediately changed Josette's circumstances and her priorities shifted. In addition to this her 13 yr old daughter was experiencing problems at her new school and was being bullied.

Josette went to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to ask for advice as to her situation and they advised that she may be entitled to Income Support (IS) now that she was pregnant. At 27 weeks she applied through the JCP. The advisor told her she was unlikely to receive IS. This made her feel very vulnerable and she felt that the advisor was not 'very sympathetic' to her situation. The advisor then told her to stop applying for JSA so that she might be able to qualify for IS.

As a result of this advice Josette received a letter from the Council informing her that her HB/CTB had been cancelled as she was no longer claiming JSA. Josette rang the HB department and was told by them that her IS application had been declined. They were able to tell her the reasons for this, which were due to her not contributing to National Insurance, due to being a student and that she was not available for work. Josette had received no correspondence or contact from the DWP informing her of this decision. She filled out a rapid reclaim form at the CAB office to challenge the decision and sent in supporting evidence, such as a letter from her GP confirming she was pregnant. Shortly after completing the form the confirmation letter finally arrived. Josette went back onto JSA and was able to get her HB/CTB reinstated and back-dated to the date it had stopped. However this period without any benefits was extremely distressing and she was worried about paying her rent and bills and having money for basics such as food and travel.

Josette has now been waiting 7 months for a response to her IS appeal. She has had no communication on this and is feeling very frustrated and vulnerable. Her second daughter is now 3 months old. During this period her oldest daughter has tried to commit suicide and continues to have problems at school. Josette's small 2 bed flat has two inter-connected bedrooms and the baby keeps the daughter awake at night which is also affecting her studies. Josette is extremely worried about her. Josette has a support worker who is supporting her daughter and the family through this difficult time. Josette has also written to the Housing Options department of the Council about her housing situation however she has received no acknowledgment of her application which was sent at the start of July.

Josette wants to be a good Mum and bring her children up as her Mum brought up her. Ideally she would like to complete her studies and then pursue a teaching career, potentially in nutrition. Josette commented that she 'wants to contribute to society but circumstances just took over.' 'I came here to work and have a life-not to be a parasite.' She feels 'the system hasn't reacted to the information she has given it'-such as the IS appeal and the Housing Options letter. 'I just want to be treated fairly until I get back to work.' She does not regret coming here but thinks she deserves a response from the IS and Housing Options departments. Josette feels the system is ineffective and that all the departments involved do not work together- 'Improvements can't be made to a system not working.'

*LB1 Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Making a claim 2010*

### **Case Study 56 - Karen a lone parent with three children and a grandchild who she regularly looks after**

Karen lives in a three bed privately rented flat and is not working at present but has just finished a free course through the JCP and is hoping to do another which will help her build back up the skills she needs to re-enter the job market. She has been told that now her son is 7 she will need to look for work else her benefits will be affected. However she is worried she won't earn enough to even cover her rent by going back to work in an entry level job. She will look for office work after completing the courses as she wants to get off benefits. She doesn't want her son she see her out of work for all his childhood.

Karen currently receives HB/CTB, Income Support, Child Tax and Child benefits. When Karen initially moved into her current property 1 year ago she had been living in temporary accommodation with her children for many years. Due to special circumstances of her family, which included her underage daughter being pregnant, Karen had a support worker and solicitor assisting her. Her solicitor directed her to an estate agent who then told her about the possible benefits she might be entitled to. The estate agent filled out the HB/CTB form for her and Karen then moved into the property. However, Karen did not hand in the form for two months. Eventually she handed it in to the AHO. The staff were very helpful and dealt with her case quickly. Karen thinks that if it wasn't for the estate agent she wouldn't have filled out the form herself as it was too long with too many questions and a lot of hassle.

It took a long time for her benefits to be paid and then when they were the benefits were paid into her account rather than direct to the landlord. The estate agent had filled out the correct section on the form so that the money would be paid straight to them so Karen couldn't understand why this had happened. This caused Karen quite a lot of problems. The Council did not back date the payments to when Karen moved into the property meaning that she is in arrears in her rent which is very expensive. Karen provided evidence to the Council of her special circumstances through her social worker but the back dated pay was refused. Karen had provided a letter from Hackney Children's Services stating the personal issues she had experienced which had led to her illness of post traumatic stress.

Karen has recently had bailiffs at her door for a £600 bill she owes the Council. She doesn't understand why she owes this money. The bailiffs really frightened her and turned up for a few days in a row banging on her door. The money she owes is now being taken directly out of her IS payments. This is leaving her unable to pay for the basics. She thinks it may be for money owed for Council Tax but she doesn't understand why she would owe money for Council Tax when she is on benefits.

Compounding this is the fact that her Child Tax Credit has been cancelled for a few months as Karen didn't fill out the renewal form. She didn't receive the letter from them as she had problems with her neighbours stealing her post. Additionally her child benefit has been reduced because she hasn't informed the department that her daughter is in further education.

Karen has been to the local JCP a few times to try and sort out the issues with her child benefit as she can not afford to call them from her own phone. However the phones in the JCP keep going down and this has caused her problems in trying to get her issues resolved.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Making a claim 2010*

### **Case Study 57 - Irene has been living in Islington for 9 years having moved here from Ecuador**

Irene lives in a 1 bedroom private rented flat and is a lone parent to her 1 year old daughter. She is not working at the moment as she is on maternity leave. Her Mum and sister live in the same block of flats as her but her Mother can't help with childcare due to poor health.

Irene worked as a cleaner in a bank for 7 years. However she is going to study English this year at college and might go back to work part time. Her English is not very good and she struggles to hold basic conversations and read and write. After she has completed the English course she will go back to work as a cleaner at the bank and will look to put her daughter into a nursery. However she is concerned because her hourly wage (under £6) is less than the hourly cost of a nursery. She is not aware of any additional benefits that may help her with this.

Irene is currently claiming IS/HB/CTB. Her friends told her about claiming benefits. Irene called the Council after seeing a leaflet in a health clinic and was sent an application form. One of the IBT visited her to help her fill out the form. The officer spoke fluent Spanish. Filling out the form was an easy process as the officer was able to take her through it step by step. Irene was able to gather all the evidence she needed. From completing the form she received her benefits straight into her bank account in under three weeks. She also received some back-dated pay which she received without any problems. Irene's benefits get paid every two weeks but always on different days of the week which she finds very confusing, and this can also cause problems in terms of paying bills.

Irene filled out a child tax application form back in March but has received no communication as to the progress of this application. She has tried phoning the relevant department almost every day recently but only every gets an answer machine message. She is finding it really hard to pay for the basics.

