

Alice* is 75 years old and has been married 50+ years. She experienced physical violence, financial control and emotional abuse all her marriage. She left her husband on many occasions and even moved out of the country with her children. Her husband always promised to change and begged her to come back – Alice explains that the constant pleading wore her down and she always took him back eventually.

The physical violence reduced over the years but there was still ongoing name-calling and controlling behaviour. Last year the physical violence started again but this time Alice felt she couldn't deal with that again and phoned the Police. Alice's husband was arrested and Alice went to stay with her sister. The PSNI made a referral to Women's Aid and the outreach worker visited Alice in her sister's home.

Alice contacted a solicitor but decided not to proceed with going to court in case this upset their children – they were angry at their mother for phoning the PSNI. With Women's Aid support, Alice went to the Housing Executive and applied for housing. Within weeks Alice was offered and accepted sheltered accommodation. Alice was very content in her new home and most of all felt safe.

However, within a few weeks her husband was diagnosed with a serious illness requiring regular hospital treatment. He lost a lot of weight and has refused to accept any help other than Alice saying that he would rather be dead than on his own. Due to this Alice has started to visit her husband again to care for him. Even though he is still verbally abusive and controlling, Alice says she would not be able to live with herself if she abandoned him at this time. At the moment Alice is hoping he will recover so that she can reduce her contact with him. Alice still has ongoing support from Women's Aid.

*not her real name