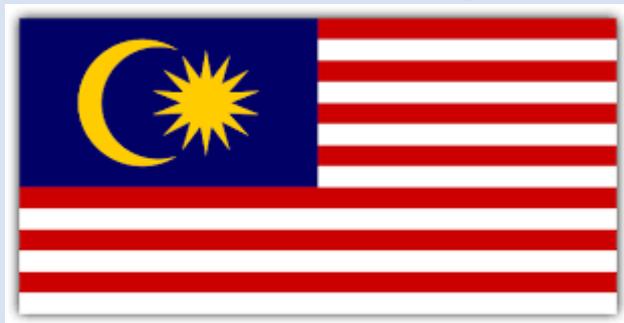


Moving to the UK from Malaysia came with its own difficulties, notwithstanding it being at such a challenging age.

During our time at secondary school, we quickly realised the significant contrast between the Malaysian and UK education system, which we found to be an interesting experience. Although we openly embraced this new change, the language barrier was very apparent and hindered our ability to make new friends. At this time we felt isolated from the other students and without this conduit to improve our English, there was little hope of building lasting relationships. Luckily our mum was part of the MFA whose members provided us with extensive support and guidance alongside the school resources. Their selfless nature and willingness to help was a turning point for us during our time here and gave us the foundations to build upon and achieve our placement at sixth form.

The next milestone for us was being accepted into university to study accounting and finance. This provided us the perfect opportunity to build long term friendships which we were able to share our graduation success with and take into the next chapter of our lives.

Suet Yee & Phui Yee, Malaysia



I was asked to write about some of my early experiences I had when moving from my country to England. When you move from one country to another, you are exposed to a completely new experiences and lifestyle. Every day brings new discoveries around culture, people, food, places, customs, and language barriers, until you get used to your new home and know what to expect from their surroundings. So, these are some of my early experiences adapting to the new way of life in North Somerset.

I was born in Brazil and I came to England in 1999 with my two boys, 3 and 5 years old, and my ex-husband. We moved to Banwell, a village 5 miles from Weston-super-Mare. During my first weeks here, the biggest impact I felt was with the English climate. I came from a region in Brazil where the climate is predominantly dry and hot, with only two seasons, dry and wet seasons. Most of the time, it is so hot over there that you better avoid the sun between 11 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon.

My first house in Banwell was a 200-year-old cottage, dark and very cold, located in a very dark street, the Dark Lane. Though I arrived in July, mid-summer, I spent my first two weeks with the heating and fire on all the time. Two of my closed neighbors used to laugh at my struggle to acclimate with the cold wet English summer. My neighbors were nice and kind, and they brought me some warm jumpers, what helped a lot. They also helped me to connect with other people in the village and to understand the village way of life. I have to say I came to love the English countryside and the rapid changes of the landscape between the seasons.

Developing English language skills is an ongoing and hard process, and I am still not done. When I arrived here, my English was very limited. And, probably, as most people who come to live here and have English as their additional language, I could make a list of situations when or I was misunderstood or I would misinterpret what people said. Few weeks after I arrived in Banwel, I went to the primary local school to register my eldest boy. The teacher who was filling the form and asking the questions, asked me if my son had siblings. I didn't know what siblings meant. My first thought was that could mean a childhood disease, so I said: " he had chickenpox, measles,

but I don't think he had siblings". Why didn't she say brothers and sisters!? I think that teacher will never forget my gaffe.

Another difference between Brazil and England that I had to learn by doing the wrong thing was about children's party. In Brazil, children's party usually have a specific time to start, but not to finish. It usually finishes when the last guest leaves and adults are also invited for the party. My boys were invited for their first birthday party, which was on a Saturday between 2pm and 4pm. I wasn't aware of the two hours restriction time for the party (which of course was on the invitation), and I went to pick the boys up at 4.30 pm. When I arrived at the house, the birthday child's mother was outside the front door waiting for me with my boys, the last two to leave. Of course, she reminded me that the party was on only for two hours. My boys weren't happy either. I apologized embarrassedly. So, I learn something that day and I thought that was a great idea! So, very soon I adapted the two hours limited for my boys' birthday parties. Much easier!