Irene also had problems claiming her Income Support. She waited six weeks to receive the first payment and the first amount was incorrect. She filled out the application at the local JCP and thought the staff were very friendly and had no problems filling out the application.

Irene is pleased to be receiving benefits as it means she now has time to spend with her daughter and can pay the rent. She also found the process of claiming HB/CTB very easy because the IBT member spoke fluent Spanish. However Irene would like to go back to work but can't because she needs to look after her daughter.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Making a claim 2010*

### **Case Study 58 - Naila is a single parent with an 8 year old daughter.**

Naila lives in a 1 bedroom privately rented flat and originally moved to London from Wales to study an under-graduate degree and escape an abusive relationship. Due to the size of the property Naila sleeps in the lounge and her daughter in the bedroom.

Naila hopes to go straight into a job after finishing her degree. This should be possible as she has to undertake a year of paid supervision in employment at the end of the three years of study. However she is worried about childcare both at the moment as a student and when she goes back to full time employment. At the moment she can't afford childcare and the schools scheme is expensive. She is aware of a free scheme called 'Three Corners' which is around the corner from her daughters school but her daughter is too young to walk there on her own from school and there is no-one to supervise her walking over there.

Naila is currently claiming HB/CTB and Child Tax credits. She was on IS before she became a student. When she started her course she informed the DWP that she had become a student but they continued to pay her IS for another 7-8 months despite repeated communication from her about her student status. They said they had a back log of cases to deal with and eventually her payments would be stopped. However this meant she was over-paid for a significant amount of time, and she feels this wasn't her fault. This has caused her a significant amount of problems.

Additionally she was waiting on official communication from the DWP that her IS payments had been stopped so that her HB payments could be recalculated. Eventually the DWP liaised with the Council to communicate that the payments had stopped. Naila started her course in September 2009 and it took until February 2010 for the payments to stop. Naila did not find out that the payments had stopped until she visited the JCP in May. She then only received a letter from the Council stating that her IS has stopped on the 30th of July. Only then was her HB recalculated.

Due to being overpaid Naila is now having to pay back the money from her benefits and this means she is going into her over-draft every month. She is finding it really hard to pay for everything. Additionally she is taking out a student loan of £10,000 a year to pay for her degree. She feels it is not her fault that she has been overpaid and is now being penalised for it. She does not know how much IS she has to pay back. She will appeal this as she has no other income and can't afford to pay it back. This is very stressful for her and she doesn't have the time to deal with it.

Additionally to this she has received many letters from the various departments (DWP/JCP/Council) which she finds very confusing and unnecessary, sometimes a number of letters come in one day. Once she received a letter from the Council saying she had overpaid her Council Tax. She didn't have the time to call or visit to sort this out and was annoyed as she doesn't have to pay Council Tax so she couldn't understand how this had happened. A few weeks later she got another letter saying that she didn't need to pay Council Tax because she was a student. There was no apology for the mistake.

Naila feels that the process works when applying for benefits but not when cancelling them or when there is a change of circumstance. The system is complex and confusing. Correspondence has been the main issue for Naila with too many confusing letters sent, also the issue with trying to stop IS. The Council should of also known she didn't need to pay Council tax. Generally speaking she has found the AHO to be really helpful, however there was one occasion when she visited the Old St office and was being helped by a young man. He was being supervised by an older woman. He gave Naila some advice and the woman stepped in and berated him for the advice that he had given. She did this in front of Naila and Naila felt she was very rude and offensive as the supervisor's comments were inappropriate in front of Naila. She was going to make a formal complaint but didn't feel she had the time.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Making a claim 2010*

**Case Study 59 - Rahib is a married man with 2 children who are 5 and 8 years old.**

Rahib originally from Algeria and has been in the country for over 15 years. He moved to Islington from Haringey in January 2010. His family live in a Council rented 2 bedroom property. At the moment the flat is big enough for his family but as his daughter gets older they will need a bigger place as his other child is a boy.

Rahib used to work full time as a bus driver but had to leave that job due to bad back problems. He has been able to go back to work as a school bus driver but only part time due to his continuing health problems. He is not sure if he will be able to go back full-time. His wife doesn't work but will look for employment soon as she has recently completed a childcare course. The family claim HB/CTB, working tax credits and child benefits.

Rahib does not know what his family will do for childcare when his wife goes back to work. The school and workplace start at the same time and this causes problems with pre and post school care for his children. He also does not know how they will afford to pay for children with him working part time hours.

In January the family swapped homes and moved from their Haringey property into Islington. The family received an information pack with the move and Rahib completed the HB/CTB form. He found the form fairly easy to complete as he had completed similar forms before. He received a letter from the Council saying some information was missing from his application; he called the Council to ask exactly what this was as he found the letter confusing. When he received his benefits the Council had made a mistake and failed to pay for the first week of tenancy. Rahib had to sort this out with them over the phone. He feels that the Council should have known the correct date of his tenancy as they had all the details of his tenancy agreement. Although the initial payment of benefits was paid very quickly it took 10 days to sort out the back dating mistake.

Rahib has experienced problems with other authorities benefit systems. Whilst living in Haringey his benefits were over-paid. He was not aware of this until much further down the line. He was sent a letter saying he owed £8000. After talking to the benefits team this was reduced to £2000 but he didn't understand why he owed this money. He commented this has also happened too many of his friends. He got a solicitor involved to help he sort out the problem.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview –*

**Case Study 60- Abdullahi and his wife are from Somalia and have lived in Islington for 1 year**

Abdullahi and his wife rent a four bedroom flat privately. They have seven children and one on the way ranging in age from 9 months to 15 years. Both Abdullahi and his wife are not working at the moment. Both are claiming IS and HB/CTB. Abdullahi cannot speak English fluently but does not have a problem reading English. He does not have enough money to cover the basics.

Abdullahi commented that registration is taking too long for Council housing. The Council has written to ask for ID for all the family and evidence of benefits but he has been waiting 2 months for an answer, living in an extremely over-crowded property.

Abdullahi found out about benefits through the local Somali community who advised him to apply. He went to the local Area Housing Office (Holland Walk) and picked up an application form. Although he filled the form out himself he did have to phone a friend to ask for help on answering some questions which he found confusing. He thought the form was mostly easy to understand but too long. He was able to fill out the form and return the evidence within 1 day. He felt the form was too big with some questions very similar. He felt that it would be better to make the questionnaire easier than to make it available in another language.

It took 3-4 weeks for him to receive the benefits without any problems. He found the process easy and didn't think there was anything difficult in applying for benefits.

