**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee: Shirin Memi**

**Project: Growing Old Gracefully - SubCo**

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**Name of interviewer: Francis Ball**

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*Interviewer*

Interviewee

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**[00:00:00]**

*Could you tell me where you were born?*

Er, I was born here, in the UK, in, up in West Yorkshire, in a town called Dewsbury.

*Uhuh. Is that where you family lived at the time?*

Erm, yes.

*And what did you parents do when you were growing up?*

Oh gosh! I can’t remember. My mum was a housewife, and I think my dad worked in a bakery.

*Bakery?*

Yeah.

*Uhuh. Erm, and did you… Was your whole childhood in Yorkshire?*

No it wasn’t. When I was about five, six, we moved to South Humberside—it’s now North Lincolnshire—to a town called Scunthorpe.

*Uhuh.*

And I stayed there until I got married at the age of eighteen.

*Uhuh.*

Yeah.

*Erm, and then did you… Well, I guess you moved in with your husband.*

Yes.

*And where did you… Where did you move to, or stay in the same area?*

Erm, no London, I lived in this… When I moved to London—not far from here, Forest Gate, about ten minutes away from SubCo… Yeah, so then I’ve lived here for almost twenty years now.

*Wow.*

Yeah.

*Was it a big change moving to London?*

Course. Of course it was. I think Scunthorpe’s a really small town, and really small town, shops close very early, and it was predominant-, predominantly a white area. And I remember when I first came to London… To me, when I see somebody who’s white, erm, they spoke English; but when I came to London I used to see a white person and they used to be speaking a foreign language. And I used to just be shocked, and I used to just stand there and stare at them, you know? But took me quite, quite a long time to get used to that, you know? ‘Cos coming from a place like Scunthorpe when… I think Scunthorpe, they’re quite racist there as well, but in London nobody really cares about what you wear, what colour your skin is… I don’t think I ever got called Paki or anything here. I don’t… No, actually, in twenty years, I don’t think I’ve been called a Paki or anything. But when I go back to Scunthorpe, when you’re walking down the high street or something, somebody will come and say something to you.

*Even what today?*

Today, yeah. Especially now I think ever since 9/11, and you’ve got all this thing happening with Trump. There’s been a lot of, there’s obviously a lot of tension between the cultures. In Scunthorpe, what’s happened is a lot of immigrants have come in, so you’ve got a lot of Iraqis have come in, a lot of people from Somalia have come in. And they have, not taken over, but if you look on our high, main… We’ve got this main road called Doncaster Road and Frodingham Road, so because of their communities are growing, they’ve obviously started renting up the shops, and started taking over the shopping side as well. So you do get a lot of trouble outside the shops, like my, you know, when there’s one fight between this Iraqi, an Iraqi, twenty other ones will turn up. One phone call twenty of ‘em will turn up. So I think things like that happen, tensions just grow even more.

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*Having such a community that is so visibly…*

Yeah, ‘cos even when my dad—he’s passed away now—but obviously my brothers have taken over his business (he had a butcher and grocery shop). I mean, that’s been vandalised so many times

*Wow.*

My mum as well, outside her front gate someone actually wrote ‘Isis’ [Laughs] in permanent marker. Yes, I remember reporting that to the council as well. Yeah, so it still happens.

*Yeah.*

I think from then, from when I was young, we were just called Pakis, but now it tends to be more, ‘cos we’re more Muslims.

*Mmm.*

So I think that’s why we tend to get picked on a lot more.

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*It’s interesting that sort of strange shift in…*

Yeah. In their thinking, yeah.

*Yeah.*

It’s like, ‘Pakis are taking over our jobs!’ and now it’s like ‘Muslims are terrorists!’

*[Laughs]*

Yeah.

*Yeah.*

But I think, even like when we were young as well, I think when we used to get called names like, ‘Pakis! Go back to your own country!’ I can remember like nobody really did anything about it then, ‘cos I think, if I remember my brother, his mates, they used to be quite young, but now they’re a lot older, you know, if someone called my brother a ‘terrorist’ or a ‘paki’, our brother would be the first one to just punch someone. He wouldn’t take it. So I’ve seen that shift as well in the people who I knew when they were younger, you know, how they won’t take that stuff, and people in the new generation, we’re talking about the teenagers now, they won’t take any of that rubbish as when we were there we probably would put up with the name calling and behaviour.

