

Case Study 1

I come from Romania and I lived in France for a long time together with my family before coming to the UK. Although I can speak fluent French and some basic English, I never received basic education and struggled with writing and reading even in my home language.

2 years ago, I came to the UK with my grandparents to look for work. I have been living in Manchester since then. One day, I came to welcome centre with some friends to interpret for me at an advice session. Then I asked if I could volunteer at the welcome centre. I was given the chance to help out at the reception and provide general help in the centre. Staff at the welcome centre later helped me to improve my family's living condition by providing food parcels and clothing, followed by more specialised advice sessions concentrated on family income, housing and health.

They also helped me to apply for Jobseeker Allowance (JSA), open a bank account, write CV and register with GP. I also participated in English classes and youth programme. Finally, I found a job and am supporting my family financially.

Case Study 2

When I was a child, I was a quiet and shy girl. I had grandparents, parents, two brothers and three sisters. We lived in a five bedroom flat. My mother was a housewife. She looked after my grandparents and her six children. Since young, I have helped taking care of my brothers and sisters. I was taught to be polite in the house and school, and always respect the elderly.

However, I rebelled against my parents when I was a teenager. I was not good with numbers so I found maths very difficult when I was at school but my parents really wanted me to go to college when I finished school. I went against my parents' wishes because I didn't understand that education is important for me in the future.

When I grew up I met my husband whose whole family lived in England. Therefore, I moved to England with my husband. When I first arrived in England, I didn't like this country because it was quiet. I hated the weather as well because it was too cold and wet. In the winter, it went dark after four o'clock and I felt like I didn't have any energy. The main problems were because I couldn't speak much English and I missed my family very much. I felt upset after I arrived in a strange country without a friendly face to greet me.

Despite feeling sad, every day we worked very hard for our family business and to bring up two children. We always let our children have a lot of freedom to choose and gave encouragement and support to them. I felt very proud of my two sons. They have now graduated in Manchester and they both have good jobs.

Now that I have retired from work, I have a lot of free time, so I joined Wai Yin Society to study English and computer course. Wai Yin staff and the teachers are very nice and friendly. They are always very patient in helping learners to solve our problems. My English has improved a lot during this time and it has given me more confidence in my daily life. I am currently volunteering at Wai Yin Society, assisting in classrooms and admin works. Now I feel very happy and satisfied with my life in England. I have promised myself to take a holiday once a year. If I have enough money, I will travel around the world because there are many places of historical and cultural value for me to visit and learn.

Case Study 3

I left my family in Hong Kong in 2007. I then lived in America and Austria before I settled in the UK in 2014.

In order to integrate into the society, I searched for Chinese communities in Manchester. I found Wai Yin Society online. I started as a classroom assistant volunteer. I assisted in ESOL and IT classes. Learners were not confident in the class. I totally understood their difficulties because it was very hard for me to learn German in Austria. I shared my experience with them. I encouraged them to practise English in daily life and ask when they struggled. I was pleased that learners made progress at the end of the course. I established a good relationship with them.

In the meantime, I attended a teaching assistant course. It enabled me to understand the school policies and techniques in helping pupils. My classmates came from various countries. All of them are mothers. We had plenty of common topics to share. I got a placement in a primary school. The school has a rich ethnic mix of pupils. A large proportion of pupils speak English as a second language. I provided group support in Year 1. It was challenging to work with young children. I had to remind them to follow the classroom rules and instructions. It was rewarding when they thanked for my assistance.

I worked as a project worker (maternity cover) in Wai Yin Society after I had been volunteering. I was mainly responsible for organising different courses in various venues. I assisted learners with BME backgrounds in the course. It was interesting to understand their cultures. They were satisfied with my assistance. I also cooperated with different partners. The nature of work was very close to the sales and marketing field which I had worked for seven years in Hong Kong. I enjoyed working in Wai Yin Society. All staffs are very helpful and kind. It is very welcoming like a family.

I am a teaching assistant volunteer in a primary school now. I mainly support the reception class. Children behave well and teachers are supportive. It is pleasant to offer help for children and teachers.

Settling in UK was not easy. I am very lucky that Wai Yin Society provided me support and advice. I am glad that I can offer a helping hand to the others when times are tough.