Women and migration

Introduction to Migration

Guidance booklet #6
Who is this guidance for?

*Women and migration* is part of the *Introduction to Migration* series from the Integration up North project. The series provides a basic guide to migration for people working in public sector organisations: local authorities (including health services), police, fire and rescue services, probation services, Jobcentre Plus, Trades Unions and others. It should also be useful for those working in the voluntary and community sector.

The guidance aims to improve the knowledge and understanding of migration among service providers, so that they can shape their service to support the integration of new arrivals to the benefit of both the newly-arrived migrants and the wider local community. Throughout the guidance there are examples from practice across the northern region, and experiences of new arrivals in these areas. While the focus is migration to the north of England, it should also be useable in other areas of the UK.

This is intended to be an easy-to-use reference document. It does not provide legal advice or a detailed guide to immigration law and policy. In such a fast-changing context, information can quickly become out of date. All information should be checked with an expert or the Home Office if in doubt. We have highlighted other sources of information and guidance where it exists, for further reading and future reference.

About the contributors

*Women and migration* was written by Kate Smith, with support from Louise Warner. Kate and Louise work for WomenCentre, a registered charity based in the heart of the glorious Pennines in West Yorkshire. WomenCentre’s mission is to improve the quality of life for women both locally and nationally. With centres in Calderdale and Kirklees, WomenCentre has nearly 50 years’ experience of women’s issues and women’s lives, offering a wide range of services. For many years WomenCentre has worked with policy makers and has informed national consultations to communicate to them the differences that women’s centres make to the lives of women who may be experiencing multiple injustices and hardships in their lives. For more information on WomenCentre, please see their website: [www.womencentre.org.uk](http://www.womencentre.org.uk)

The *Introduction to Migration* series was edited by Pip Tyler, with most Integration up North (IUN) case studies written by Nahida Khan. Updates in 2015 were made by Rosa Mas Giralt. The project and guidance documents would not have been possible without contributions and advice from our migrant volunteers, migration champions in our partner organisations, and our training delegates who commented on the materials.

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Figure i: ‘Who I am’ (poem by ‘Women Together’)

Who I am...

As a human being I have the right to exist

I am responsible for my children

I am a woman who stands up, speaks and speaks loud

I am busy

I don’t have a direction at the moment

I feel I am always wrong

I was not strong

Everyone has had a struggle

I am now a source of hope

I feel I am not good enough

I have too much to give and too much to learn and gain

I am beautiful

I am happy

I am a woman loud and proud

Source: WomenCentre, Kirklees
Introduction: why Women and migration?

Women migrants face particular opportunities and challenges in the UK because of their gender and immigration status (amongst other aspects of their identity such as age, race and sexuality). As such, this guidance booklet is not intended to cover all aspects of women migrants’ experiences but draws on some of the central gendered issues that have arisen through practice work within services, training and communities.

Women migrants still face significant inequality in society and may face exploitation and persecution that is distinct from those of men and children. Whilst we have focused on issues primarily affecting women migrants, we acknowledge that some male migrants also experience challenges and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, within the UK women and men both work within professions which have contact with women migrants. As such, this document is aimed at both women and men working with women migrants.

This booklet is a starting point to consider some of the challenges and opportunities for women migrants. Poems and stories from women migrants are included to increase understanding of women in migratory situations from their own perspectives. This booklet:

- Begins with key facts and barriers that women migrants face in accessing services
- Outlines five key themes covering important issues faced by women migrants: work, marriage, exploitation, violence, and forced migration.
- Reminds us that those who work with women migrants need to reflect on the impact their work has on them personally.
- Celebrates the contributions of women migrants to the UK, including their role in specific services and organisations.

Despite the challenges migration is not, per se, a negative experience and neither should migration always be associated with vulnerability. Migration can be seen as a fundamental human right and leaving one’s country can represent an empowering choice for women within the right circumstances. Figure ii gives an example from the North West.

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**Figure ii: Mina’s story - life before and after coming to the UK**

Mina came from Afghanistan to live in Manchester with her husband in 2010. She has indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

Mina has found many differences between her life here in the UK and in Afghanistan. For example, she contrasts the health concerns she would have had in her country of origin with her experience in hospital in Manchester:

‘Many women die both during pregnancy and whilst giving birth in Afghanistan. This is due to limited access to resources, resulting in poor facilities and conditions. When I had my baby boy here in the North West, the pre- and post-natal health care and my stay in hospital was excellent.’

She is grateful for the way in which she can live as a woman in the UK, compared to her country of origin. However, she is hopeful that conditions are getting better for women in Afghanistan, and thinks that access to education has definitely improved.

Source: Integration up North (IUN) volunteer project

‘I like the diversity of cultures in the UK, freedom for women and it is a safe place to live.’
Trends in women’s migration

Key message 1: Women have always migrated primarily for family reasons (for marriage and family reunification). Women’s migration patterns are changing: more women now migrate, and increasingly without immediate family members.

Across the globe women migrate for diverse reasons and in many different ways. Women have historically migrated for marriage or family reunification, and the majority of women who migrate to Europe continue to do so for family reunification. However, the motivations and ways in which women migrate are changing as they migrate for reasons of economics and labour, as well as seeking asylum.¹

In the past few decades women have increasingly migrated on their own, unaccompanied by family, with other women or with wider networks of migrants outside of their family circles.² A constant movement of women over the last five decades contrasts with the 19th century when the majority of migrants were men.³ It is difficult to obtain accurate demographic breakdowns of migrant populations by gender but it is thought that:

- About half of the people who migrate in the world today are women⁴
- An estimated 95 million women are international migrants⁵
- In some places, including Europe, women have surpassed the number of men migrating.⁶

Figure iii shows at a national level, the most recent data on women migrating to the UK who arrive to join family, to work, to claim asylum and to study.

People migrate for varied and diverse reasons. The causes of women’s movement are frequently based on unequal opportunities including poverty and lack of development; gender inequalities and discrimination; conflict, violence, political instability; socio-ethnic tensions and bad governance; food insecurity; and environmental degradation and climate change. Whenever and wherever women find themselves in situations of crisis, unemployment and financial vulnerability, migration can be a survival strategy.⁷ The extremely unequal distribution of income and opportunities within and between sending and receiving areas is one of the key factors that drive human movement.

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The impact of immigration status on women migrants

**Key message 2:** It is common for migrants to switch between regular and irregular migration status over time. Women with irregular immigration status are particularly at risk of human rights violations, in addition to discrimination and exclusion from rights and services.

