



Case Study: Zahra's Journey

Zahra (name changed), a 39-year-old woman from Iran, had recently received the life-changing news that she had been granted refugee status in the UK.

Zahra arrived at our office asking for help with something simple but essential: opening a bank account. Ewa, our project worker, supported her through the application process to Halifax Bank and not long after, Ewa accompanied her on a follow-up visit. Her account was successfully opened: a small but important step toward rebuilding her life in the UK.

During her visit, she spoke with growing worry about her son Izmir. He had been struggling with mental health and general wellbeing, and it was clearly weighing heavily on her. Ewa assured her that we would reach out for some support for him. We contacted his school via email first to request extra support and then we followed up by phone. The school representative said that they would look into the matter and get back to us. Zahra also mentioned difficulties with getting her sons to and from school. ICOS contacted the Department responsible for school bus passes and learned that several documents (proof of the receipt of free school meals and the letter from the Admissions that there are no spaces available in any school nearer to home) were needed to begin the application. When Ewa called the local council for guidance, they advised that children should have a Pop Card, which allows them to travel all day for just £1.10. Ewa decided to email Tracey Jackson from Together for Children to seek further advice about securing a free bus permit. The client advised she has been issued bus passes by Fodi for her children.

Zahra asked us for help with her Child Benefit application and ICOS guided her through which documents she needed to send. ICOS helped her set up the NHS app and explained how she could request fuller access to her GP records by contacting her practice. Zahra also mentioned a knee problem that was limiting her mobility. Given her benefits status, Ewa helped her complete a self-assessment form for the Community Therapy Service – an important step toward applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant. She also wanted advice on how to complete a Work Capability Assessment – we supported her throughout the process. The results were disappointing – she was assessed as capable to do some form of work. She expressed a wish to appeal but had no additional evidence to challenge the decision.

At ICOS, we've walked alongside her through each hurdle – from setting up essentials like a bank account to navigating health services and advocating for her son. Her story is still unfolding, but each small achievement is building toward a future where she and her family feel safe, supported, and at home.