Cirlei, Brazil



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I came to the UK in 2006 as a student to complete my Bachelor degree. Like for many international students, my arrival city was London. Coming from Pakistan, where a degree obtained in the UK holds a high value in the job sector, just the thought of achieving such a goal was pure excitement. This kept me motivated and helped overcome the hardships of social, cultural and language differences.

The student visa at that time allowed me to do a part-time job with a maximum of 20 hours a week. Finding work was a steep learning curve of language differences, I was amazed to see the number of 'Vacancy' posters on various 'office like' buildings but was disappointed to find what that word meant when advertised by a Hotel or a Bed & Breakfast.

I submitted my CV everywhere I possibly could and was able to successfully secure a customer assistant position in Marks and Spencer. The journey to my M&S store took 2 hours (each way) and included walking, getting a Bus, changing into Tram and finally taking the Underground. I worked in that store for over 2 years and made that journey at least 4 times a week. This might come across as a difficult time, but the whole experience has not only helped me understand the diversity of London's culture but provided confidence I needed to further my educational and professional career.

Adeel, Pakistan



It has been fifteen years since I first arrived in the UK, in London to be exact. I will never forget the overwhelming mix of emotions when I stepped into the city that I never thought I would be able to travel to, never mind live and work in. So many different cultures and languages, not to mention coffee shops on every corner and just overall abundance of everything. For someone who lived all her life in a small town (population of 15,000), London was like the whole world in one place. As most of my Polish friends, I did not speak English and was never planning to stay too long, just long enough to learn the language and earn enough to get me by.

My first job was in customer services in KFC where I have learnt some of my first English words like: chicken thighs, drumsticks, corn on the cob etc. I was always confused when customers would greet me with 'alright mate'. I remember thinking: "why would they call me 'mate', not knowing what that means. I was also shocked by how many regular KFC customers we had and how "take away" culture was a norm in this country.

Fast-forward fifteen years and I am accustomed to take-aways, eating out, tea with milk (another mind-blowing British "thing"). However, to this day I would never greet anyone with "alright mate".

Natalia, Poland



## **My journey to bring up my own, & working with other children in a Foreign Country – W-s-M, England**

I was born in East Java, Indonesia. I have been married to an English man for the last 28 years. I have 3 boys, twin boys (my older sons) and a youngest. The twins were born in Indonesia and my younger boy born in Bristol. We moved to England in the summer of 1999 when the children were under 6 years old. When we moved to England, my children could not speak very much English; they only understood and spoke a few words of the language. I also didn't use English much in Indonesia after I left my job as a Senior Secretary for eight years before I got married. By the time we moved here, I realised I could not speak and understand English as much as I thought I did. In my mind at that time I wondered how I could help my children study if I could not speak English fluently. I knew my husband could help the children, but as a Mum, I felt that was not right because many children will seek and ask help automatically from their mum.

With these fears I decided to go to college to study English at Weston College in September 1999 with other students from around the world. The first year I attended twice a week, but still did not improve a lot. I motivated myself to study and to socialise with English people to improve my English. The first and the second years were very hard, I missed my family in Indonesia a lot and the help from my family. I felt very lonely and frustrated but I knew I should stand on my own two feet. I started everything from the beginning again, for example driving a car. I had to take an exam again to have a British driving licence, and that's not easy. Luckily I passed straightaway for my theory test, but for my practical exam. I took it twice and the third time I passed. I found everything not easy at all, but I got through it all to make life much better. I got a job as a dinner lady at a secondary school. I enjoyed the job, all the teachers

were very nice and polite, but at that time a couple of incidents happened with the children when I looked after them during lunch. Because I had just come from a completely different culture I could not accept the behaviour of some of the children. One day a group of children just teased us and annoyed a couple of dinner ladies, so I told the senior teacher about it and he asked the children to apologise to us which they did in writing. Then I found later on that the children had serious problems at home and at school as well. I could see from that their hand writing and spelling was very poor for their age. As a result, I began to think that I should help them in the area of their weakness but I could not do anything at that time because of the limitation of my English as well as my profession. So I decided to start from basic or foundation level to build my confidence. I applied for a job as a School Meal Supervisory Assistant or Dinner Lady in a first school in May 2000 and I worked there for four and half years, so I felt confident working with the children. Because English is my Second Language, I took courses at Weston College like English, Business English, Computer, Childcare & Play work assistant; all of which improved my confidence in many aspects of working with children.