The complexity of migration dynamics has led to the conceptualisation of different categories of migrants e.g. voluntary or forced migrants, family migrants, asylum seekers,

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**Figure iii: Data on women migrants entering the UK**

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<th>Description</th>
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| Family<sup>9</sup> | 75% of those joining a spouse in the UK in 2013 were women. | 12 080 women from third countries (outside the EEA) joined spouses in the UK in 2013. The majority had temporary leave to remain.  
- 11 790 women from third countries (outside the EEA) joined spouses (as wives or fiancés) on spouse visas  
- 300 women from third countries joined spouses as wives and were granted indefinite leave to remain on arrival. |
| Work<sup>10</sup> | Women account for almost half of the total (46%) of new workers in 2014. | 350 430 women born outside the UK came to work in 2014. Nearly three quarters were from the EEA and the remainder were from third countries. |
| Asylum<sup>11</sup> | A third of all asylum seekers applying in 2013 in the UK were female. | 9 910 females claimed asylum in 2013.  
- 6400 women claimed asylum in their own right (as main applicants)  
- 3510 females claimed asylum as dependants (women and children) |
| Study<sup>12</sup> | Just over half (52%) of new migrant students in the UK in the 2013-14 academic year were women. | 123 450 migrant women enrolled in their first year of a higher education course in the UK in the 2013-14 academic year. Three quarters were from outside the EU. |

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<sup>8</sup> Figures rounded to the nearest ten. No known data is available on EEA women migrants joining family in the UK.  
<sup>10</sup> The data on work visas is not disaggregated by gender, although many women will arrive on a ‘domestic worker’ visa; there were 9760 arrivals in this domestic worker category in 2013 according to the Immigration Statistics (Table ad_03_w). Instead, figures here are from National Insurance Number registrations (a proxy for new migrant workers, issued to people intending to work or claim benefits) which will include women from across different categories – including those here on study or family visas. The data is available from DWP’s Stat-Xplore tool at: https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/  
refugees, trafficking victims (see Understanding immigration status\textsuperscript{13} for more on these terms). During the migration process women may fall within different categories at different times. Putting women into such categories can prevent a comprehensive analysis of their situation. People who are migrants rarely think of themselves under these analytical terms. We urge services to consider women as women first, regardless of immigration status.

Women have historically experienced discrimination and unequal access to services and opportunities across the world because of their gender. This is recognised by the many countries who have legislated to try to protect women from this problem. In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 protects against gender discrimination. Women migrants are protected by this legislation too. However, combining their status as a woman with their immigration status can increase the difficulties they face in exercising their equal rights and opportunities, and may increase their vulnerability to human rights violations.

One of the challenges women migrants face is the impact of their migration status. Migrants can experience both regular and irregular migration statuses at different times:

- Women with regular migration status (i.e. permission to be in the UK) are vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion from basic rights and services.
- Women with irregular migration status (without permission to be in the UK, sometimes described as ‘undocumented’) are more likely to be in a position of dependency and vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse.\textsuperscript{14}

While some migrants without permission to be in the UK have opportunities to regularise or legalise their status (for example after residing in the destination country for a number of years or being granted refugee status after submitting a fresh asylum claim) many do not.

Those with regular migration status may be at risk of becoming irregular at a later date for a variety of reasons: if their visa expires for example; if their application for international protection is refused; if they lose their skilled job that is linked to a registered employer; if they face obstacles to renew or keep a regular residence permit; if they stay in the country after their application for international protection is rejected; or if their temporary status expires.

Narrowing legal avenues for migration exacerbate these issues. Immigration controls (such as ‘family reunification’) in some countries may create greater vulnerability to human rights violations for women migrants. As immigration policy in the UK becomes more restrictive, such as the changes to family migration policy and the withdrawal of legal aid from immigration, it becomes harder for women to enter the country lawfully, or to escape violent and exploitative situations once here. While updated policies around domestic violence (the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession) can protect some women, others with ‘no recourse to public funds’ are not covered by these.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{13} Integration up North (2015) Understanding immigration status. Introduction to Migration guidance booklet #3. www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/introductiontomigration-iun

Barriers to integration and accessing services in the UK

Key message 3: Isolation, poverty and household role are particular barriers to accessing services and to integration for women migrants.

Women migrants face a range of barriers to accessing services in the UK. Many of these are faced by all migrants, but some are specific to women and others are often exacerbated for women. Barriers include:

- **Isolation**: losing social support networks after migration, plus the likelihood of caring responsibilities for young children, can make women migrants particularly isolated from shared information and support within communities.
- **Poverty**: financial concerns may lead some women to not access services, even if they may be entitled to free provision. New charges for healthcare services are a contributing factor, affecting most third country nationals from April 2015.
- **Household role**: women migrants can be in a position of dependency with limited access to support. Migrant mothers may find themselves as primary or sole carers for young children, limiting their ability to attend interviews or access services.
- **Lack of knowledge**: when women arrive in destination countries they may have no idea of what their rights are. Organisations and services may also create barriers for women with a lack of information in accessible forms, including barriers of language. GP practices have been known to refuse registering patients who are recent migrants.
- **Fear**: anxiety about repercussions or consequences may prevent women from contacting the police or other people in authority, including health services.
- **Legal, cultural or language barriers**: these may lead to women avoiding seeking services and information.

Caring responsibilities can be complex and impact on women migrants’ integration in the UK in different ways. Migration not only affects adults but also millions of migrant children who leave their countries of origin, the children left behind in the care of someone else, as well as children born to migrant parents in countries of destination, as illustrated in Figure iv.

As women migrate (often to become domestic workers and caregivers for others) they may leave some or all of their children in the country of origin under the care of others such as female relatives or domestic workers. Women may carry the emotional and psychological toll of working and caring for someone else’s children whilst being separated from their own children, sometimes for years. The phenomenon of caregiving and migration has been called the ‘global care chain’, an international system heavily dependent on gender and class where such care remains largely overlooked, undervalued and unrecognised.

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All these issues – barriers to service access, caring responsibilities and family separation - increase women’s risk of poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion. Poor health outcomes are a particular issue for women migrants and migrant mothers. Figure v provides suggestions around making services more accessible to women migrants.

Figure v: ‘Loss’ (poem written by a child engaged in transnational parenting)

Loss
She said she had no choice
We had to leave............
I did not understand why I had to leave.
She said ‘pack your things’
I looked away, speechless, motionless, I looked away.
She said it’s time to go, say goodbye to her
I looked at her, tears in my eyes
She grabbed my hand and said ‘I’m your mother one day you’ll understand’
I looked at her for an explanation
She took me to a strange place
I left my heart back in that old space
She said everything was going to be alright....
She did not understand that living with my grandmother was for me what life was about.