Abdullahi is not working due to a problem with his knee which has needed a number of operations on it and he has problems standing and sitting. He wants to go back to work but cannot at the moment. His wife cannot work at the moment due to looking after the children with the youngest only 9 months old and because she is currently pregnant; she will remain the main carer when he does go back to work. When asked about access to childcare Abdullahi commented that this was not a consideration as his wife will remain the carer. It seemed that it was not a consideration for the wife to go out to work, that she would remain a full time mother and housewife.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Making a claim 2010*

### **Case Study 61 - Michael a single man working as a chef**

Michael has been living in his current property since 1996. It is an RSL rented property. He has been working as a chef for many, many years. He has no partner or children. Since the end of March this year Michael has been off work sick due to diabetes. He has to go to hospital twice a week to have treatment and has recently had a couple of toes amputated. He has been on statutory sick pay during this time (no employment sickness). He has recently agreed with his employer that he will leave work in September as he is unable to stand for long periods of time on his feet.

He would love to go back to work as a chef but has been advised by his doctor that this is not going to be possible. He may look for work again when he comes off his medication but this would have to be part-time and locally based due to his condition. He does not know what type of work he will be able to do. Michael has applied for DLA but was refused as he can walk for 15 minutes at a time.

Michael did not want to go on benefits as he had worked hard all his life. He was very proud of this and felt that going onto benefits was somehow a failing. However his friends were telling him he could not live on statutory sick pay alone and he relented and visited the CAB for assistance. They gave him the number for the IBT and an appointment was set up for the end of April. A woman visited him at home and helped him fill out the form, she was extremely nice and helpful.

Michael found the form very long and confusing. There was a problem due to incorrectly filling out the form despite help from the IBT. Michael ticked the box which stated he was an RSL tenant but due to also ticking another box the benefits were paid straight into his account, rather than to the landlord. Michael is repaying a bank loan and the money paid for his rent was deducted to cover this lone. This caused him quite a lot of problems. He had to come to an agreement with his landlord and pays an extra amount of money back each month to cover this.

His benefits were paid around 3 weeks from completing the form. Michael visited the Upper St AHO and was surprised there were no queues. He found the staff very nice and helpful. Apart from the mistake with paying the money direct into his account Michael found the whole process very easy due to the help he received from the IBT team. He would still rather be working than on benefits as it appears that he is a very proud man and sees this as a failing but at the present time his health problems are too deliberating.

Michael commented that there is nothing can that be done to improve the current service and that if his friends were in the same position he would recommend they find out about benefits via the local CAB office because that is where he went for assistance.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview – Customer Journeys Making a claim 2010*



### **Case study 62 – Tina a girl now living with adoptive parents**

Tina is the 8th child born to Diana. Her 7 siblings all have the same father and are white British. She has a different father Leo, who is Black African. Tina's eldest 5 siblings were removed from their parents care due to substance misuse and domestic violence. The 3 eldest are in long term fostering and the 2 younger ones were adopted. Diana went on to have 2 more children, both times she attempted to detox from heroin but could not abstain long enough to be assessed as able to care for her children. The children were adopted. Their father then passed away and Diana committed an offence of Arson serving 5 years imprisonment.

Diana began a relationship with Leo however when Tina was born, Leo denied being her father, refused DNA testing and any engagement with children's social care (CSC) up until August 2010 when he approached CSC and advised he was the father.

Tina spent 5 days in hospital withdrawing. She was placed with an Islington foster carer under an Interim Care Order. Plans were for mother to engage with substance misuse services through Family Drug and Alcohol Court. However, Diana could not abstain from misusing substances and withdrew from attending contact with Tina. Adoption therefore became the plan for Tina and this was ratified at the Adoption Panel in June 2010. In July 2010 a Placement Order was received.

In November 2010 Tina's prospective adopters were matched to her and introductions began two days later. Tina moved to live with her adoptive parents in December 2010 and she is reported to be settled and content in her new home.

*LBI Children's Services 2010*

### **Case study 63 – Billy a boy now living with foster carers**

Billy had been the subject of a Child Protection Plan since June 2009. He was the youngest child of a sibling group of 3. In 2004, just before his first birthday his mother suddenly died of pneumonia. Billy remained with his father until 2008 when concerns about Billy's father's misuse of alcohol were referred to CSC and led to the children moving to reside with their paternal grandparents whilst their father entered detox. Billy and his siblings returned to their father's care and were classed as Children in Need. Concerns about Billy's father's capacity to care for him and his siblings increased and the children were made the subject of child protection plans.

In August 2009, Billy's father stated that he could not cope caring for his children and they moved to live with their grandparents. Billy's father made several attempts to detox from alcohol whilst his parents and the children's maternal grandparents shared the care of the children. In June 2010 the department made the decision that permanency for Billy and his siblings could not be provided by the children's father or either set of grandparents and plans were made for them to be placed in foster care, together in a planned way.

During September 2010, placements were identified, visited by professionals, discussed with family members and planned introductions took place with the selected carers. Billy and his siblings were made the subject of Interim Care Orders in October 2010. The plan is for Billy and his siblings to remain with their foster carers permanently.

*LBI Children's Services 2010*

#### **Case study 64 – Craig a boy remanded into Local Authority Care**

Craig became Looked After in April as he was remanded into Local Authority Care following an assault against his father. Craig was described as a young man with difficulties in managing his anger particularly around his family. He was assessed to be beyond the control of both his parents. There was a history of domestic violence between Craig's parents which led to a brief period of CSC involvement in 2006. Craig's parents then separated and he lived with his mother and father separately without success.

Craig had violently attacked different members of his family in the past. It is believed that Craig's use of cannabis exacerbated his behaviour; he refused to engage with substance misuse services. Whilst remanded Craig was provided with an Independent Living Skills package and he responded well within the semi independent unit. He also attended school daily. Craig received a community penalty and moved to reside with his mother.

The Youth Offending Service continued to provide a package of services to Craig as part of his community order and CSC closed the case in October 2010.

*LBI Children's Services 2010*

### **Case Study 65 – Jen a young person who has lived in many different foster homes**

Jen's mother disappeared when she was 2 and at first she was raised by her stepmother and father. By the age of 6 it was clear to Jen's teachers that something was wrong at home and she was moved to her Aunt and Uncle's. Jen was not consulted on the move but was initially happy to go but then her uncle began to sexually abuse her. When Jen tried to run away she said people assumed it was because she missed her father. She said people always thought the problems were to do with her.

Jen moved around a couple of foster homes but none of them worked out and her Aunt kept asking her to go back to live with them, Jen said she couldn't tell her why she didn't want to move back and eventually she was pushed into going back. This time her Uncle didn't abuse her but it didn't work out and she ended up moving into a new foster home with four other children. This home was run by an alcoholic woman and despite being only 9yrs old Jen said she ended up looking after the other children. Jen stayed in this foster home for a few years and during this time the 16 yr old son of the woman who ran the home repeatedly tried to rape her and the other eldest girl. Finally all five children ran away to the next door neighbour. The foster woman was never allowed to foster again.

