



## Violeta's Story

### The Beginning:

Violeta was experiencing poor mental health and extreme anxiety, with severe implications for her ability to 'cope with life'. The absence of friends and an inability to engage with local support networks had left Violeta isolated and lonely, exacerbating her low mood and anxiety. Violeta came to the attention of the Community Builder during a walkabout in Harehills where a doorstep conversation led to a series of meet ups over coffee and the beginning of a trusted relationship. Over time, it transpired that Violeta had a passion for sewing with a background in tailoring and clothes making. The Community Builder saw an opportunity to support Violeta to share her talents and skills with other Roma women and build a community connection through a sewing group.



### The Journey:

Using small sparks to fund the group the hunt began for a suitable venue to host the sewing group. Fortunately, a local asset existed in the form of Thackrey Medical Museum which was hosting sewing workshops for other groups. With language support provided by the Community Builder, Violeta negotiated a regular space at the venue and purchased a range of materials for the group. Violeta proved to be an excellent community connector, organising coffee mornings to which she invited other Roma women and encouraged them to join the sewing group.



Despite her earlier isolation, Violeta emerged as a sociable, friendly woman who found her strengths in being able to engage with others and share her passion and skills for sewing. The sewing group has given the women an opportunity to make new friends and to discuss their shared experiences as recent immigrants, whilst providing a new skill set of use in their daily lives.

## The Impact:

Violeta has replaced her isolation and loneliness with a social circle of Roma women who share her passion for sewing. Many of these women, like Violeta, were experiencing difficulties in making new friends and adapting to a new lifestyle. The sewing group enabled them to find a sense of purpose, to get out of the house and to get to know others in a friendly, supportive environment. As Violeta's confidence has grown, she has encouraged other Roma women to develop their gifts, talents, and passions.