Source: Best-Cummings (2008)\(^{18}\)

Figure v: Some practical tips for working in organisations with women migrants

- Create an open and safe environment
- Treat all women migrants with dignity and respect
- Ensure all workers are aware of the need for gender sensitivity
- Understand gender based issues and act appropriately to take account of these
- Offer the choice of female workers and interpreters to women migrants wherever possible
- Ensure women migrants are routinely supported with childcare during interviews and appointments so that they feel able to speak about confidential and sensitive issues
- Ensure women migrants are aware of their rights and independence from their partners
- Provide services to meet women migrants needs regardless of their immigration status
- Prevent vulnerable women migrants from being wrongfully detained
- Remove barriers to women’s full participation (including providing women and child friendly spaces)
- Involve women migrants in developing the services provided to them, through for example: consultation and feedback, volunteering and job opportunities, positions on boards or as trustees.

Source: Why Refugee Women\(^{20}\)

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\(^{20}\) Partly reproduced from the *Why Refugee Women* Charter ‘Minimum Standards for Working with Refugee Women’. WomenCentre was a partner organisation who drafted this document alongside refugee women in the Yorkshire and Humber region, Refugee Council and Northern Refugee Centre. The Charter is online at: [www.whyrefugeewomen.org.uk](http://www.whyrefugeewomen.org.uk)
Figure vi provides examples of how these suggestions can be put into practice in healthcare settings, firstly in communicating health messages to the Roma community and secondly in adapting and developing mainstream maternity services to better engage with women migrants.

**Figure vi: Accessible services for migrant women: health mediators and maternity services**

**Health mediators**

In Yorkshire (and other places across Europe) the Roma MATRIX project has worked with the Big Issue to train Roma women as community health mediators. A health mediator is an intermediary who facilitates access to health and social services for vulnerable groups. They can undertake a range of tasks such as encouraging people to go to the doctor, make referrals to other services and assist health authorities with specific campaigns. Key issues for Roma women health mediators is around vaccination uptake.

The project in Yorkshire ran health training sessions for almost 70 women to increase their knowledge about local health services as well as health needs of their community. Women reported an improvement in their knowledge and confidence in accessing and disseminating information, and were particularly positive about learning about accessing different medical professionals. The project also facilitated meetings between mediators and local health professionals, with benefits reported by both groups. For more details, see the Good Practice Guide (right).

**Maternity services**

The Migrant Friendly Maternity Services Toolkit (below right) incorporates a wide range of case studies of working with migrant women in different healthcare contexts and addressing barriers to service access, as well as an example care pathway for migrant women.

Examples include the Doula Starfish project in Birmingham which ensures that pregnant women do not go through labour alone, and a pregnancy outreach service in Birmingham’s most deprived wards.

Sources: Roma MATRIX (2015)\(^{21}\), Sharpe (2010)\(^{22}\)


Safeguarding

Key message 4: Services are bound by safeguarding duties, holding responsibilities and obligations for safeguarding vulnerable groups of adults and children, including migrants. All organisations should have policies and procedures in place for safeguarding and protection.

All professionals are bound by safeguarding duties, holding responsibilities and obligations for safeguarding vulnerable groups of adults and children. Women in migratory situations and their children may be at risk of suffering harm both in institutions and in the community. As such women migrants and their children may need safeguarding help.

In England the law states that people who work with children and vulnerable adults have to keep them safe. Parts of this safeguarding legislation are set out in the Children Act (1989 and 2004). Safeguarding legislation also features in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (to which the UK is a signatory) and sets out the rights of children to be free from abuse. A number of other key human rights include the right to life, the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment, the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of liberty and the right to respect for private and family life.

Adult safeguarding is about protecting people from harm and when the situation involves someone who needs extra or additional support – known as ‘an adult at risk’ – the situation becomes critical. The law is also constantly changing so advice should be sought where necessary.

Individuals and organisations can play an important role in the protection of vulnerable individuals and groups. Consider the following:

- Joint working between organisations is essential in safeguarding activity.
- All organisations should have policies and procedures in place for safeguarding and protection, ensuring that services and support are delivered in ways that are high quality and safe. This enables staff and volunteers to know what to do if they are concerned and to work within the law.
- Jobs that involve caring for, supervising or being in sole charge of children or adults require an enhanced DBS check (previously called an enhanced CRB check).

Having proper safeguards in place means you can promote a safe place for your beneficiaries, and gives the public confidence in your organisation and services.

24 Disclosure Barring Service www.safenetwork.org.uk/help_and_advice/employing_the_right_people/Pages/Disclosure-Barring-Service-DBS.aspx
Women and work

**Figure vii: ‘Life and Work’ (poem by Women’s Health in Women’s Hands)**

‘We face many realizations in life: we are born, we grow, we study, we find jobs, we decide to try life in other countries. Yes, it’s time to immigrate: new life, new friends, new neighbours. The long and tortuous search for work... We work to survive...at first, As time goes by, work becomes stimulating. Work we can be proud of...finally. Long, long road... We have no experience. We are always new, We studied abroad. There are no... No quick fixes, no ways. To show what we do know. To help with what we know. To share our experiences. To give suggestions... But I know we can.’

Source: Gastaldo et al (2011)\(^{25}\)

Motives for working overseas

**Key message 5: Women migrant workers earn money not only for themselves and their families, but through financial and social remittances promote independence, education, rights and choice for women in their country of origin, as well as contributing to the UK economy.**

Women migrant workers may be motivated by several factors:

- Women who migrate alone or as heads of households in search of work are principal wage earners for themselves and their families.
- Migration can be a household diversification strategy.\(^{26}\) Labour demand and widening inequalities between countries encourage women to move to wealthier countries to minimise the risk of poverty and unemployment in the household.
- Women working overseas send significant amounts of money in remittance funds back to their families, homes and communities.\(^{27}\) These funds for example, support girls to go to school, provide money for food to feed families, pay for healthcare and medication, and improve living standards.