After they ran away they were split up and Jen was placed in an emergency home for two weeks until she was placed in another home. This didn't work well and there were regular arguments with the whole family. Jen's mother was then found and she moved in with her but after two weeks she went back to the previous foster home. Jen was still unhappy so she ran away to her sister.

From her sister's home Jen was placed in a new foster home aged 15. Jen felt this was a great home, she said it really worked and she got on very well with the woman who ran it and that she was given freedom and trust. Jen moved into her own flat when she turned 18 but still regularly goes back to see this woman.

Jen started working at working at 16 and is now working full time. Jen is also studying for a professional qualification and does a lot of work in the community. Jen hopes that one day she can have her own family and be a foster carer

Jen says that as a child in care you don't tell people things because the outcomes are too unpredictable. 'If it's not too serious your foster parents can be told and that causes tension and arguments. If it is serious you can be moved and although your situation might be very bad you have no way of knowing the new place will be any better. You will also risk losing all of your friends in the move'.

When Jen was a teenager she did speak out and told her brother about being abused by her uncle. Her brother told her family and the case went to trial. Jen only spoke to her solicitor once and that was on the day of the trial. Her Uncle was found not guilty, the fact that she had gone back to live there counted against her and now she is ostracised by some parts of her family.

Jen said that 'it is very hard to trust people when you're in care my social worker changed continuously and I only saw them once a month. It's also hard to get information – I would not read any of the letters I was sent by the Council when I was a child'. Jen thinks social workers need to be freed up to spend more time with children.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview 2010*

### **Case study 66 - Yeva a mother with a disabled child who has overstayed her visa**

Yeva arrived in the UK from the Ukraine in 2002 with a 6 month visa, she worked in a department store, fell in love and after 5 months became pregnant. This made it very hard for Yeva to go home. Her partner wanted her to have an abortion and their relationship deteriorated. Yeva was feeling very stressed, she couldn't tell anyone at work she was pregnant in case she lost her job. Her visa had run out and she said she was looking over her shoulder all the time.

Yeva's daughter Hope was born at six months; she had brain damage and had to spend the first 3 months of her life in an incubator. The doctors let Yeva stay in the hospital for a week so she could be with Hope, after this she went back to work and went to the hospital every morning and night to see Hope and feed her. Yeva knew then that she couldn't go home and that staying in the UK was essential for Hope's health.

Yeva had saved up some money so that when Hope came out of hospital she could stay at home with her but it was not enough and she had to borrow from friends and the bank. Yeva got a job but had to pay rent and give £30 a day to a Lithuanian friend to care for Hope. Yeva got in to debt and did a 21 day medical trial to help out with the repayments.

Yeva eventually found a live in job in a B&B so she could spend more time with Hope but it turned out the Greek owner wanted Yeva to have a relationship with him and so she had to leave. It was hard to find somewhere to live as no one wants to flat share with someone with a child but eventually Yeva found a box room in Holloway Road, her friend continued to look after Hope and Yeva went back to work in a department store.

Yeva did find a bigger place to move in but at the time of the move Hope had to go into hospital. While she was in hospital the new landlord rang and said Yeva could no longer have the bigger place. Yeva was homeless and for the first time and she spoke to a social worker. The social worker was very kind but said there wasn't anything she could do for Yeva because of her status. Luckily Yeva's old landlord had another small room for her that she took.

After a while Yeva managed to rent a 2 bed flat with friends and they were happy there. Eventually her friends moved on and she flat-shared with a number of different people, they had the bedrooms and Hope and Yeva lived in the living room. Recently Yeva sub-let one of the bedrooms to 2 Pakistani men. They wanted Yeva to leave and said they would tell the Home Office and social services about her if she didn't. The next day the police arrived at Yeva's work and she instantly lost her job. Social Services came to see Yeva and contacted Faith's school but they could see Yeva was a good mother.

Yeva says when she was found out she was actually relieved. The social worker told her about the NRPF team. She is now submitting an application to stay in the UK, this is likely to take 6-7 months. Yeva is no longer able to work so the council are paying for her rent. Hope is still in school and has responded fantastically to care. Yeva states that if they returned to the Ukraine there would be no facilities for her. Yeva says that she is not proud of overstaying but is proud of the last 8 years and can only hope to get status.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview 2010*

**Case Study 67 - Emma a woman suffering from domestic violence, using drugs and becoming homeless, now works with other users**

Emma left home at the age of 17 and moved in with her partner. Within two months he had begun subjecting her to extreme mental and physical abuse. This went on for 11 ½ years until her partner died. Despite training and working as a social worker, Emma had no idea where to go for help, she had two young boys and felt trapped.

Emma's partner was a heroin addict and after resisting for 11 years, she began using 3 months before he died. When he died Emma lost her job and became homeless. She was homeless for three years and during that time worked as a street girl and was raped.

Emma had no idea what help was available and no idea where to go to get information. Emma's new partner encouraged her to go to a doctor who put her on methadone scripts. A charity who worked with Street Women then told Emma about a homeless charity who may be able to help. The homeless charity said they could not help her until they had photographed her sleeping rough. Having been photographed by them they then said they still couldn't help her.

Finally Hackney Council referred Emma about the Peter Bedford charity. Within 3 weeks they found Emma the home that she has had now for five years.

Emma began working for ICDAS to represent users of drug and alcohol services. She runs a surgery every Tuesday for users and was recently elected chair of the group. Emma has achieved her NVQ level 2 in Drug and Alcohol Support Work and has been nominated for a Camden and Islington Service User Award.

Emma feels that there needs to be much more support and information for young people. We should take advantage of social media to communicate this information.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview 2010*

### **Case Study 68 - Pete a man who has been a substance misuser and has been homeless for many years, now working with other users**

Pete has lived in Islington all his life. He didn't get into the secondary school that he wanted to and by 16-17 alcohol was a big part of his life. His parents didn't want him to stay with them and he didn't know who to turn to. He ended up on the streets and homeless in 'Cardboard City' in Waterloo.

Pete wasn't aware of any agencies that he could turn to for help and he turned to crime to fund his drinking and did some time in Prison. No one picked up on the fact that his underlying problem was alcohol. Pete never saw drinking as a problem, for him it was the solution. When Pete came out of prison he legally squatted for a while but the council wanted him out of the borough and he was offered a flat in Hackney. He lived there for about 6 years but didn't pay any bills. During this time Pete's drinking got worse and he attempted suicide a number of times.

