

**Transcript of interview with Farsh Raoufi**

**Track 1** – My name is Farsh Raoufi, I’ve been living in Peterborough since 1979, and I’ve just retired after 30 years with Cambridgeshire Fire Rescue Service.

**Track 2** – So I was born in Iran and as with many other countries across the world, at that time and now there are different conflicts going on, everyday life is there is shocking, there are restrictions and sometimes there isn’t a life that you want there to be, as far as education or job opportunities are concerned. So, I moved to this country and I came in 1979, a refugee, to start a life in Peterborough.

**Track 3** – Unfortunately at the time there was restrictions out of the country that I was born, so I did come here by myself.

**Track 4 –** I came straight to Peterborough, I had some distant family friends that sponsored me and I stayed with them for a few years.

**Track 5 –** I lived not far from Weller Road, sort of Dogsthorpe area and I went to school at St Paul’s school, which was also called Lincoln Road school in Millfield. At that time, the education system wasn’t what it is now, there wasn’t any support teachers or teachers to help you with language or interpretation. So schooling was, you went to all of your lessons just as everyone else did, sat in the back of the class and tried your best to understand what was going on.unately at the time there was restrictions out of the country that I was born, so I did come here by myself.

**Track 6 –** I always found it really welcoming, when a person moves to somewhere different, you either look different or speak different and you stand out all on your own. But Millfield is a place that is so vibrant, with different cultures and communities, you’re just sort of a one-off group in many many groups, at the time that I came here in the early 80’s, there was a big Italian community around Millfield, there was the Asian and South Asian community which was huge and also Afro-Caribbean community, as well as that you had a lot of people from Poland who moved here after the war, so the elder Polish community lived in Peterborough, so I found it really welcoming, it was just like lots of different people from different cultures and their businesses, living together, working together, every now and again there would be slight tensions like there would anywhere else, but the majority of the time, it everyone getting on together, there are mosques, Hindu temples, there are churches only a step away from each other and you could really move from one to the next and be welcomed.

**Track 7 –** The communities has changed slightly, so there was a big Afro-Caribbean community and Asian community, that’s slightly smaller and the gaps have picked up, there is a big Portuguese community, a new generation of the Polish community, there is more vibrance with different cultures but still as welcoming and what I think about Millfield is like what you see in movies in America, the land of opportunities. When you think of how many people from different parts of the world are running small businesses, when you walk along Lincoln Road or in Millfield, people come here with the aspiration of starting a life and growing a family and that what they’re doing, they’re bringing opportunities so I think in a tradition it’s grown to cast a net over a wider different communities in Peterborough, but it’s still just as vibrant with different cultures

**Track 8 –** I had a couple of friends in the Fire Service, we grew up together, so it was people that I went to school with at St Pauls in Millfield and we sort of played in the same streets and parks and stuff, and they used to tell me what a great job it was to serve their community, an exciting place where you don’t do the same thing twice, it different every day, different places, different people. I felt a bit of a debt to the city that’s given me a home and I wanted to respect that and pay something back to that community and I couldn’t think of anything better than keeping them as safe as possible by doing something that I enjoy as well. So back in 1990/1991 I joined the Fire Service and it was really nice because I worked around the county in Cambridgeshire, but Dogsthorpe is what you sort of think of as home, and it’s nice to work in a place where you also live. When you go to incidents or you go to educate people about safety, it’s the areas that you know, it’s the people that you know, you can have a human conversation with them on a one to one basis as opposed to just generally giving out information to people that you don’t know.

**Track 10 –** At present I am doing some work with Peterborough Racial Equality Council, building connections within the communities from diverse backgrounds. That is the type of thing I love doing and again around Millfield is where the diverse communities are and what I’ve found out in my 30 years of working with the council, I’ve worked with the Fire Service, I’ve worked in the volunteering sector, everything almost interconnects, so lots of different agencies are trying to work within communities and when it comes to it, if you work smartly and collaborate because you work with the same communities, so we talk about fire safety as well as stuff about scamming or the NHS or the environment, we tend to duplicate work time and time again so it would be nice for one agency to help the other out. So, at present it is my aspiration to stay in the local area and help communities achieve the best that they can.

**Track 11 –** This feels like home, when I talk, I have my siblings that live across the globe from Los Angeles to Montreal to Washington and when I meet them, when I’ve been to see them, when we speak on Zoom of late, whenever we talk about going anywhere or doing anything, it always comes back to ‘right it’s time to go home’, or ‘I’ll be going home’ and for me, this is home and I’ve always thought of the Millfield or Dogsthorpe area as home. Wherever I go or whatever I do over time, but then I will always return to this being my home. I know most people, I know every street, every park, every alley, every shop, this feels right, and I feel at home and you’re always welcomed. If you walk through Millfield, even if you don’t know anybody, you only have to take a few steps to come across somebody to have a conversation with, talk about where you’ve come from, what you’ve done, what you’re doing, you can spark a conversation and start making friends

**Track 12 –**You’re always going to wonder about the place you were born, how it’s changed, you want to go and explore but I don’t believe, I mean culturally I am from there, that is my ethnicity from there, but this is my home, this is where I built a home. It’s almost like renting a house, as opposed to digging the foundation yourself and putting brick by brick on top of each other. I grew up here, I made a family here, I educated myself here, I got a job here, I worked here. So this does feel like this is home. With all the good bits, with all the bits that are not as good, I take it all but this is home.