As a SMSA at the First School, I knew a little bit more about what the primary school & it's staff want to achieve for their pupils. I then decided to volunteer to help in Year 1 and Year 2 classes which I enjoyed very much. Because I liked working with children, I registered and started on the first step childcare course and then my tutor recommended me to go to a higher level (childcare NVQ level 3), but I decided to take Teaching Assistant NVQ level 2 instead which I obtained in July 2004. The skills which I have further developed at school and Weston College helped me look for a better job. In November 2004 I started a new job as a Pre-School Assistant at Churchill Pre-school which I enjoyed very much. The Leader planned for me to take a course in September at Weston College to gain my NVQ Level 3 in Foundation Stage for Pre-School which I was looking forward for it but instead I took Children's Care, Learning and Development, NVQ level 3 at Weston College. I also attended Four Days evening Course for

Makaton Foundation run by Makaton Vocabulary Development Project, Surrey. I took 10 weeks course for CACHE level 3 in option 2 - Working with children with disabilities and special educational needs and their families in Pre-school setting as well at that time. Because of my course that I was taking I had to find a school which provides for education from baby unit until pre-school that's when

I applied for placement at the Green Umbrella voluntarily, but only for a few months the Manager decided to employ me as a part – time Nursery Nurse Practitioner. I was so happy working there. It's a very good Pre-school and Nursery, they had a very good grade from Ofsted because they employed very skilful and committed staff and provide an activities in different developments, have plenty of spaces to explore and had a great environment for the children, their staff and parents as well. Children learnt so much from it, as staff and the management worked together to make sure that the children were happy and proud that they were doing well on a daily basis at the nursery. And NOW I could see and met some of them are success and want to be a Lawyer, business people, an artist, teacher, electrician etc. So I am happy after all, as my boys also doing well with their education as well as their attitude, manner and behaviour.

T. Newbury (Mrs.)



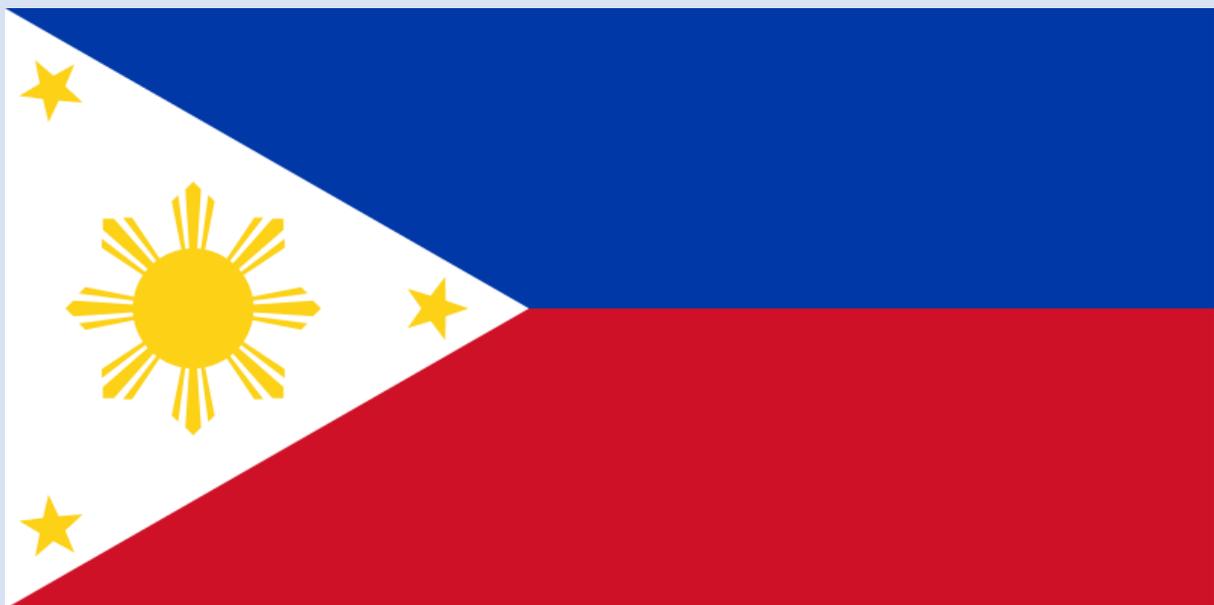
I have been proud to support the MFA for a number of years on behalf of North Somerset Council. The volunteers in the group work hard to ensure that people are welcomed, valued and respected. Their kindness and generosity to those who are seeking friendship is fantastic, their vibrant and welcoming events have been enjoyed by many in North Somerset. They have enthusiastically been involved in many public events over the last 10 years with the aim of sharing information about different customs and cultures and always taking the opportunity to welcome and celebrate the diversity in North Somerset. They have been an important feature in events such as Your North Somerset, Food Festivals and Weston Pride. In addition to the important ways that they encourage friendship and celebrate diversity they have also played a keen role in supporting the council and other agencies such as health and the police in working on key issues such as hate crime, health improvements and service development; always ensuring that the views of the multi-cultural members that they serve are well represented. I look forward to continuing to work with them on important issues that improve the lives of the people of North Somerset.