The benefits of working overseas are not limited to working women and their families. Women also contribute to the economies they have migrated to through taxes and consumption. Opportunities to work abroad also may loosen constraints on traditional roles and increase women’s mobility and choices. Social remittances (such as sharing knowledge, specialisms, ideas, skills and attitudes) can enhance socio-economic development in the country of origin, promoting human rights and boosting gender equality. Women migrants who send financial remittances may also be breaking boundaries and definitions of what it means to be female which in turn affects families’ and communities’ views of women.\(^{28}\)

Women migrants may change the traditional private and public roles and responsibilities of women and men.

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Work and the UK

Key message 6: Many women migrants participate in the business sectors and professions but the most common forms of work are in the service and agricultural sectors, domestic work and caring, sex work and entertainment.

In the UK the number of women migrants participating in the information, communication and technology, finance and business sectors has grown despite considerable challenges and obstacles they may face to have their qualifications recognised. Around a quarter of women migrant employees living in the UK since the early 2000s have worked in health or education sectors, and the UK has been actively recruiting Caribbean teachers directly from high schools and colleges.

The experience of migration differs greatly by gender and there is considerable evidence women migrants face greater barriers to access to the labour market. Women migrants are found disproportionately in certain sectors such as the caring profession. Women migrants’ most common forms of work include: service sector (such as waitressing); agricultural sector (such as fruit picking); domestic work (such as cleaning); carers of the elderly; and sex workers and entertainers. Care-work in particular remains traditional ‘female’ work.

Key message 7: Many women migrants find work in low-skilled occupations which expose them to severe forms of discrimination and abuse, risk of poor health and safety at work, as well as the potential for unfair dismissal.

Despite employment opportunities the occupations within which many women migrants find work expose them to severe forms of discrimination and abuse, risk of poor health and safety at work, as well as the potential for unfair dismissal. For example, in the cleaning sector women workers are in a majority; domestic work tends to be out of office hours, often out of the sight of other workers which can increase isolation and increase women migrant’s vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

Lower skilled work such as on farms or in factories can expose migrants to violations in their employment rights and poor, overcrowded living conditions which increase women’s vulnerability to potential sexual abuse. Health and safety is of concern, with pregnant

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women reporting being forced to work in conditions that pose a risk to their health, threatened with losing their jobs and even miscarriages have also been reported.\footnote{Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010) \textit{Inquiry into recruitment and employment in the meat and poultry processing industry}. EHRC: London.  \url{www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/Inquiries/meat_inquiry_report.pdf}}

\textit{Figure viii} suggests several organisations supporting women migrants on work issues, directly or indirectly. For more information on migrant work issues more generally, see \textit{Migrants and work}.\footnote{Integration up North (2015) \textit{Migrants and work}. Introduction to Migration guidance booklet #11.  \url{www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/introductiontomigration-iun}}

\textbf{Figure viii: Services and information: migrant workers}

- \textbf{Kalayaan}: a charity providing advice and support to migrant domestic workers. They also provide data and briefings, and are first responders under the National Referral Mechanism for suspected victims of trafficking.  \url{www.kalayaan.org.uk}

- \textbf{HomeWorkers Worldwide UK}: Based in Leeds and supports home-based workers around the world. It also is part of the Women Working in the North Network, concerned with women in low paid and precarious work. It has produced a range of resources including factsheets for homeworkers (below) \url{www.homeworkersww.org.uk}

- \textbf{UNISON Migrant workers}: UNISON provides free immigration telephone advice to UNISON members who have come to work in the UK from countries outside of the EU. \url{www.unison.org.uk/get-help/pay/migrant-workers/overview/}


- \textbf{Committee on Migrant Workers}: an international body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the \textit{International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families}. \url{www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CMW/Pages/CMWIndex.aspx}

\begin{itemize}
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\item \textbf{HomeWorkers Worldwide UK}: Based in Leeds and supports home-based workers around the world. It also is part of the Women Working in the North Network, concerned with women in low paid and precarious work. It has produced a range of resources including factsheets for homeworkers (below) \url{www.homeworkersww.org.uk}
\item \textbf{UNISON Migrant workers}: UNISON provides free immigration telephone advice to UNISON members who have come to work in the UK from countries outside of the EU. \url{www.unison.org.uk/get-help/pay/migrant-workers/overview/}
\item \textbf{Committee on Migrant Workers}: an international body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the \textit{International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families}. \url{www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CMW/Pages/CMWIndex.aspx}
\end{itemize}
Women and marriage

Migrants who come to the UK from a third country (outside the EEA) to join a spouse are usually women. 75% of those admitted to the UK in 2013 as a spouse were wives. The overwhelming majority of women migrants joining as a wife or fiancé are granted temporary immigration status in the UK.

The majority of these women migrants arriving as wives or fiancés are from Asia. The top individual countries of origin for these women in 2013 were: Pakistan, India, the USA, Bangladesh, China and Thailand.37

New marriage

Women migrate to marry in different circumstances. While marriage should be a positive and joyful new phase of life, the pressures of a personal relationship combined with migration to an unfamiliar country and culture can put new wives in a difficult situation that they had not anticipated.

Dependency can be an issue for newly-married women, who are rarely the main applicant on official forms and processes, such as visa and asylum applications or on household bills. Many arrive on a temporary, two year spouse visa with no recourse to public funds, and so may feel that their presence in the UK is dependent upon their husband’s actions.

Immigration status can be an underlying source of stress, since extending a visa requires expense and possibly an interview with the Home Office.

These factors may impact upon a woman’s visibility to public services, her confidence, identity and self-worth, and her ability to access services independently. Having young children can exacerbate this situation if the wife is expected to be the main carer but does not have the social support networks she might have had in her country of origin to help her care for her child(ren) and to maintain a life outside of this role. Wives with a temporary visa can be reluctant to leave unhappy or violent marriages because of the (often well-founded) fear that it could impact negatively on their immigration status.

Figure ix tells the story of Misbah, a new spouse whose expectations of married life in the UK were not realised.

Mail order brides

The phenomenon of ‘mail-order brides’ and ‘internet brides’ provokes opposing perspectives on the issue of choice and exploitation. The UN Population Fund38 suggests women on the whole are willing participants in this phenomenon. However, the Poppy Project asserts that the mail-order bride industry overlaps with trafficking and violence against women and girls, promoting trafficking, slavery, prostitution, pornography, exploitation of vulnerable groups and racial and ethnic stereotyping.39

37 Table ad_03_f in ‘Admissions data tables’ from: Home Office (2015) Immigration Statistics as per earlier footnote.
Women in this context may marry out of a desire to find a supportive partner, gain economic security or as a means to gain legal entry into another country. There are risks and challenges associated with these decisions. For example, women are dependent for their legal status on their grooms-to-be and the industry has the potential to recruit and traffic women around the world.