*Yeah. So what was Forest Gate like for someone from this sort of small, Lincolnshire town?*

Like a new world! Honestly it was like shops I’d never seen, erm, especially Green Street. Er, where we live in Scunthorpe you couldn’t get no Asian clothes, no Asian vegetables, it was, there was nothing. And this was just like, ‘Wow!’ It’s like a whole new world. And I remember I used to go to Green Street every day; every opportunity I used to get I used to go out shopping. And even my family, when they used to come over, they used to just absolutely love it, ‘cos we’d never seen anything like this.

*Yeah.*

And then I think I remember even when I left, arm, Forest Gate and I used to go to shopping centres—where did we used to go to? I think Brent Cross, I think…

*Uhuh.*

Either that or… I used to think, ‘Wow!’ I couldn’t believe it. ‘Cos it was like a new world. Scunthorpe’s a small town. You had a small high street, you know, a local butchers, local fishmongers, British, British Homestores we had. You only had one supermarket that time: Safeway…

*[Laughs]*

… I remember. And that is all we had. Yeah.

*Yeah.*

I XXXX [00:05:25] I think. Marks and Spencer’s as well, yeah.

*So, so what did you do, arm, when you came to London. Like was it a job or were you…*

No, no.

*… a housewife?*

It’s stupid, actually, I just got pregnant. And then I had my first child and then got pregnant again [Laughs]. So I spent a lot of time being pregnant, bringing my children up. And then when my son started full time school, he was about five, I thought, ‘I can’t be a housewife no more!’ So I did some level 2, level 3 courses, because a nursery nurse, worked there for a while. Then I got bored with that and I think I decided, ‘You know what? I think I’ve got the confidence to do a degree and become a social worker!’

*Oh wow!*

And that’s how I ended up here at SubCo.

*That’s excellent.*

Yeah.

*Wh-, where did you do your degree?*

I did it in Havering, at Havering College. Yeah, so that took my five years, ‘cos, erm, I think what happened was I was ready to have a degree, and then I found out I was pregnant with my, with my third child. I was like, ‘Oh God! What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do?’ But, you know when sort of things are just like meant to be? I’d managed to find childcare for her, so… A nursery actually opened up, literally, at the bottom of my road. And then that new thing, you know? You get fifteen hours for free for child—and you’re working… not if you’re working. You get fifteen hours free if they’re under… as soon as they turn three. And the manager was really nice; he let me take it as flexi. And then something happened at my husband’s workplace: he wanted to leave and in order to keep him there they offered him working from home, so he took that on as well. And I was thinking, ‘That helps me out even more!’ So the days that the nursery wasn’t open or if I was running late from university then he would come, he would pick her up, and look after her. Yeah.

*So it all worked out?*

You know like when something is just like meant to be?

*Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

Yeah, so it was like… It was really easy. Like in my class a lot of parents struggled with childcare. I couldn’t say that not even once I struggled, at all.

*Wow.*

Yeah.

*Was your course… Were there lots of, sort of, parents on your course then?*

Yeah, it was mostly… nearly everyone on my class were matura students. There were a couple that got pregnant while they were studying as well.

*Yeah.*

A lot of them, erm, erm, dropped out the course. They couldn’t take the pace. In my class I think there was only three of us left in the end. We were the mums.

*[Laughs]*

Yeah. All the youngsters… Well, there was a couple of youngsters from Essex I can remember. They all dropped out by the second year of the course, you know? They couldn’t cope with the coursework.

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*And after you graduated did you, sort of, find employment quite easily?*

Err, I was already… I was here at SubCo on placement, on my final placement. And I’d finished my coursework and everything, but because of some technical things happening at college we didn’t do our dissertation until very, very late. So, arm, I was doing my dissertation then Taskin managed to find a lot of funding and that… You know, I obviously came for the interview, got the job for two of the projects. And I’ve, I’ve been here I think four maybe five years now.

*Wow.*

Yeah. And I’m not leaving. I’ve actually about to start another course from next September.

*What was that in?*

We were thinking, Taskin wants me to do a practice educate course. So, erm, I went to an open evening yesterday, and they’ve changed it so it’s actually a masters course now, and so… I’ve spoken to Taskin about it, and hopefully I’ll be started that in September, so I’ll be taking on two students, and I’ll be overseeing their placements.

*Oh wow!*

Yes.