Louise Roberts  
Equalities Manager  
Human Resources and Equalities Team  
Corporate Services  
North Somerset Council

## Pilgrim

Over 30 years ago, I lived in The Philippines. I was a widow with 2 girls, Marilyn aged 10 and Glaiza aged 4. Through pen friends I met Roger Ingham and we began our friendship through letters until our relationship developed into a romance. Roger visited The Philippines after a year of letter exchanging and eventually we got married with a grand wedding ceremony. We were blessed with the news that I was pregnant and we had a lovely daughter, Regina. It took a tortuous year before Regina and I could join Roger back in England and then another 6 months for Marilyn and Glaiza to join us. The girls are now grown up and they are very successful in their chosen careers. We all consider this as our second home and we have always embraced the opportunities offered to us. Roger and I have been shown enormous hospitality by joining the MFA group and we thank you for your longstanding friendship, support and generosity. 2020 has been tough and full of sadness for the whole world and our sadness was intensified with the loss of Roger 3 months ago. We have endless memories together which I will treasure forever.

Gloria Ingham





## **A Dream Come True** *(by Paul and Grace Howe)*

We met online. It was really a no brainer for me. Grace is a gorgeously looking, constantly smiling, hardworking, kind and an honest Filipino lady. But we also had a myriad of common interests. That's why it only took me three weeks to propose to her. And she said, 'yes'. And so our life's journey together began.

Grace was teaching at a local University in Dumaguete, a small tropical island of thousands which were part of the Philippines. I booked a flight to meet Grace about four months later. That's when Grace had her school break.

It was a bit of a culture shock for me. Except for the major roads, there were no traffic lights on the roads. It seemed like a free for all-great if you liked going on the dodgems, where the bravest go first. You could be left at a junction for hours if you hesitated to move forward. You'd also see riders on motor bikes carrying a struggling pig and as they wavered from left to right you'd keep your distance. Of course the daily hot temperature was also something to get used to.

Meeting each other was just as we dreamed it would be and to cut a long story short, Grace eventually received her residence visa and we ended up in the UK two and a half years later.