Pete was voluntarily sectioned in 1994 at University College Hospital and that is when he first found about the Alcohol Recovery Project (ARP) (now called Foundation 66). The staff there were fantastic and had lots of empathy. This was the first help Pete had with his alcohol addiction and he did a number of residential rehabs. Sometimes he felt people didn't really understand him, it was like they were listening but not really hearing him. Because of his time in rehab Pete had to give up his flat in Hackney and move in with his dad for a while before getting a bed sit in Kentish Town. His drinking spiralled out of control and he started using drugs. Pete ended up begging on the streets and selling the big issue but he wasn't homeless as he had the bed sit to go back to. After being out of services for around 5 years a friend saw how bad he was and an AA friend took him to Peckham for a 13 week residential rehab. After this he went into a third stage house in Wandsworth.

After rehab Pete started a relationship with an alcoholic and they relapsed, drinking on and off. He moved back in with his Dad but his father passed away due to his drinking aged 56. Because Pete was not living with him officially he was worried he would be made homeless again so he barricaded himself in and people brought him some bits of shopping. Pete couldn't face being homeless again; while at 18 he felt he could cope now he was older he didn't think he'd manage. Pete's partner went to a solicitor and mentioned his situation to them and they said he would be able to get re-housed. Pete was worried they would put him on one of the awful estates but they found somewhere on Liverpool Road. They said he could move in when they had done a bit of work to it.

While this was happening Pete's partner and he were still in and out of drinking and one night she left a cigarette burning in the front room. There was a fire and it gutted the room. The new house was still not ready so Pete thought about writing to the Islington Gazette but they didn't want the story. They did tell him about his local MP and he called him. The next day the housing office rang and he moved into Liverpool Road. By this time they were both desperate for a detox but their GP said they had to wait 2 months. Pete knew if they did wait one of them would die so he managed to book them into a private detox. Since this Pete has been sober.

Through the college and ARP Pete managed to do his level 2 course in counselling and from 2003 – 05 he did some 'back to work' computer training and got a special achievement award. I worked for a while in the sales industry but he knew it wasn't what he really wanted to do. In 2008 he found out about ICDAS and got the opportunity to do his NVQ level 2 course in substance misuse. He began working 1-2 days a week for Pillion and now he also has his NVQ level 3 in Advice and Guidance and NVQ level 2 in Peer mentoring. Pete has now found his voice and is working to help others who are in the same situation that he was.

When Pete was in difficulty he had no clue places existed that he could go to for help. He thinks for lots of people this is still the case. People don't know that they can make their own Care Plan with their GP and not all GP's are aware of the issues for alcohol misuse. Islington need to promote the services that are available more.

*LBI Strategy and Partnerships Interview 2010*

## **Case Study 69 – Miss M an 18 year old woman suffering from domestic violence**

Miss M came to Solace Women's Aid (SWA) early in 2009 seeking advice and support. She was 18 years of age and was fleeing her family; her father was violent, often beating and kicking her. He also wanted Miss M to marry a man whom she had never met and who lived in Ireland. Miss M was very afraid of her father's violence and she did not want to marry this man. She fled her family, pretending to visit the ladies toilet whilst out shopping with her brother – Miss M was never allowed out alone; she was escorted by a male family member at all times. This is common practice within traditional Irish Traveller families.

Miss M was referred to SWA via a Health Centre she had walked into after fleeing. SWA secured a space for Miss M at one of their two Islington refuges. It was unsafe for Miss M to be moved to their specialist refuge for Irish and Traveller women in south London because the risk of her being 'found' was deemed too high. When Miss M first arrived at the refuge she stayed for one week as she found it very difficult to adapt to life away from her family and community. Miss M had telephone contact with her father and mother whilst living with SWA and she returned home – her father had promised to end his violence and to stop pressurising her regarding marriage. Miss M came back to SWA a week later – the violence had increased in severity and her father had begun to pressurise her into marriage as soon as she returned home.

Miss M then stayed at the refuge for one year. During this time she became more self-confident and she began to plan for her future with support from SWA staff. Miss M was unable to read or write and had on-going health problems when she came to SWA. With support she attended both literacy and numeracy classes and had an appointment with a specialist to address her underlying health problem. Miss M also attended a six week domestic violence workshop programme provided by SWA – these provide a safe space for women like Miss M to talk to other women about their experiences of violence and to try to come to terms with their impact. She attended SWA's specialist counselling service, volunteered with a local pre-school provider, began to travel via bus and train unaccompanied and learned budgeting and other life skills. These were a first for Miss M who had led a very sheltered existence, cosseted from the outside world all her short life.

Securing appropriate move-on accommodation for Miss M was very difficult. She needed a huge amount of support from SWA staff to prepare for life after refuge. Miss M would be living alone for the first time in her life. When Miss M left SWA and moved into her own bed-sit, SWA provided her with six month's resettlement support. This support involved organising her welfare benefits entitlement, registering with a local GP and dentist and enrolling for a further education course in childcare.

Miss M has been living independently for eight months and is doing extremely well. She has limited contact with her female siblings and has made friends locally. SWA worked with Miss M until October 2010 and Miss M knows she can contact SWA at any time should she need advice or support.

Miss M hopes to make a life for herself away from her family and community, to stay safe, to finish her training course and gain a qualification in childcare, to work in paid employment and to give something back – Miss M has expressed a wish to return to SWA and support other young women fleeing domestic abuse in a voluntary capacity. Miss M thinks that good local specialist advice and support services, a range of options including refuge provision and floating support, resettlement support post move-on, specialist counselling services, access to a range of life skill 'classes' including budgeting, basic DIY and basic cookery, access to safe, appropriate move-on accommodation post refuge and more advertising of domestic and sexual violence services using creative methods e.g. not relying on the written word are key for women affected by domestic violence.

*Solace Women's Aid 2010*

### **Case Study 70 – Miss L a pregnant woman suffering from domestic violence**

Miss L was referred to the Islington Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy Service (EVOLVE) run by Solace Women's Aid (SWA) in 2010 aged 19. Miss L was assessed as being at 'high risk'. During her four year relationship with her perpetrator, Miss L was subjected to serious and persistent physical, psychological and verbal abuse. At point of referral, Miss L was three months pregnant and feared for her safety and the safety of her unborn child should the perpetrator be made aware of her pregnancy.