*That’s really cool!*

I know. because the one project’s ending now. To be honest I was saying to Taskin not a little while ago, ‘I don’t think I could ever stay at home no more. I could not be a housewife any more.’ I’d get bored or I’d fight with my husband all day…

*[Laughs]*

… ‘cos he’s at home just so got nothing to do [Laughs]… Yeah…

*What were the first projects that you started when you came here?*

Erm, when I came here it was things in daycare, so we’d do a lot of advocacy casework in downstairs in daycare. And then, er SubCo we, er, got funding for two projects. One’s a carers project and Reaching Communities. Both working with Asian elders above the age of fifty. So I divide my time between the two projects. Carers is coming to an end now, at the end of November time. Yeah, but Reaching Communities with carry over for another two years.

*What’s reaching communities about?*

Reaching communities… It’s basically we tried to get A-, Asian elders over the age of fifty to try and get them fit and healthy and try and integrate them into the community. So part of our project, what we do, is we go visit other areas of Newham and try bringing people on our project with us, so they try, maybe, instead of saying in Forest Gate, Manor Park, where they’re from, they’ll integrate into different other communities, making friends with them, starting to make use of some other resources that are available to them.

*That sounds really nice.*

It is, it is. I think now we’re in our third year you can see how it’s working now.

*Yeah.*

You know, some more… Even some of the, erm, some of our participants as well, you know, in three years you’ve seen them… From what they… There’s one particular lady I remember, Shapla actually started befriending with her. We’d managed to get her coming to our Health & Wellbeing sessions on a Wednesday, but the lady who first came in and the lady you see now two years later, it’s like completely different. Yeah. So we see a lot of, lot of that in our clients.

*What sort of like change of behaviour…*

Change, change of behaviour. There was one lady I remember her daughter rang me up, and I said, ‘Look, just bring her to our session and, you know, we’ll, we’ll do a bit of befriending with her’. And I remember every ten minutes, ‘Call my daughter, I wanna go home. Call my daughter, I wanna go home.’ And now, she doesn’t wanna leave. You know, every event we have at SubCo, anything we do with our projects, she’s there; any trips we have, she always… She absolutely loves it. It’s helped her, but it’s also helped her family as well.

*Yeah.*

‘Cos you know I think her daughter always used to be really worried. I remember speaking to her on the phone, saying, you know… I… Daughter lived in Ilford, ‘‘cos I can’t be round in this area’, so the lady actually lived in Manor Park, she goes, ‘I can’t be with my mum and leave my husband and my kids alone in Ilford’, you know, ‘Please, I really need some help’. But now, because she’s with us, she spends most of Wednesday with us, and, you know, like today there’s a party organised at the Trinity Centre, so she’s there today. You know, and if we’ve got something else going on she’ll come to that, so it gives the daughter a break as well. Yeah, what else? It’s not just getting them out and about with, erm, the help of things like Dial-A-Ride. So we did the application of that with XXXX [00:11:48] benefits, so she’s… especially with Dial-A-Ride we do do that for a lot of our clients because we know carers can’t always take them every day. So if you have Dial-A-Ride sorted they know we can just make the booking for them and, yeah, they’re free to go without having to ask anyone.

*Yeah.*

Yes.

*Good. Erm, does the advocacy, is that like an important part of the work SubCo does?*

It is. I think that takes, erm, a large chunk of our time. Yeah, the health and wellbeing sessions would be like we’ve got something set every Wednesday, or we have an event, or we have sessions elsewhere. But advocacy takes a large… Especially when we have some complex cases as well. Erm, it’s not just doing the advocacy work: when you have to work with other professionals as well. It’s just waiting on them a lot, lot, a lot of the time. Waiting for an email, waiting for them to say, ’Yes, I’ve done this. You can go ahead and do, do whatever role you need me to do’. So that kind of take, takes a lot of time. Yeah, that’s one thing in our report I always mention. That’s one of the challenges that we do have.

*What, just working with these other…?*

Yeah, ‘cos at SubCo I find that we’re quite fast. If we say we’re gonna do something, we will just get it done, you know? If I don’t do it this week, it’s written down on my post-it all the time: ‘I’ll come in on Monday and get it done’. But I think with other professionals it just takes a lot longer.

