



## Case Study 2

I left my native country and came to the UK for a safer place for myself. I made an asylum application but it was declined. Whilst I was waiting to hear, I met and married my husband. He was an EU national. He hired a lawyer and changed my application based on us being married. But that was declined. We tried again after he was granted his British Citizenship and it was pending.

The abuse started soon after. He would lock me up in the house when he'd go out to work every day. He said he didn't like me speaking to people without him knowing and approving. He controlled what I wore. When he was angry, he would hit me and shout at me.

One day the abuse got so bad I had to run away. He had beat me up all over my body. I knew he had also done something that hurt me so bad. He took a video of us having sex and sent it to someone in another country. I felt dirty and betrayed.

I went to the police for help. They took pictures of all my marks and injuries. They arrested him. But I couldn't go back to the flat we shared. They referred me to Al Hasaniya.

I met the IDVA there who helped me contact the solicitor and see the impact of what has happened on my application. she refused to do anything unless she was paid. My husband paid her, so that meant my case was essentially paused.

I didn't have the right to approach housing for help so I started sofa surfing. I didn't have rights to benefits so had to rely on donations from charities.

My IDVA referred me to another service – Migrants Organise. They have solicitors who reopened my case and gave me hope. They saw that under the rules then, I mirrored my husband's rights and was entitled to public support which included temporary accommodation and benefits. Finally, after months of fighting I had a small studio and a roof over my head.

In the meantime, my IDVA helped me understand the CJS. My case was going to court and my ex-husband was trying to pressurise me to drop the charges – talking about culture and doing what is right. However, I received a shock. The CPS said they were not taking forward the revenge porn charges as there wasn't enough evidence. I was told I can appeal their decision and my IDVA encouraged me to do so. Although I didn't feel there was much point in doing it, I felt I needed to have my voice and opinion heard – something I wasn't used to. We appealed but it was upheld.

My case went to court. I was nervous and scared. We were during COVID and everything was different. But the results came- the case was dismissed. I was shocked, upset, sad, confused. I thought 'what's the point?' but with time, I later realised that I did it for myself and stood up for myself.

**Questions:**

1. How can we improve experiences for VS of domestic abuse particularly BAME women? We strongly call for perpetrators to be held accountable for their actions and many BAME women refuse to go to court but when they do, report negative experiences
2. We have been calling for the DA bill to support women regardless of immigration status. If the right conditions were in place, this VS may have been able to access housing and benefits from the offset rather than having to rely on friends and waiting months before having a safe secure place for her to reside in- how can we overcome similar situations in the future?