Figure ix: Misbah’s story - unrealised expectations of marriage in the UK

Misbah came to the UK from Pakistan in 2010 on a six month visit visa to spend time with her aunts and uncles. She has three brothers and is the only daughter. She had no intention of living in the UK permanently as she wanted to be near her parents. During her visit she met a young man who she really liked and who asked her to marry him. After much deliberation both she and her family agreed and she was engaged. She returned to her part time job and studying in Pakistan.

After a year, her fiancé sponsored her to return to the UK and planned the wedding. She returned to the UK in 2011 with the legal marriage booked for two months later, followed by the Islamic ceremony the next month. Shortly after the legal marriage, Misbah became suspicious.

Misbah found out her fiancé was having an affair and already had three children. She confronted him and his family. He told her that he would never leave his girlfriend and he wanted to marry both of them. He told her that if she did not agree he would inform the Home Office and have her sent back. At that time Misbah had a two year spouse visa.

This was a really big blow for Misbah since she had left Pakistan as a married woman and returning as a divorcee would be extremely difficult. She is from a tribal area where divorced women are treated very harshly by society; she would have very little chances of remarriage and finding employment; she would be treated as a second class citizen and feel like a burden upon her family. People would not believe her side of the story and assume she was not a good wife or daughter in law.

After much deliberation Misbah decided to give them both time to reconsider the situation, but after a while nothing had changed, so she applied for a divorce and is now waiting to hear from the Home Office about a special leave request she has made. Misbah has been supporting herself, working full time as a supermarket till operator. She is hopeful that she may be granted a visa but realises she may have to return.

Source: Integration up North (IUN) volunteer project

‘Women like me in my situation have to make some very difficult decisions. We come here with an expectation and then end up in a mess. I never imagined that this would happen to me.’

- Misbah
Forced marriage

Key message 8: Forced marriage involves a lack of consent, and pressure or abuse is used to coerce the individual. Women in forced marriages may face poor health and isolation.

Women may migrate for arranged marriages which are common in some cultures and can mean a supportive partnership.\textsuperscript{40} However, for some arranged marriages, a woman or girl’s wishes and human rights are disregarded and violated and as such the marriage can more accurately be described as a forced marriage.

The right to voluntarily choose a spouse is recognised in various international human rights conventions.\textsuperscript{41} A forced marriage is a marriage ‘where one or both people do not or cannot consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used.’\textsuperscript{42} Forced marriages can also involve pressure put on people to marry against their will. This includes: financial abuse (such as withholding finances and restricting access to money); physical pressure (such as threats, actual physical violence and sexual violence); and emotional and psychological violence.

Forced marriages can be driven by a number of factors including: gender inequality where women occupy a lower social status; and poverty where families on a low income may view girls as an economic burden with the perception of the women’s potential to earn an income, pushing women into marriage. In some countries families force their daughters into marriage to safeguard against ‘immoral’ or ‘inappropriate behaviour’ which could bring dishonour to the family. Sometimes families are not aware they are breaking laws.

Poor sexual and reproductive healthcare are further challenges that women in forced marriages may face. Illiteracy and lack of education may also compound women’s isolation if they are forced to discontinue education and take up roles and responsibilities within the home. The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) leads the on Government’s forced marriage policy, outreach and casework. It dealt with 1267 cases during 2014 related to a possible forced marriage.\textsuperscript{43} 79% of cases involved female victims. Cases involved 88 different countries, most commonly Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. Within the 12 regions of the UK, Yorkshire and Humberside was 4\textsuperscript{th} with 9% of cases, and the North West was 5\textsuperscript{th} with 8% of cases. It provides a range of resources\textsuperscript{44} including:

- Guidance for professionals, MPs and constituency offices (statutory guidance, practice guidelines, a helpline, eLearning training and online documentaries)
- Information for potential victims: forced marriage posters in different languages, \textit{Marriage: it’s your choice} (small cards with FMU contact details for victims) and \textit{Forced marriage: a survivor’s handbook}.

\textsuperscript{40}EP Kofman et al (2005) \textit{Gendered Migrations}. Reference as per earlier footnote.
\textsuperscript{41}Namely: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art.16), the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (Art.23), the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art.10), the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (Art.16).
\textsuperscript{42}Home Office. \textit{Forced marriage: information and practice guidelines for professionals protecting, advising and supporting victims}. \url{www.gov.uk/forced-marriage}
\textsuperscript{44}Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Home Office (2015) \textit{Forced Marriage}. \url{www.gov.uk/forced-marriage}
**Women and exploitation**

**Key message 9: Women migrants are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and re-trafficking. It may take a long time for them to disclose the full extent of their experiences. Services should have knowledge of the indicators of trafficking and referral services available.**

Unfortunately a range of poor and inhumane work practices exist, from poor working conditions and exploitation to trafficking and slavery. These practices take place across the world, including the UK. At this worst extreme, human beings are bought and sold for profit, gain and gratification; *Figure x* gives a definition of slavery.

![Figure x: A definition of Slavery](image)

*A slave is:*
- forced to work -- through mental or physical threat;
- owned or controlled by an ‘employer’, usually through mental or physical abuse or threatened abuse;
- dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as ‘property’;
- physically constrained or has restrictions placed on his/her freedom of movement

*Source:* Anti-Slavery International

Women migrants are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and also re-trafficking (second occasion trafficking) to different destinations or within their own country. They are often subject to high levels of physical, sexual and psychological violence in these situations. One consequence of these situations of exploitation is exposure to sexual violence and sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV, with little access to medical or legal services. Women may be afraid of the police, and it may take them a long time to disclose the full extent of their experiences.

Services need to be aware that exploitation may be taking place in the community, and women migrants accessing their services may have experienced or be experiencing a form of exploitation. They may need support from someone they trust, who can refer them to a specialist service, to health services or to the police for example. *Figure xi* gives examples of women migrants’ stories of exploitation told to workers in Kirklees.

The issue of labour exploitation is explored in detail in *Trafficking for labour exploitation* with details of the various indicators of trafficking, the legal duty to report potential victims (Modern Slavery Act 2015), the national response to trafficking as well as a range of available support services and resources.

