

Name of Project: Al-Aman (DVIP)

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My name is Sarah (not her real name). I have a three year- old child. I met Jamal (not his real name) a British national through an online dating site. After we got married, I eventually joined him in the UK. I thought he was the one, we got along well at the beginning and then I started to notice changes in Jamal's behaviour. For example, he started to physically abuse me, calling me horrible names, telling a lot of lies that made me doubt myself and telling me that I'm hallucinating. All this has affected me emotionally and psychologically. He controlled all aspects of my life, he was checking my phone, wasn't allowed to continue my studies, stopped me from calling my own parents and even food was scare (only allowed fish & chips). I felt very isolated and humiliated by his actions.

When I was pregnant, I thought he will change, but nothing has changed! He continued abusing me mentally, emotionally, financially and physically throughout my pregnancy and after I gave birth. I remained in the relationship as I thought Jamal was protective of me and our child. I haven't realised that his behaviour was domestic abuse. Eventually it got so bad, I realised that both my life and my child's were at risk that when I had to call the police.

My own family didn't support me they wanted me be patient as they worried that I will get divorced and bring shame on them. I contacted Al-Aman and I confided in them that my husband was controlling, emotionally, physically and financially abusive. He was also threatening to take custody of the child and to send me back to my family abroad.

Al-Aman provided me with much needed safety planning, emotional and practical support. They supported me in making my own decision to leave Jamal and flee the abusive and degrading life I had. They referred my case to MARAC and Victim Support. I was referred for counselling sessions. I'm currently placed with my child in a refuge and financially supported by the children's services until my benefits get sorted. Al-Aman has also referred me to immigration and family law solicitors to support me to win the right to stay in the country and to keep my child. I did ask them to provide me with a support letter for my ILR application.