*What are the other organisations you work with?*

It’s just a lot of, you know… For instance we might do an assessment on somebody who wants to come to day care. But what will happen is, erm, we’ve done our assessment XXXX [00:13:19], you know? We’ve calculated it’s gonna cost so and so much but for that person to attend. But we can’t allow them to come to the centre until brokerage. Arm, we’d have signed it off, gone through the panel, and stuff like that could take months, you know? Sometimes it takes a couple of weeks, so… Especially what I find in my case, always the ones you want to come in really early are the ones that take the longest. And it’s always constantly, because as soon as we send a referral we get an email, ‘Ten working days. Don’t contact us’. And even if you ring up in them ten working days, they’ll say, ‘Well, you know, it’s not ten working day yet, so we’ve got to wait, then…’ Even then, they don’t contact us they always contact families. So we do say to them, ‘Can you keep us in the loop?’ but it never happens. And then there’s like ringing the families to find out, ‘Have they rang you up?’ They don’t know. Then we have to ring social services, or, you know, ‘What’s happening with this?’ Yeah so it’s just, just really strung out process really.

*Just chasing people up.*

Just chasing. That’s, that’s what takes up a lot of our time, yeah.

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*What are the issues that you advocate for?*

It could be absolutely anything. Erm, we do things like benefit work… Erm, even a simple thing like somebody needs dial-a-ride. And to some people… I can remember someone close to me at… ‘Well, that’s not really much, is it?’ I went, ‘But you don’t understand. When you apply for dial-a-ride how much a difference it makes to somebody’s life, especially somebody who’s isolated, somebody who can’t use public transport.’ And dial-a-ride’s not always that easy, especially if a person… It’s automatic qualification if you have, if you receive a certain benefit, but if you don’t, then you’ve got to get medical reports. And even the way that you write the form as well, you have to make sure… ‘Cos they always ask you, you know, ‘So-and-so’s got a certain, erm, medical issue, how is that preventing her from using public transport? How does it affect her mobility?’ So, as time goes on you kind of like learn how to write things properly so that you don’t… so that whoever’s assessing them understands that, yeah, this is the issue and they definitely can’t wait, can’t use public transport.

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*Erm, and you said that your, is it the Carers’ Project…*

Yeah.

*… is coming to an end in November?*

Yeah.

*So what, what was that…?*

That was working with South Asian elders, looking after somebody who’s over fifty years… A South Asian Elder over the age of fifty. I mean, that’s been quite successful I think from when I was… ‘Cos I do a lot of the database, I think we’ve managed to have contact with about two-hundred-and-fifty carers so far. So that would, that would be anything from giving information, doing advocacy work, getting them to come to some of our sessions. Yeah, I mean I think that’s been quite successful as well, if you look at… But I think back on some of the cases, you know especially when they came to us, a lot of the time they’d come to us at the point of crisis, so you know, they’re looking after somebody, they find their role so hard, nobody’s helping them, they just don’t know where to turn. And then, you know, we’d go in and explain what are your rights as a carer, try and get things like carer’s assessment. And where are they caring… if, if we know they do fit the criteria for a day centre, we’ll try and get them to come to SubCo or wherever, Chargeable Lane… We’ve got a few others, erm, day centres here, to give the carer a break as well. So we work mainly with the carer here. And then, when we finish our work with them we’ll also try and get the carer out and aobut a lot more, so we might refer them to the Reaching Communities project who’ll carry on working with them, and finally get them out and about. And do like education, jobs… Yeah, we’ve also got something we call mentors and peers. So the people that we’ve identified, ‘You know what? They’re actually very independent.’ And we think they would be really good at empowering other people like them, so, you know… We train them up, and we get them to work with, er, people who’re obviously not as confident as them so then they are able to go out and do things themselves. And that’s been quite successful as well.

*Excellent.*

When you come to one of our parties you’ll probably, I think… Yeah, Christmas Party… Or no, you know our celebration coming next month? They’ve organised something for that? You are coming aren’t you, that one?

*Yeah!*

Yeah. So you’ll see them there, yeah.

*Excellent.*

Yeah.

*Erm, do you have any sort of stand-out memories or kind of proud moments or just good times at SubCo?*

Erm, you know what I, I think I always remember at SubCo is our parties. I, I… Have you been to any?

*No, no.*

No you haven’t been to a… Erm, they’re just… Everyone comes, they’re just so happy, especially when they get up they dance, and when they look back at the pictures. Something funny will always happen: somebody will say something, somebody who doesn’t know how to dance but thinks they’re so great gets up, you know, all like, everyone will be laughing at them but they don’t care. You just… Things like that just happen and you always, you always remember that.