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Figure xi: Women’s stories of slavery and domestic servitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I came from Thailand to study. I thought I was coming for study. I didn’t know anyone and was forced to work as a prostitute. The lady who ran the brothel was very strict. I had to take drugs and alcohol which I never did before. I also had to dance on a film they made. They dressed me in very children’s clothes and wanted me to look very young’</td>
<td>Mai Lu, trafficked across the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Was not allowed to go outside. I felt was in jail. I was not allow to eat meals. I just eat baby’s food. I was not allow to open door or go near window’</td>
<td>Pinkie from India, held in the UK by her in-laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘They didn’t let me to call home. My mum she worry. I was work hard and all my fingers cut. I don’t feel this finger now’</td>
<td>Rose from Nigeria, held in domestic servitude in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘One day she tried to kill me. The woman was mad. She hate me. She hate all women Ethiopia. Tried to push me from building, from window. She was screaming at me’</td>
<td>Diane, domestic worker in Lebanon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Stories told to workers at the WomenCentre, Kirklees
Women and domestic violence

**Key message 10:** Women migrants in the UK are entitled to protection from domestic violence, regardless of their immigration status. Those who are violent and abuse women migrants are subject to the same sanctions as anyone else.

Violence, or potential violence, threatens and affects the lives of women everywhere and cuts across boundaries of culture, class, race, and religion. Violence against women is present in every society in various forms including domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, ‘honour based violence’, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Governments are obliged under domestic and international human rights law to prevent, protect and respond to victims of violence. *Figure xii* offers some definitions.

**Figure xii: Definitions of violence against women**

Violence against women is: ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.’ (Article 1)

Violence against women encompasses, but is not limited to: ‘physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.’ (Article 2)

Source: UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993

‘Gender-based violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.’ (Article 3(d))

Source: Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence, 2011

‘Domestic violence is physical, sexual, psychological or financial violence that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. This can include forced marriage and so-called ‘honour crimes’. Domestic violence may include a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are in themselves inherently `violent’.

Domestic violence is most commonly experienced by women and perpetrated by men. Any woman can experience domestic violence regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, class, disability or lifestyle. Domestic violence can also take place in lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender relationships, and can involve other family members, including children.’

Source: Women’s Aid

Many women migrate to the UK to marry, or on temporary work permits, student visas or spousal visas. Women migrants face multiple forms of discrimination that may place them at greater and disproportionate risks of experiencing gender-based violence. The UN Secretary-General issues reports that focus on the elimination of the problem.

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51 Women’s Aid. About domestic violence. [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

Women migrants in the UK cannot always access basic levels of protection and support. Sometimes their immigration status prevents them from accessing some services which can intervene or prevent violence and abuse. The report ‘No recourse, No Safety’\textsuperscript{53} exposed how hundreds of women were forced to stay in violent relationships because they were unable to access basic levels of protection and support because of their immigration status.

Some of the difficulties particular to women migrants suffering domestic violence arise because of her immigration status and newness to the country:

- **Reliance upon the perpetrator**
  A migrant woman who comes to the UK to marry or join her partner (who is already settled here) usually has to complete a two-year probationary period and has limited leave to remain in the UK as shown on her visa. During this probationary period, a woman must stay with her partner before she can apply for indefinite leave to remain. Women migrants subject to immigration control are usually unable to claim most state benefits, even if married to a British citizen (known as having 'no recourse to public funds'). Therefore women migrants are likely to be reliant on their husband, partner or family to support them. As a result, many women migrants in the UK may be trapped in dangerous and violent situations.

- **Lack of control over identity and immigration documentation**
  An abuser may use a woman’s insecure immigration status to abuse her further. Women migrants may have their passport and other identification documents taken and withheld, they may be denied any information about their rights and isolated from outside contacts.

- **Lack of knowledge or information about her immigration status**
  Even if women have completed a two-year probationary period, they may never have had their immigration status confirmed to them. Many women migrants are kept unaware of the immigration laws and procedures. Women may be afraid of reporting the abuse to anyone in case they are detained and deported.

- **Cultural norms**
  In some countries, domestic violence is accepted as part of gender relations. Women from these societies are unlikely to seek help from services, afraid of the consequences, choosing to maintain their immigration status over personal safety.\textsuperscript{54}

*Figure xiii* gives an example of a migrant woman who experienced domestic abuse while pregnant. Her difficulty in seeking help was compounded by her isolation and lack of social networks as a new arrival to the UK.


\textsuperscript{54} UN Women. Virtual knowledge centre to end violence against women and girls: Women from diverse cultures. \url{www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1394-women-from-diverse-cultures.html}
Women migrants may face additional difficulties because they are new arrivals with temporary immigration status. However, they are entitled to protection like anyone else:

‘Regardless of immigration status, women migrants are entitled to protection from violence and abuse just like anyone else in the UK. Regardless of immigration status abusers are subject to the same law enforcement and sanction as anyone else’. 55

The UK government has expressed a commitment to work towards the elimination of violence against women and girls. 56 In 2012 it introduced the Destitution Domestic Violence (DDV) concession to protect migrant spouses who are victims of domestic abuse by giving access to benefits while their claim for indefinite leave to remain is being considered, and in 2014 the Joint Committee on Human Rights held an inquiry into violence against women and girls; one of their conclusions was that asylum seekers and refugees are ‘often

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Sonja came from China in 2004 to live with her husband in Kirklees who was working at a University in the region. She became pregnant after only a few weeks of being in the UK.

A few weeks after Sonja told her husband about the pregnancy he didn’t come home one night. She tried calling him on his mobile but he didn’t answer. She was worried and went to the University campus to look for him.

When he eventually came home, her husband was very angry that she had been out looking for him. He hit her across the face and screamed at her not to follow him again. He told her not to speak to anyone else. He said she was only in the UK because of his immigration status.

The next day Sonja waited at home. She was extremely scared but didn’t know anyone or anywhere to go. When her husband came home he was carrying some flowers. He said he was sorry for his behaviour and that things would get better.

Things did not get better for Sonja. Her husband started coming home later and later. He often smelt of alcohol. He became increasingly violent if she even tried to speak to him.

One morning he became enraged when he found his shirt hadn’t been ironed. He pushed Sonja down the stairs. She lay at the bottom of the stairs as he stepped over her and left the house without a word. Sonja ran out of the house and banged on her neighbours door. Luckily the neighbour was home and opened the door. The woman helped call an ambulance for Sonja and she was taken to hospital. Sadly, Sonja’s baby didn’t survive.

