

BENEFITS OF EMPLOYMENT

'I have been given an opportunity'

Re-entering the workforce can be a positive experience for people who have been long-term unemployed.

For Sabina Banu, pictured, it's allowed her to regain confidence and independence after a tough few years in which she spent time living on the streets.

The 40-year-old was accepted as a refugee by the British Council in 2010 after fleeing Bangladesh because of persecution over her sexuality.

After initial support, she drifted away, experiencing mental health issues and homelessness. "It was a messy life, I was drinking all the time," she said.

After being accepted as a resident at Caritas Anchor House, Canning Town, Sabina was given the skills and training to re-enter the job market, with a placement at Pret a Manger.

"I was really nervous," she admitted about her first day.

She breezed through her three-month internship and is now a regular Pret employee, working behind the till and helping to make the food in the kitchen.

"They are all very friendly and nice," she said of her colleagues. "I am lucky. We sing and we dance."

Sabina's manager Simon Buckley, said: "When we met Sabina, she had



various issues to deal with, but she was very determined to turn her life around.

"She has been an absolute joy to work with. She's friendly, reliable and nothing is ever a problem for her.

"She's the type of employee every manager wishes for. She's always chatting, singing and dancing – creating her own buzz which everyone is drawn to."