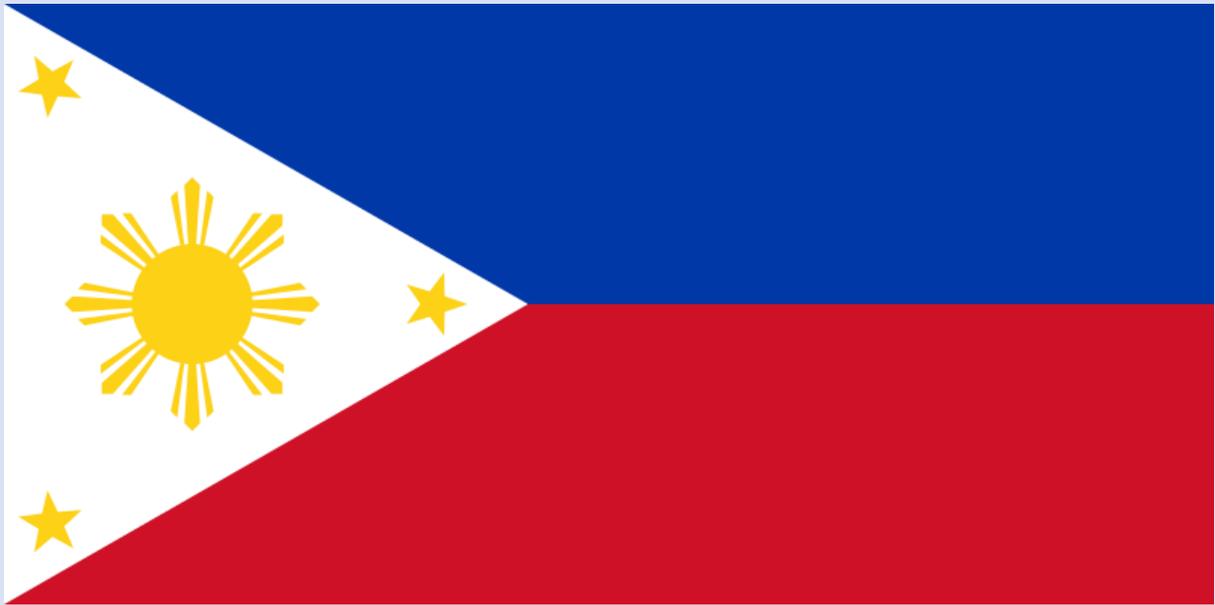
For Grace, meeting different people with different accents and different paces of speech took time to adjust to. But she was strong, quick to learn and her confidence soon grew. And within a short time she found herself working in a residential care home in Weston-super-Mare. It was not an easy job and the hours were long but again she adjusted to it and even managed to get her NVQ 3. But her ambition was to become a school teacher. Thus, while working, she was also studying at Weston College to improve her qualification to be able to meet the requirements to teach here in the UK.

It was concerning that she noticed some discreet but obvious discrimination but came to terms with it. I wanted to do something to help her cope, perhaps meet others with similar issues so when I saw an article in the Mercury celebrating the work that the Multicultural Friendship Association (MFA) did, I knew that was what we should do. We were warmly welcomed by Triliria, the chairman of the MFA and other members immediately. We joined that day and for years the association has been of great support. Not only does the association attract people from all over the world but it also does a lot to raise funds for local charities. We've made lots of friends from all over the world, including the Philippines to whom Grace will talk often with for ages about their nostalgia and cultural events back home.

It's been a real challenge but with the continued support of the MFA, and the friends she's made there, and after finally completing her

teacher's qualification at Bristol University, Grace is now, five years later, teaching Science and specifically Biology full time at the Huish Episcopi Academy. Her dream achieved.

Paul (British) and Grace (from the Philippines).



11th September 2014

One of the first MFA events I was delighted to attend was a ceremonial tree planting ceremony in Grove Park, on 11th September 2014, to celebrate the mayoral patronage of the Association. There were such kind and inspiring words from Rev. Wing. Com Keith Berry-Davies, Imam Moktar, and of course from Triliria Newbury. The patronage in perpetuity was happily received by a beaming Mayor Roz Willis. Following much hilarity and supportive handholding, Triliria and the Mayor made it up the steep bank to oversee the planting of this beautiful tree, accompanied by prayers and good wishes from both clerics.

