

Hilda recalls the challenges of settling in Hertford and bringing up her son here, away from her support network in Zimbabwe.

I was accepted at University, at Hertfordshire University, to do my nursing and coming from Cardiff, I was doing my dental nursing in Cardiff and then I came here, yeah in 2003, I'm still here! I brought in my son with me and then he was accepted at Sele School.

Hertford Baptist church, it made me to decide to stay in Hertford, to make Hertford my home. And the support which I got, and my son, was second to none. And although in that year, 2003, I was kind of, like, on the edge of going back to Wales. We used to drive for six months, every month end, to Wales, to do shopping and to meet up with friends because in those six months we struggled a little bit... Then, in 2004, my sister joined me from Cardiff as well.

It wasn't my intention to stay in the UK or to bring my son from Zimbabwe. 'Cos I thought education in Zimbabwe, and culture as well, was much richer than bringing him over here.

Were you worried about that, for him coming somewhere where he wouldn't have the cultural references?

Yes. Being a boy, it was a challenge because once I was training, he was at school, then, from school, where we didn't see each other, it was a big worry. Whom is he getting friends with? And that was the biggest worry and thank goodness, we had friends from, connections with the churches and their friends, and there were a couple of African people as well who were around us, so it wasn't that much. He could go to that place and then I'll know that he is safe there.

In Zimbabwe we have this saying "Community raises a child". A community, it will bring up the child whilst you're not there. You can remotely control your child because you'll be knowing, you'll be trusting your community, your neighbours and family and friends. The support network, it's wider in Africa than here. But then, when I moved here, it took a while to build that connection, that support network. So, the church helped quite a lot on that note.

Did you meet people through your son's school?

The parents, not much because, like I say, the culture was different and people kept to themselves but their children, you know, they'd come and I used to often say when one, a few friends of his friends come and then we'd eat together and then the next thing, they want to sleep over! I'm like, "No, no, no, no! Give me your Mum's phone number so that I can ring Mum", they say "Oh no she doesn't bother, she doesn't worry". I said "No, I do, because when my son comes to you, I want your Mum to phone me to say he is with you, so that I don't worry. So, I'll do the same".

Those are some of the things which I had a challenge with, you know, they could sometimes knock and open the door and then come straight to my son's bedroom, not even saying hello to me! Oh, that used to really, "Ah Ah!, Eden does not pay rent here! Eden has got a

parent, excuse me?" You know, so those kind of things, those are the things which I needed Eden to stay in Zimbabwe a little bit longer to get.

Now my son is about 32 years old, Eden, and he has a partner who, I love her so much, they've got three children. They all have got middle names, they've got Shona names to keep that sort of sense of belonging.

How did your son find it? Moving from Zimbabwe?

All the challenges, he didn't see them! He didn't see all these challenges. It was only when we were here, it was still in 2003 and when I didn't have much financially and that's when he really felt the pinch of how hard it is to live in the UK, until I got a comfortable place to work whilst he was still at school, when I don't have any lectures.

Where you are from in Zimbabwe, is it a small place or a city?

A city. Harare

But then to come here, a very small town...

It was a very small town. We went to one of the St. Andrews Street, and there's a boutique. My niece helped us to move, so I said, *"Let's just walk into town and see the shops."* Then we were in there, I think, about five people, the place was full! My son says *"Mummy, are you sure, we are going to be ok here? The shop is full with five people!"*

You know, the other thing was we found, food was expensive. That's why we took some trips to Cardiff where we could shop where we used to shop, and then it took us a while as well, to say, actually the drive, you know, paying the petrol, so we might as well start learning to, you know.

It has been a journey and I'm glad and pleased that we ended up settling here and making it our home... Everything around us is about Hertford. I don't think I'll ever think of moving to any other place.