Source: WomenCentre, Kirklees

‘I thought he would be happy. I was pregnant and we were going to have a baby. But he started to become distant. He didn’t want to speak to me much. I just stayed at home all day’

‘I knew I had to go. I saw he was gone from the house. I picked myself up and I walked to get my bag. Then I saw I was bleeding. I was now really frightened. What was going to happen to me and my baby?’
overlooked’ and calls for specialist support to be available to those without secure immigration status.\textsuperscript{57}

New research from the IUN project\textsuperscript{58} highlights the integration challenges facing migrant victims of domestic violence who are relocated within the UK away from their violent partner and emphasises the role of law enforcement agencies and the third sector. Alongside needs including knowing their rights and entitlements, access to mental health services, language and culture classes, the report notes that women can be placed within ethnic communities which may reinforce their isolation. It recommends a range of locations and strategies should be available when rehousing family joiners who have been abused.

*Figure xiv* lists relevant services for women migrants experiencing or fleeing domestic violence, and highlights resources relating to those with no recourse to public funds. More information on safeguarding issues such as forced marriage, FGM and honour-based violence is provided in *Safeguarding adult migrants*.\textsuperscript{59}

**Figure xiv: Services and Information: Domestic violence and No Recourse to Public Funds**

If there is immediate danger to the suspected victim, inform the police and call 999.

**Domestic violence**

- **Women’s Aid**: the national domestic violence charity. They support over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the country. They have a freephone 24 hour domestic violence helpline, and a directory of local domestic violence services. [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
- **Rape Crisis**: information, help, child abuse, legal procedures. [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)
- **Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre** (RASAC) has a National Freephone Helpline [www.rasasc.org.uk](http://www.rasasc.org.uk)

**The Survivor’s Handbook** provides practical support and information for women experiencing domestic violence, with simple guidance on every aspect of seeking support. It has a section on ‘Immigration issues’. It is available in different languages and in audio version. [www.womensaid.org.uk/page.asp?section=0001000100080004&sectionTitle=Different+languages](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/page.asp?section=0001000100080004&sectionTitle=Different+languages)

**No recourse to public funds**

- **Rights of Women** provide a legal advice line for women, information sheets on subjects including domestic and sexual violence, and run the *Women’s Migration and Asylum Network* for professionals seeking information or advice on gender and migration issues. [www.rightsofwomen.org.uk](http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)

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Forced migration

Key message 11: Women asylum seekers face particular challenges during journeys of forced migration and within ‘safe’ countries of asylum. The UK is one of the few countries to recognise issues raised by women’s asylum claims, providing a gender specific Asylum Policy Instruction.

‘It’s now more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in modern conflict’  
- Major General Patrick Cammaert, former UN peacekeeping commander

Whilst forced migration poses risks for all those who are fleeing, women and girls face particular challenges in-flight: during time in temporary refuge and places of transit and in their settlement in ‘safe’ countries. For example:

- When conflict, war and violence breaks out, it is often women and girls who take up the care of younger children, the elderly and those who are most vulnerable.
- Women and girls are often targeted for particular treatment in conflict zones including rape and sexual violence which may result in pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and infections, and injuries.

The vast majority of women forced to migrate never come to the UK. In 2013, just 6 396 women applied themselves for asylum in the UK (not as dependants on a male claim). Women seek asylum in the UK from persecution and human rights abuses in their countries of origin, often presenting a range of issues around persecution which are different to those presented by men who are seeking asylum. The main countries of origin of asylum seeking women in the UK in 2013 were: Pakistan, Iran, Nigeria and Albania.

Asylum processes in many countries are criticised for discriminating against women, whose experiences are different from male asylum seekers. In 2004 (revised in 2010) the Home Office issued a new Asylum Policy Instruction (API) Gender Issues in the Asylum Claim which pertains to recognise the different issues raised by women’s asylum claims and provides policy guidance for Home Office case owners making decisions on asylum claims.

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64 Table as_04 of the Asylum data tables Volume 2 in: Home Office (2015) Immigration statistics. Reference as per earlier footnote.
**Figure xv: ‘Hush’ (excerpt of a poem by Imani Woomera)**

**Hush**

Because my voice contains power  
My experience contains the experience of others  
The birth of my words is the death of my shame  
So I shall speak  
Until my tongue goes numb  
And my lips forget word  
I shall speak  
Until I create a hurricane and blow down concrete skyscraper  
I shall speak  
Through Monologue  
Through Scripture  
Through Song  
Through Noise  
Through Bad blood  
Through My anger  
Through My pain  
Through My shame and yours  
Through my soul  
I shall speak  
So I shall free  
I shall speak  
Through Poetry

Source: Integrated Regional Information Networks (2007)§

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Looking after ourselves as workers and volunteers

‘A gracious word may smoothen the way, A joyous word may light the day, A timely word may lessen stress, A loving word may heal and bless.’

- A Word. Women’s Health in Women’s Hands

How do we as workers (and volunteers) look after ourselves when working with women migrants with complex needs? Asking the question without needing to have immediate answers is a step, a spirit of enquiry that hopefully leads to sustained healthy work. It is vital to take care of yourself in order to sustain and support yourself at work. Do not think that it is indulgent to spend time looking after your body, your mind and for some, your spirit self.

It is a privilege to work with diversity, with women who have migrated with inspirations, new ways and positive benefits this brings. Working in an area of human rights and social justice can be extremely fulfilling. Many workers and volunteers get burnt out, working in ways that mean they are living in permanent anxiety. Working in these ways can also re-create and mirror the crisis of the women we work with.

Women’s lives can be extremely complicated by their gendered experiences and situations which arise through their immigration status. Women migrants may be in horrid situations where they face or have faced violence, abuse, persecution and torture. These kinds of stories can evoke a strong reaction in a worker. Disclosures may take place when women are subject to immigration laws which can create complicated situations. Staff may feel these are senseless and painful complications which compound suffering.

Working with women migrants can be extremely difficult and distressing. Women migrants can feel very vulnerable, upset or angry, behaving in ways or saying things which are difficult to witness, hear or to respond to. Workers can also display distress and take on some of the emotions and behaviours of the women they are working with. This re-creates trauma rather than perceiving exactly what is needed.

Traumatic symptoms can be experienced by those who listen to traumatic events. These can have profound, negative effects which can manifest in different ways: exhilaration and inspiration or disorientation, confusion, anger and exhaustion. Other responses may be more extreme: sleep disturbances, extreme mood swings and wanting our work role to end. Workers who provide support to a woman migrant who has had some type of crisis may be at risk of developing what is known as secondary trauma. Empathy can play a central role in our caring roles, but it also means workers may internalise some of the pain and suffering. Listening to stories of extreme events and upsetting situations on a regular basis can mean workers do not have sufficient recovery time. Some workers may also be women migrants or may have their own personal loss or traumatic experiences. The distress can be re-activated when hearing stories from women who have suffered a similar trauma and this can trigger painful reminders and invasive memories.