We repaired to St John's Hall for a suitably splendid lunch (the hospitality being legendary at all MFA events). Here we ate and chatted happily well into the afternoon and enjoyed the fabulous cake which had been created for the occasion.

Mayor Willis was presented with a silver salver in recognition of this happy event.

Anna Steven





My dad came over to the UK in the early sixties. He was Spanish and had met my English mum a few years before. Originally, they had intended to marry and live in Spain, but plans changed, and they spent all their married life here in Weston. Dad soon missed familiar tastes and would try and replicate Spanish meals at home. Our house was the only one on the street that smelled of garlic in those days. One particular story sticks in my mind. Dad told me that when he first came over, he couldn't buy saffron anywhere to make paella. He finally managed to track some down in a chemist on the high street and would buy it from there for many years. Every time he needed saffron he would be asked how many strands he wanted? And would have to buy by the strand. He was totally bemused by this, as were the chemists, who wondered why on earth he wanted more than a couple of strands!!

Manuela



Greetings !

First of all, I would like to introduce myself, I'm Lealee Mendoza-Brown 41 years of age, originally from Philippines, happily married to Andre' Lawrence Brown and with two healthy kids named Lawrence-Lee 7 years of age and Laura-Lee 5 years of age.

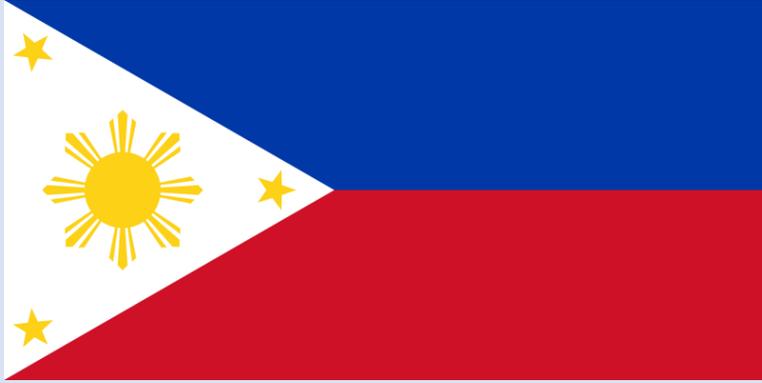
2008 , I came here to study on how to look after the elderly and so I finished my NVQ( National Vocational Qualifications) Level 3 & 4 at Derbyshire whilst my study placement was here in Weston-super-mare called Highctoft Nursing Home. I finished my studies which helped me to pursue my career here in UK after 2 years my employer sponsored me to work for them.

So I applied at the Home Office to get my working permit and luckily I had my permit to work for 2 years and then after 2 years I applied again from Home Office to extend my permit to work and they gave me another 2 years for extensions.

2012, I got married to Andre,' I met him 2008 when I went to their workplace named Brockley in St. Nicholas Way as part of my placement. It was one of my great achievement here in Uk to finished my study and I did applied my learnings to work .

2017, I left my workplace as I want to learn more and acquiring critical thinking skills and discovering new ways of relating to people

from different cultures. So, here I am now presently , working in University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust .  
Lealee Mendoza-Brown



I became involved with MFA because my wife was its Patron as Mayor.

I enjoy all the events and meetings because I am able to learn and understand and enjoy other people's cultures and traditions.

I enjoy listening to MFA friends talk of how things are in their homelands.

I even more enjoy the wonderful foods from across the world that we are able to taste! I know my wife so enjoys Zeina's 'Lebanese Pudding'!

The friendship and warm welcome is why I became a regular member and to enjoy good humour and companionship.

