

## **First Journey**

*Rafika*

My story of change began when I moved to Glasgow with my eldest son from Pakistan. My husband was already living in the UK so we came to join him. Moving was difficult. I did not know how to speak in English and we did not have any phones which we could use to help ourselves to communicate with other people. I remember going to the playground with my son, even though I would not understand what people were saying, but we had to go out of the house. I also remember that every time I would pay something I would open my purse to the shop keeper as I did not understand how much the things cost. I was trusting of the people around me. It was also difficult to get used to the weather. We had to use so many clothes because it was so cold. Pakistan is very hot. The freedom that I witnessed also surprised me, as I saw people wearing short sleeves, or people not wearing so many clothes during the summer time. It was shocking at the beginning, but then I got used to it.

The time went by and we had two more children. We moved houses quite a lot. One of those times, just after our last move and after having my third child, my husband had an accident and he broke both legs. He could not walk again. Suddenly, I had to take care of him, take them to the hospital, and also take care of our children and take them to school. It was a very difficult time as we did not have any relatives here and I did not manage the language.

I had to work to get some money for the family, so I started sewing and knitting at home. I learnt how to do different patterns, using different colours and making different types of clothing. For 29 years, I just

worked, worked and worked. A long time after the accident, my husband passed away. My children went to school, grew up, went to university and became professionals.

Today, I look back and think that life was very hard. I also look at my children and feel really proud of them being educated, having jobs and having their own families. Everyone seems happy. Today, my children look after me. I started to do activities for myself: I go to community groups and art groups. I also do sewing and knitting. If I am asked for a certain pattern, I can just do it by looking at it. Today, I can say that I do these things not because I need to work, but because I enjoy them. And I like that I am volunteering to help others in my community.