

## CASE STUDY 5

# Against all odds

K arrived from Ireland on with her child aged 8 and her grandchild aged 5 fleeing domestic violence. She is a very strong woman and set targets for herself knowing that she would be safe and thus able to reach them. She is nearly 50 years old and can not read or write but never allowed this to hinder her in any way.

K's goals were to pass her driving theory test, to start divorce proceedings and to gain custody of her child and grandchild.

Now to us these may seem measurable and doable, however I must state here that Kay is from the Irish Travelling community where divorce is frowned upon and the fact that she left her husband and came here to England, means that she is looked down upon even more.

She is such an incredible woman and she sets about doing things with a vigour and vitality that puts the rest of us to shame. She does not see or pay attention to obstacles in her way and there have been many, she just sees her target and off she goes.

The children started a local school within days, she was registered with a local health clinic and settled in to the refuge very quickly.

In order for her to study for the driving theory test she went to the library and rented a dvd after having purchased a lap top from her savings. Her son in Ireland helped her to buy this.

We attended a "driving theory class" for Irish Travellers in Tottenham; this group was set up by Cara Irish Housing and is very successful. K's

children were so supportive and after school would "test mammy" writing and reading notes for her and also another refuge resident worked with her and helped her too. When we attended meetings outside, on bus journey's or by tube, she was constantly working at the questions and was on the lap top for hours a day.

Anyway the day of the test came and K dropped the children early to school and we met, and K was very anxious, we went for a walk by the river and talked about anything just to relieve the tension, I wasn't much help really as I was nervous as well and wanted her to pass so much, knowing the effort that she had put in.

Eventually K came out with the "piece of paper and handed it to me." "Did I pass?" was all she could say and I was a wreck. I screamed yes and we began laughing and crying at the same time. She was overwhelmed and delighted at the same time. And the rest of her targets are in process too, she has filed for divorce and the legal is in place for custody of the children.

***This woman's story is amazing, because of what she has been through like many other women who come to refuge of course and we can all learn something from it by never giving up regardless of the odds been stacked against us. You know sometimes we see in papers and magazines awards for "woman of the year" usually a star or a botoxed celebrity, but for my money it's women like K - a TRUE SURVIVOR!***