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D Gastaldo (ed.) (2004) I’m Not the Woman I Used to Be. Reference as per earlier footnote.
Working out how to manage the effects on you is important. This requires prevention, care and recovery strategies. These strategies may be personal and based in your social networks, but your organisation should also provide some kind of support. Seek support from your line manager, and consider other resources which may be available through your organisations such as counselling and peer support groups.

For many of us working with scant resources is another challenge. Providing opportunities to pause and reflect, a chance to speak about the stories of service users, can be a beneficial reminder that these are collective sorrows rather than individual burdens.

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**Figure xvi: Some things people do in order to take care of themselves**

- I drink lots of water
  - I see my friends every weekend
- I go running every evening and I do yoga
- I have clinical supervision every four weeks
- I dance and move my feet
- **I am working out what to do.**
- **Prayer**
  - Pause
  - I think about this- reflect.
- **Pause**
- **Breath in breath out**
- **I am not working at the moment.**
- I go on training.
- I meet up with peer workers to talk about everything.

- I spend time reading books to my children
- I spend time in nature
- I sing in the shower very loudly sometimes
- I live alone.
- I light a candle
- I find strength through the women I have met
- I cry sometimes
- I walk my dog in the bluebell woods
- Source: WomenCentre, Kirklees
Celebrating women’s contributions

‘No society has become prosperous without a major contribution from its women’

Key message 13: Women migrant’s lives cannot be characterised as one group. They are diverse and bring a wealth of experiences, skills and knowledge to the UK, and have contributed to developing local services and resources.

Women migrants come from countries across the globe. Women may be mothers, daughters, sisters and partners. Some women come with children, some women travel alone. Women come from all backgrounds and from multiple situations. Women bring with them a range of skills, knowledge and expertise. With different experiences and achievements, women can be seen as sustaining the foundations of our communities. As leaders and negotiators within families, communities and societies, the strength and resilience of women migrants can be inspirational. Women migrants enrich the communities they live in.

Women migrants alongside individuals, communities and organisations in the UK are creating a stronger women's sector, aiming to influence policymakers, support women migrants and their organisations to increase knowledge of their rights, demonstrate and participate in greater leadership, and build confidence and capacity in relation to community cohesion, sustaining minority ethnic services and communities.

The contribution of women migrants are illustrated by highlighting projects in the UK drawing on the vision, input and work of women migrants, shown in Figure xviii. They are sources of both inspiration and support.

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Figure xvii: Projects and services in the UK

- **Development and Empowerment for Women’s Advancement (DEWA)** is an organisation with a vision of: ‘equality, dignity and respect for all women worldwide’.
  [http://dewaproject.wordpress.com/about/](http://dewaproject.wordpress.com/about/)

- **Rights of Women** is a women’s voluntary organisation committed to informing, educating and empowering women concerning their legal rights. [www.rightofwomen.org.uk](http://www.rightofwomen.org.uk)

- **Routes to Solidarity Project** (at Oxfam) aims to: ‘create a stronger black and minority ethnic (BME) women’s sector, with increased strategic and influencing power’.

- **Southall Black Sisters**: Provides advice and information on domestic violence, racial harassment, welfare and immigration, primarily for Asian, African and African-Caribbean women.
  [www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk)

- **Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST)** [www.wast.org.uk](http://www.wast.org.uk/)

- **Women for Refugee Women (WRW)** challenges the injustices experienced by women who seek asylum in the UK. WRW work to empower women who have sought sanctuary in the UK to speak out about their own experiences to the media, to policy-makers and at public events.
  [www.refugeewomen.com](http://www.refugeewomen.com)

- **Women’s Project** (at Asylum Aid) for women asylum seekers. [www.asylumaid.org.uk/womens-project/](http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/womens-project/)

- **Why Refugee Women Charter for Yorkshire and Humber**: ‘highlights some specific needs of refugee women, why services should understand these needs and minimum standards for working with refugee women in the Yorkshire and Humber region’.
  [www.whyrefugeewomen.org.uk](http://www.whyrefugeewomen.org.uk)

- **Women in Exile and Women Together**: Services at WomenCentre Kirklees supporting women seeking asylum and new migrants. [www.womencentre.org.uk](http://www.womencentre.org.uk)
Women and migration
Summary of key messages

1: Women have always migrated primarily for family reasons (for marriage and family reunification). Women’s migration patterns are changing: more women now migrate, and increasingly without immediate family members.

2: It is common for migrants to switch between regular and irregular migration status over time. Women with irregular immigration status are particularly at risk of human rights violations, in addition to discrimination and exclusion from rights and services.

3: Isolation, poverty and household role are particular barriers to accessing services and to integration for women migrants.

4: Services are bound by safeguarding duties, holding responsibilities and obligations for safeguarding vulnerable groups of adults and children, including migrants. All organisations should have policies and procedures in place for safeguarding and protection.

5: Women migrant workers earn money not only for themselves and their families, but through financial and social remittances promote independence, education, rights and choice for women in their country of origin, as well as contributing to the UK economy.

6: Many women migrants participate in the business sectors and professions but the most common forms of work are in the service and agricultural sectors, domestic work and caring, sex work and entertainment.

7: Many women migrants find work in low-skilled occupations which expose them to severe forms of discrimination and abuse, risk of poor health and safety at work, as well as the potential for unfair dismissal.

8: Forced marriage involves a lack of consent, and pressure or abuse is used to coerce the individual. Women in forced marriages may face poor health and isolation.

9: Women migrants are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and re-trafficking. It may take a long time for them to disclose the full extent of their experiences. Services should have knowledge of the indicators of trafficking and referral services available.

10: Women migrants in the UK are entitled to protection from domestic violence, regardless of their immigration status. Those who are violent and abuse women migrants are subject to the same sanctions as anyone else.

11: Women asylum seekers face particular challenges during journeys of forced migration and within ‘safe’ countries of asylum. The UK is one of the few countries to recognise issues raised by women’s asylum claims, providing a gender specific Asylum Policy Instruction.

12: Workers and services need to consider the wellbeing of staff that work with traumatised women migrants and address secondary trauma through provision of appropriate support.

13: Women migrant’s lives cannot be characterised as one group. They are diverse and bring a wealth of experiences, skills and knowledge to the UK, and have contributed to developing local services and resources.