Miss L wanted to be pregnant but Miss L's perpetrator had made it clear that he never wanted to be a father; two years previously, he had forced Miss L to have a termination. Miss L had no family in London as she had originally come from Scotland. Miss L ended her relationship with the perpetrator but he did not accept this. Post separation, the abuse Miss L experienced escalated with assaults taking place in public. It was no longer safe for Miss L to remain in her local area but she wanted to stay in Islington as she had one close female friend in the borough

EVOLVE carried out a thorough Risk Assessment with Miss L and as a result she was referred to the Islington MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) to ensure a multi agency response was initiated with immediate effect. This included: securing safe, appropriate temporary accommodation for Miss L outside her 'danger area', linking Miss L with SWA's legal advice service (Miss L obtained a Non Molestation Order against her ex-partner), linking Miss L with Islington based ante natal service providers with a good awareness of domestic violence issues.

Miss L was also referred to SWA's specialist counselling service and SWA worked with Miss L to draw up a Safety Plan helping to keep both her and her unborn child safe from her perpetrator and his family Life after EVOLVE. SWA's EVOLVE service worked with Miss L for three months. Miss L is still in contact with other SWA services including our specialist counselling service.

Miss L's achievements since coming to SWA include a successful application for a Management Transfer (housing) within the borough, attendance at a programme of domestic violence workshops facilitated by SWA where Miss L had an opportunity to meet other women in similar situations and talk about her experiences. Miss L made friends with two women from this group, attendance at ante natal classes, attendance on an Access to Higher Education Course – Miss L wants to train to become a midwife

Miss L hopes to be a good mother, to stay safe, to become a midwife, to be able to contact the police should her perpetrator find her. Miss L thinks that a quick response, 'believing' statutory and voluntary agencies, good local specialist advice and support services including excellent legal advice from domestic violence experts, more awareness amongst the general population about domestic violence and the MARAC and more safe housing options are key for women effected by domestic violence.

*Solace Women's Aid 2010*



### **Case Study 71 – Miss A a mother whose child had experienced domestic violence**

Miss A was referred to Solace Women's Aid's (SWA) Art Therapy Service in 2010 for one to one parenting support. Miss A's daughter was 7 and Miss A was very worried about how her daughter's emotional wellbeing was being impacted by the domestic violence she had witnessed and her parent's subsequent separation. SWA worked with Miss A around four main areas : contact with her child's father, setting boundaries with her daughter, looking at her child's emotional development, building a healthy and appropriate mother/daughter relationship.

The one to one sessions offered Miss A a safe place to discuss her concerns as a parent and practical ways to support her child were explored. She knew her child had been affected by the domestic abuse but she didn't know how exactly. Miss A was encouraged to observe her child closely and map some of her behaviours against the development of a child who had not experienced abuse. Miss A learned a great deal about child development at different ages and how violence can affect a child, increasing their anxiety and inhibiting their learning. SWA and Miss A looked at the ways in which children react to the presence of aggression, how they can sometimes act out aggression themselves because they have been exposed to it or how they can lose confidence completely and withdraw into themselves, losing their spontaneity.

Each child is different but SWA will always help a mother to look at what is happening for her child so that she can use that learning as the child grows up and becomes a young adult. Miss A had never had the chance to focus on her relationship with her daughter and was anxious to rebuild some of the attachments that had been damaged by domestic violence. She was frightened that she would be judged by local services and other women and she said it was a relief to talk to a professional who knew it wasn't her fault and wouldn't blame her for staying or leaving but just recognized that the violence was her partner's responsibility.

Miss A is building a strong and appropriate relationship with her child. With the SWA worker she, looked at communication styles, understanding the importance of body language, tone of voice and content, looked at ways to communicate with children at different ages/abilities and the ways they might try to communicate with us as adults, looked at why her child was being aggressive and abusive in her communications with her, imitating Miss A's perpetrator. Miss A worked with an SWA worker for four months.

Miss A's hopes to build a healthy parent/child relationship with her daughter, to encourage her daughter to continue to talk about the domestic violence she witnessed and any impact this may have had on her, to keep herself and her daughter safe, observing contact arrangements put in place to try to ensure this

Miss A thinks good local specialist advice and support services for adults, a range of good local specialist services for children and young people including art therapy, an open door should women encounter further problems post move-on, awareness raising campaigns in schools and colleges targeting both young victims and perpetrators are key for women and children affected by domestic violence.

*Solace Women's Aid 2010*

## **Case Study 72 – Miss E a woman suffering from domestic violence**

Miss E met her husband in Brazil in June 2003. Miss E worked as a clerical worker in an office and was an independent woman living in Rio de Janeiro where they met. The relationship in Brazil was quite good and Miss E remembered the courtship stage as a happy and pleasant time. However, she expressed that at times she felt controlled by him, but it did not seem to be a significant problem. In 2005 they got married in Brazil and in 2007 they came to live in England, London.

The domestic violence started a month after they arrived from Brazil that it was when the abusive relationship began to escalate. Miss E was told by her husband that she could not go out of the house without his consent. He took her savings she brought from Brazil and constantly humiliated her. He put her down by making negative comments about her every day.

Miss E was not allowed to get a job or make new friends, and the only money her husband provided was some food vouchers. On January 2007, Miss E decided to find a job regardless her husband threats, when her husband realised that she was working, he started to hit and slapping her, he always excused himself by saying it was unintentional until one day he threw her down the stairs. As a consequence of the fall, her back was injured and she went to see her GP. She told the GP it was due to an accident, she felt ashamed and scared to tell what happened.

After that incident of violence Miss E did not know what to do. She was still in love with him, but completely frightened and powerless. She tried to discuss the situation with him but he was dismissive saying everything was her fault because she did not know how to be a good wife. The domestic violence increased every day and the situation was unsustainable. She felt hopeless and desperate without friends and family to get support.

Miss E decided to contact to Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA) on July 2010 looking for advice on the ongoing abuse she has been experiencing, she found a LAWA's leaflet at her the GP surgery. Miss E had a spouse visa which meant in practice that she did not have access to public funds. Miss E was risk assessed as standard risk. LAWA's adviser and Miss E discussed safety planning measures so she could make herself safer while remaining in the relationship. Miss E felt more self-assured and felt she understood about the options available to her and how she could make herself safer should the abuse increased further.

Miss E was informed about her rights and options available including civil remedies and possible case outcomes. It was agreed to make an application on Miss E's behalf to the Sojourner Project to obtain financial assistance to leave her abusive husband. Her application was successful and the funding was granted. Consequently, Miss E agreed to be referred to LAWA's refuge. E was later referred to an immigration solicitor and an Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) application was made under the Domestic Violence Rule.

In less than a month, the Home Office had granted her ILR and she is now in her way to live an independent life free from violence which it was what she wanted. Miss E is currently living at the refuge, working as a receptionist, she has been attending counselling sessions in her mother tongue and she will start the divorce proceedings next year and will start an interpreter course to improve her jobs opportunities.