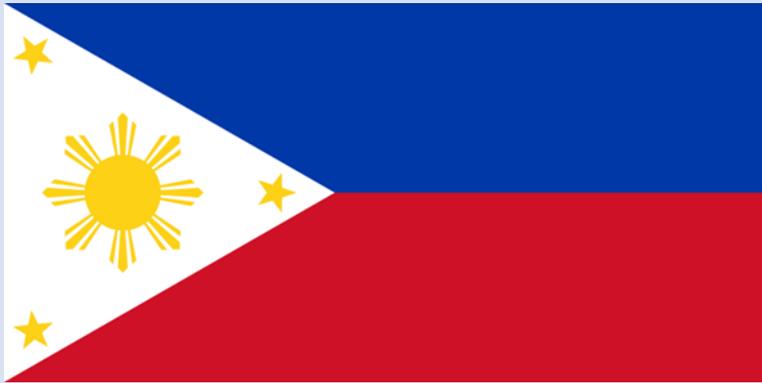
Derek UK



Hi, my name is Luzviminda. People call me Lucy here in England as its easy to remember than my Filipino name. I came here in UK, November 2006 as working visa. The process of getting a job here wasn't easy. I have had applied 2005 in an agency but due to terrorist attack in London, my application has been on hold. Of course with that I have lost the employer and waited for another chance. In 2006 I had an employer and started sorting papers. Plenty of papers and documents had to be sent and also my medical and physical health. As of October 2006 it has started to have a good light and get the working visa. I have finally have my plane ticket in November 2006. A week before the flight, we received bad news as employer have abandoned us and get a local worker instead. We then have to face the difficulties of coming here whilst the agency looking for a job for us. It didn't take time to wait and finally get an employer to keep us and change our working visa. From Heathrow to Clevedon and without any company who can give us a lift so we travel by public transport. Took is 3 hours and more to get to our destination. I settled quickly here in the UK working and met a lot of friends. June 2007 I met my husband through his friend. His friend came to our flat to ask information how we managed to come here to work. He had a fiancé who would like to know about it. It was actually my flatmate who knows him but she asked me to be with her and have a good chat. As I had a good chat with him he asked me if I'm single or want to meet a friend. I said not a problem to meet someone and of course I'm single at that time. 27 June meet Phil for first time and had

good laugh – never get out of my sight since then. Got married August 2008. From working to care homes for many years and got qualifications (NVQ Level 3 and Level 5) to be employed by NHS at Weston General Hospital as nursing assistant for 5 years and now working in Weston Hospice Care as Day hospice Nursing Assistant for 3 years although I have been working as Bank Nursing Assistant since 2015 in WHC. I have achieved a good journey here in UK. A happy mum now and enjoying the rest of my life.

Lucy – Philippines



My name is Erzsebet Veress (Erzsi). I was born in Budapest, Hungary. I first moved to England in 2003 and spent a year with a family to learn English. Then I finished my studies in Hungary.

I liked living in England during that year and I always planned moving back to England once I finished my studies. So, I moved back to England in 2007. I have been living in Weston-super-Mare since then. I am a British Citizen since 2014.

I like living in England as I like the people, they are very nice and welcoming. I also like the weather here, it doesn't have extreme weather. In Hungary, we have very hot summers and very cold winters. I also like the culture, I like learning about it.

Every year I go back to Budapest to visit my family and friends. Being Hungarian means that I have a country to go back whenever I need it. It is a place I love with the same equality as I love the UK.

I am proud being a Hungarian as this little country has so much history. Its language is very unique, only two languages pertain to the linguistic family called Finno-Ugric (and this is only Finnish and Hungarian).

There are some interesting facts about Hungary, for example, that a Hungarian invented the Rubik's Cube; Hungarians created both Paramount and Fox Studios, and lots of famous actors have Hungarian roots. Not to mention the influence that Liszt Ferenc and Bartok Bela left on the music world. Even the famous magician Harry Houdini was of Hungarian descent.

There are so many things that Hungarians are related to, and I embrace this and hope that one day this country will get recognition for it.

It is also a beautiful country to visit, Budapest is the 'Heart of Europe'.

I have an English fiancée and we have a beautiful daughter, Daphne. We are expecting our second child next March. I talk to Daphne in Hungarian most of the time as I would like her to grow up as a bilingual and she will speak this unique language, she will be able to communicate with her grandparents and family members in Hungary. I also would like to teach her about the Hungarian history and tradition.

Hungary is a home I hold close to my heart and I will talk about the culture to anyone who is willing to hear about it.

Erzsi – Hungary



