



‘I had come to the end of the road...’

When Ursula Richards applied for a placement at City South, Sarah Roberts, our Placement and Volunteer Coordinator couldn't understand why she needed a placement. But while on paper she looked 'job ready', in reality she wasn't.

"Ursula's CV looked good and she sounded 'job ready', but when I interviewed her I could see she could benefit from a placement," says Sarah. "The person in front of me didn't match the CV I was looking at. I felt that Ursula lacked confidence in her abilities and conviction in her work. She simply didn't believe in herself."

"Ursula had a full employment history up until two years ago. She had worked as a resident liaison officer for Bramhall for three years but was made unemployed after her contract ended. She had been attending the work programme, but it had disheartened her and she felt that they would tarnish her as someone not interested in getting into work, and they gave very little time or support to her."

Before coming to City South Ursula would job search regularly, but would find it increasingly difficult and she began to feel down. Ursula has mild anxiety, which heightened during times of frustration and uncertainty. She became sceptical if employers were even receiving her applications, as she often wouldn't hear back.

"It would set me back emotionally," says Ursula. "I felt down about not getting work, as I considered myself work ready. I was first introduced to City South by my work programme advisor, but I had always said that I would not do volunteering work, because I value my time and always thought my time in work should be paid. However I had come to the end of the road; I was exhausted, frustrated and disheartened - but my gut instincts told me to go ahead and take the move."

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"When I was told I had been successful after the interview, I was overwhelmed with joy. It felt like I was back on track and that it was a step forward. Although it was unpaid, that didn't matter in the end; I was back in work, into a routine and happy again."

"My placement was fantastic and all the staff at City South have been so supportive. My confidence was low but now I feel on top of the world. It's so important for me to feel comfortable and at ease in the workplace, and sometimes that doesn't happen. But at City South I feel part of the team and most importantly a valuable member of the team. Being given responsibilities is so important to me and gives me confidence. My anxiety has reduced to the point that it's no longer a barrier into work."

"My advice to anyone considering a placement is to go for it. It's unpaid but don't let it hold you back as you never know where it may lead. I've now got a three-month fixed term contract at City South. I hadn't expected this and when I was offered paid work I was blown away and so proud. It felt like an achievement."