Her knowledge on domestic violence and its impact has increased. Miss E feels more confident and independent on the process of rebuilding her life and more positive about the future. Miss E has also now become aware of the support and advice available to access should the need arise again. She stated that she felt self-assured by receiving advice in her own language and by someone from her own cultural background. She found it difficult to be understood in English and that played a great difference in terms of being empowered to decide to leave the abusive relationship which changed her life for the better.

*Latin American Women's Aid 2010*

### **Case Study 73 – Miss R a mother suffering domestic violence**

Miss R is originally from Peru and has lived in the UK with her Kosovian husband Mr R for the past 10 years. They have three children together. Mr R has been physically, verbally and emotionally abusive towards Miss R for many years and tried to kill her on various occasions. Although he didn't abuse the children directly, they were witnesses of the abuse for years. Miss R tried to separate from Mr R several times, but always went back as she found it hard to provide for herself and her children, since she has no money, no job and no recourse to public funds. After Mr R's last severe attack in September 2010 Miss R finally sought help and eventually found LAWA through a friend. But it took her a nearly a month to find the right kind of support.

Miss R was scared of approaching a support organisation, as Mr R always told her that no one would believe her and that she would only get deported and her children taken away. Miss R therefore never went to seek any kind of help during the many years of being abused by her husband.

When Miss R finally summoned the courage to leave her husband, she was in a desperate situation and eventually approached social services. However they told her that they wouldn't be able to support her as she had no recourse to public funds. Miss R at that time had a visa application with the Home Office pending and was waiting for their reply for more than a year. Legally social services are obligated to help a woman and her children if they have a visa application pending and encounter financial hardship whilst waiting for the Home Office's reply. However social services didn't follow this regulation and merely offered Miss R the following two options: to return to her country with her children (who were all born in the UK) or to accommodate her children separately from her (as they stated to only have an obligation to protect the children, not her).

Miss R wasn't happy with any of these options and didn't know what to do. Around this time a friend gave her LAWA's telephone number and recommended our services to her, so she got in touch with us to ask for help.

Miss R's caseworker at LAWA tried reminding social services of their obligations, but they still refused to help. The caseworker then arranged for a community care lawyer to take on the case who put pressure on the social services to follow their legal obligations. As a consequence meantime social services agreed to provide Miss R and her children with basic financial support and temporary accommodation until the Home Office replies to her application.

After a while Miss R's indefinite leave to remain was granted and her caseworker supported her with applying for permanent accommodation and benefits and helped her to find an adequate school for her children. In the meantime Miss R has taken up an ESOL class and job's skills course and has a much more positive outlook on life.

Miss R would like to lead a life free of fear and wants to be able to provide for her family without having to rely on benefits. LAWA helped her access a skills for work course and ESOL classes, which Miss R is in the process of absolving successfully. She is now on her way to professional independence.

Miss R said that if she would have known before that she could approach agencies for help, and had e.g. social services been more sympathetic with her when she first spoke to them, she would have never remained in this abusive relationship for so long. She said that people like her need to feel that they can turn to organisations for support, without being judged or treated in a rude way. She also said that it would help if e.g. social services would be aware on where to send people, if they cannot assist.

*Latin American Women's Aid 2010*

#### **Case study 74 - Miss S a woman suffering from domestic violence**

Miss S is a 44 year old Syrian woman. At 19 she was married. The marriage broke down and Miss S was divorced. Miss S remained unmarried for 20 years. Through a family connection Miss S was introduced to a Syrian man with British citizenship living in England who was in Syria looking for a wife. Miss S met him a few times and he seemed shy and kind and Miss S agreed to marry him. She waited for 10 months to obtain a spousal visa and during this time her new husband called her twice a week.

On her arrival in the UK Miss S discovered that her husband had lied about his circumstances. He was unemployed and claiming incapacity benefits. She also found bags and bags of unused medication in an unused bedroom wardrobe. Worse still Miss S's husband's behaviour was erratic. He would have violent mood swings that resulted in violent beatings. At other times he went through periods of total withdrawal. Miss S's husband had been previously married and Miss S sought help from his three daughters and informed her sister in Dubai of her marital problems. Her sister was concerned about what would happen to her if she returned to Syria after another divorce and advised her to do everything she could to please him and to try and avoid arousing his anger.

Miss S continued to endure life with her husband. Most detestable to her was his sexual appetite which involved doing things which she found humiliating and frightening. Miss S suspected that her husband was only interested in using her for sex for the duration of two years and wanted to get rid of her once this time was up.

The day before Miss S was legally entitled to claim for indefinite leave to remain her husband pronounced the Islamic divorce formula with his daughter and his son-in-law as witnesses. Miss S did not know what to do and so stayed in the house. A few days later he and his family came to the house insulted her and told her that she had no right to stay in the country and that they were going to have her deported. They then called the police in order to have her taken away. Fortunately, the police treated her very well and provided her with an interpreter. It was at this time that Miss S first heard the words 'Domestic Violence' and became aware of her rights to contest her husband's demands for her removal.

The difficulties that Miss S faced were a lot. Miss S had no recourse to public funds and therefore she couldn't access any form of social housing or benefits to maintain her. Her visa expired and she feared she might face deportation. She didn't want to go back home as her family would reject her and accuse her of bringing shame on the family by not staying married and have children.

She had to make a claim for Indefinite Leave to Remain under DV Rule and it was successful. When Miss S first arrived in the UK she hoped to work and live a decent life. So, she got enrolled in a college and did an English course. She feels that women who come to the UK as a spouse are not treated with dignity especially when their marriages break down. They have nowhere to go and they become destitute as a result. She said she can imagine that if she had children with me the situation would have been intolerable

*Kurdish & Middle Eastern Women's Organisation Limited 2010*

### **Case Study 75 – Ms Y a woman suffering domestic violence**

The events and circumstances that lead to the outcome of this case study resulted from Ms Y objection to being treated like a “slave” along with the fact that, over a period of time, she discovered that her husband (Mr Y) was a selfish and habitual liar.

Ms Y is originally from Morocco and Mr Y from Iraq but had been living in London for sometime. They met on the internet dating website and shortly thereafter he visited her in Morocco to meet her and her family. He was very unassuming, polite and friendly and her family was generally impressed with his demeanour.

Within weeks they were married and apparently everything went very well. About a month after the wedding her husband returned to London and she followed him shortly thereafter. For a week or so there continue to be much excitement about the marriage when there was a sudden change in her husband’s behaviour. He started to demand sex repeatedly and if she objects, he would rape her and indulge in practices that were totally unfamiliar to her.

