

# The Sanctuary Scheme

## Case Study: Mrs S, Wythenshawe, south Manchester

### Background:

Female, Asian aged 29

Children – 2 children under 10 years

Born in Bangladesh

Family came to UK and settled in Manchester

Married (arranged) aged 19

Moved to husband's home in Staffordshire

Domestic abuse throughout marriage

Husband has affair and throws her out of home

Family unsupportive – moves into Bed/Breakfast/Homeless families

– allocated a house with Willow Park Housing Trust

Husband tracked her down (via joint bank account) and under pressure from family and church, she tries reconciliation

Knife point incident – Sanctuary Room installed



*“It goes against our culture to talk about our problems, but it was only by breaking free and telling my story that I was able to receive the help that was out there. I didn’t know that all this support was available, so I want to share my story to encourage other women – particularly Asian women – to do the same.”*

“I had an arranged marriage when I was 19.

Married life had never been happy. I smiled on the outside but was dying on the inside, and didn’t let on. I did test the water once with my brother, but it became obvious that my family would not support me if I left my husband.

“Things came to a head when my husband had an affair and threw me out of the house. I stayed with friends for a short while and when I was able to rescue the children from the family home, I moved into bed and breakfast accommodation and then a homeless family unit in Manchester. The support I received was brilliant, and when I was re-housed in a family home with Willow Park Housing Trust in Wythenshawe I was very happy.

“I had been told that the area was predominately white and not very mixed or integrated, but I can honestly say I love this community. My family and religious leaders were not supportive of me leaving my husband, but my neighbours have become my family. They look out for me and my children and are a wonderful comfort to me.

“My husband eventually tracked me down, and under pressure from family and church, I was persuaded to take him back. It started gradually, with him visiting weekends, and then it was also during the week. The abuse also started gradually, but it culminated in a terrifying knife attack, witnessed by my young son who was only three. He was screaming and asking his daddy not to kill me. I think this was the final wake-up call, and my family began to support me when they heard how upset my son was and saw how it was affecting him.

“At this point someone suggested I contact my landlord, Willow Park Housing Trust, and I cannot believe how much they have been able to help. Bernie Woodward, Housing Manger and Domestic Abuse advisor, came out to see me and talked me through all the things that they could do.



“It was at this point that the idea of a Sanctuary Room was discussed, a room in the house where myself and the children could be safe if my husband broke into our home – which had happened on a few occasions.

“The room has already proved to be a life-saver, as on one occasion my neighbours alerted me that his car was parked outside, and me and the children locked ourselves into the Sanctuary Room (my bedroom) and

were able to alert help.

“On another occasion my husband actually locked himself into the room and was unable to get out. We called the Police, and Willow Park came to unlock the door and remove him – at 2am in the morning. I had no idea that they would be able to come out at this time!”

“The support I have had from Willow Park has been unbelievable. Whenever I’ve needed their help, they have been there for me and are always there at the end of the phone – 24/7! And my neighbours have become like family to me – they are fantastic.”

“I just want to encourage other people who are in similar situations to look and see what support is available. I had no idea that landlords could provide this sort of help and I cannot thank Willow Park enough for giving me my life back! They have been unbelievable! I have been studying part-time in tourism and leisure and have even found a part-time job at Manchester airport – but the best thing of all is that my home is safe for me and the children. *I am now smiling on the inside and the outside. A real sanctuary!*”