At about the same time some facts about Mr Y began to surface. When they met he told her he was 42 years olds. In fact he was 53. He also told her that he owned a restaurant, a mini-cab firm and his own house. In fact the house was owned by sister in law and mini-cab and restaurant owned by a daughter-in-law. She also discover that Mr Y was married twice before, once with an English woman with whom he fathered three children and once with a Iraqi woman with whom there was one child. It is understood that the Iraqi was sent back to Iraq and has never been seen since but the infant remained in this Country with Mr Y

It also came to light that a 23 year old woman who was living at the same address, who was said to be Mr Y niece and taking of the infant, was in fact the ex-wife of Mr Y’s son and that she and Mr Y has been having a relationship for over four years. When Ms Y challenged Mr Y about what she was told/ discovered he suggested that she go and visit her family in Morocco, whilst he go on a business trip to Iraq. On her return from Morocco she was detained by the Immigration Officials, because Mr Y had cancelled her spousal visa whilst she was away.

Support provided to Ms Y has included accompanying her to her solicitors – provide translation and interpretation, visit her in hospital following a failed suicide attempt, enrol her on an English conversational group classes, providing her with one to one support on a range of issues to help facilitate her stay in this Country. Ms Y hopes that if she is successful with her application for the right to remain in this Country her plan is to go to University to study Social Work.

Ms Y would advise others to avoid falling in love with some on the internet, especially if he is from a different country as there is very little opportunity to get to know him well and would like to see changes in the rules governing No Recourse to Public Funds, which currently gives too much power to a man over his abused partner

*Kurdish & Middle Eastern Women’s Organisation Limited 2010*

### **Case Study 76 – Ms N a woman suffering from domestic violence**

Ms N came to the UK as a spouse of a British national in 2009. Immediately after she turned 21, her family pressured her to get married as part of the custom there, where people would look down on the unmarried woman. They arranged her marriage to their neighbour's brother who came back home in a very short visit to marry her after he exchanged with her a few emails and pictures.

As Ms N was still studying she hadn't had a chance to sit with her husband alone and the marriage was never consummated. Upon her arrival to the UK she experienced domestic violence, stayed in a refuge and applied for ILR under DV Rule. Her application was rejected. She applied for asylum, but also her case was rejected.

The difficulties that Ms N faced were a lot. She had no recourse to public funds and therefore she can't access any form of social housing or benefits to maintain her. She didn't want to go back home as her family would reject her and accuse her of bringing shame to the family by not staying married and have children. While Ms N was immersed in all these lost thoughts she met a married man who offered to help her if she became his mistress and she accepted.

Ms N has to make a fresh claim. We don't know the outcomes yet as she came from a country that the UK government thinks is safe and might deport her.

When Ms N first arrived to the UK she hopes that she would stay here to pursue her pharmaceutical studies further and qualify to work as a pharmacist. She feels that she was betrayed by the immigration system as a genuine domestic violence victim whose case was rejected. Also, she felt that the system didn't care about her and left her destitute and vulnerable to the point that she accepted a hand out of a random person on the street who could have been a vicious criminal.

*Kurdish & Middle Eastern Women's Organisation Limited 2010*

### **Case Study 77 – Ms Z a mother suffering from domestic violence**

Ms Z is a mother of two children 6 and 7 years old. Ms Z disclosed that she married her husband Mr Z in 2002 and the violence began very soon after marriage. Ms Z said that initially Mr Z would throw things in the house, such as the telephone. Ms Z added that within a year of marriage life, Mr Z had started to use physical violence towards her.

Ms Z added that Mr Z gets irritated at the smallest things for instance, if the box of tissues on the coffee table has been moved or if she is late to home for 5 minutes late. Ms Z said that she tires not to do things that will irritate him but she often fails at this and he will "blow up like dynamite and start assaulting her". According to Ms Z, she had no right to say 'no' throughout her marriage life as he was getting very upset and begin violent towards her.

Ms Z disclosed that she is mainly punched on the face and arms but is also hit all over her body. For Ms Z, the violence was a sort of daily basis life. Ms Zis made to apologise after she is assaulted. Ms Z said that "sometimes I am forgiven but sometimes it is not good enough". Ms Z said that if the violence occurs in the kitchen Mr Z will pick up a knife and will hold it at her face and threaten her. Ms Z said that she is worried that Mr Z will stab her.

Mr Z has also been violent towards his mother in the past. Ms Z stated that his family wanted him to get married as they thought that a marriage life might calm him down. Initially, Ms Z has been chosen as a victim. Ms Z has pointed out that she can understand why she gets assaulted (because I do wrong things) but doesn't understand why he would assault his own mother. In terms of the domestic violence towards the children, Ms Z said that if they try and help her after she is assaulted or stop the assault from happening, they will get punched (not on face), slapped on their faces or hit on their heads.

Ms Z said that she is trying to improve things but can't. She stated that on one occasion she went to call the police in order to protect herself. Her husband took the phone, assaulted her, and locked the children and herself out of the house for 4/ 5 hours. Ms Z said that if she tried to call the police again she would be worried about "how he is going to treat me after I make the call". Ms Z said that when she got a call from the school to tell them that she needed to come in to talk to someone about the children, Mr Z guessed that it was about the violence and told her not to talk about it. Ms Z has denied everything due to fear and escalation of future violence.

Ms Z was referred to our service by her social worker. We carried out a risk assessment on the same day to identify the risk level and provide support plan. Our risk assessment determined that Ms Z was at high risk of domestic violence at the hand of her husband. We have identified the following support needs: Referral to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) as multi-agency response is required to reduce the high risk and provide safety. Women's Safe Accommodation – Ms Z was willing to go refuge somewhere outside London due to safety reasons. Mr Z was working as a minicab driver across London. Counselling – Ms Z was suffering from anxiety, depression, lack of self-esteem and sleeping problems. Legal protection and family law – possible injunction, supervised child contact.

In addition to this, we have contacted numerous refuges outside London however, they have refused to provide a space on the basis that Language Line and interpreting services are too costly. After appealing their decision, the refuge that has agreed to take Ms Z have said that the victim may not be able to have the full range of services due to the language barrier and the costs of using Language Line at £2 per min is prohibitive. The reasons that we are getting from refuges for not accepting Ms Z is that she requires interpreters and they state that they do not have the funding to support this or making assumptions about her circumstances such as she might return back to home.

Unfortunately, some of service providers are still refusing provide services for Black, Minority, Ethnic, Asian, Refugee (BMEAR) women, despite to fact that the client's life in danger due to domestic violence. This mean that BAMER will be denied essential services to extricate them from domestic & sexual violence, forced marriages and honour based violence situations.

*IMECE Turkish Speaking Women's Group 2010*