*That’s excellent.*

Yeah. There’s I think one of my, I think one of my favourite trips was we went to… I can’t remember where it was, but we went to a steam train, but I remember that it was just such a lovely day, and we were out in the countryside. And we had quite a large group; I think it was a coach full. I remember that that was a really nice day, ‘cos we were on the steam train and a lot of the elders got up and started dancing. And even some of the passengers who were on there actually joined in and started dancing with them. The conductor came, I think to check what the noise was about, then I think he saw they were enjoying themselves so much he just left us and went. Yeah, so that was… I think, think that that’s probably my favourite trip.

*That sounds really nice.*

Yeah. I can’t remember what it was.

*Yeah.*

Some, somewhere, yeah.

*Do you, do you go on a lot of trips?*

I think when I was a student and at the beginning of when I started working on the projects I did, but we’re just so busy now that I just get tired. Yeah.

*That’s a shame.*

It’s like instead of a trip… I love to go on a trip, but I think, ‘I’ve got to ring so-and-so, I’ve gotta fill this form in, I’ve gotta do this home visit. And if I don’t do it today it’s not going to happen next week’. Yeah, so, no, don’t go on as many trips as I’d like to.

*[Laughs] What about away days?*

Away days… I didn’t go to this year’s away day. Erm, ‘cos I think by the time we got told I already had something planned for that day. But, yeah, we do go to away days. They’re quite good for the team to get together…

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*Yeah.*

… erm, what we plan to do for SubCo, you know, as employees, what we expect from them as employers. Yeah. I think we all get together brainstorm sort of how we want SubCo to XXXX [00:19:34] on, so they’re they’re quite good, yeah.

*Yeah. Lots of the other staff I’ve talked to say it’s a really good work atmosphere, and quite open and…*

It is. I think they’re we’re allowed to say whatever we want. So anything we’re not happy about we can discuss with, erm… ‘Cos it’s not just management, it’s our committee members as well. So, you know, we can tell them, ‘We’re not happy with this. We think something needs doing at SubCo.’ And, you know, they take it on board because obviously they’re, they’re not, they’re there for both our sides, the employees and the employers, so it’s quite good. We’re a like a little union aren’t they? They’re mediation. Yeah.

*SubCo union.*

Yeah.

*Erm, where do you see SubCo sort of going from where it is now? What do you think’s gonna change in the future?*

You mean in terms of our projects, erm, er, what I wold really like to see is I’d like us to be on par with the statutory services. Only because I feel that as a voluntary service, the way we work, we could offer so much more than what statutory services can offer. For instance, when I was doing my placements I did about ten days in statutory. And I found it was just form filling. You’d never get to sit down and get to know your clients. You know, once you’ve done that assessment, it gets passed on to someone, they’ve got issues, and someone else will take the case on, and you’ll never really like get to know your clients. But here we start something off and we’ll see it to the end. As I said, you’ll always know, that, you know, this is the person. If someone says to us, This happened to that person’, or ‘They did this’, you know, I would know this person is not capable of doing this, because I know them so well and they wouldn’t say this. ‘Cos we know them so well, and even with statutory services, when you’re a voluntary organisation they don’t really think much of you. That’s what I think. You know, when they have their multidisciplinary meetings, or even a safeguarding meeting, if someone’s coming to our day centre, they’re known to our projects… We could probably give them so much more information about that person than they have on file. Because we know them, we visit their homes, we’ve probably spent time with them at parties, you know, we get to know their families. There’s a kind of like, ‘No…’… Well, not ‘Kind of’, we know we know a lot more about them, yeah.

*Yeah.*

Yeah. So I really do want SubCo to be working with statutory services, and actually be recognised for the input that we can have, you know? We are quite important.

*So what’s, what’s the relation between SubCo and statutory services? Like where do you, sort of…?*

I think right now we just think that referral, we’ll send a referral to, erm, to them saying, ‘So-and-so wants to come to a day centre’, or, ‘Someone’s care package needs sorting out’, ‘Someone wants to change their carer’… So it’s kinda like, like on a professional whatever you need to know kind of basis.

*Yeah.*

Yeah. I would like it like, you know, when you’ve got a safeguarding issue, you know, especially if its someone of South Asian that fits into our remit, why don’t you ask us to come in and, you know, we would maybe go in first and see what the issue is. It could just be something nothing. I think sometimes… Because we work with South Asians… It could be we know people’s culture as well, and what somebody else might see, ‘Oh this is quite wrong’, you know, we could go, ‘No, this is quite normal. This is what, what, this is what they do. It doesn’t mean that, you know, it’s a safeguarding issue.’ And then we could report things like that back. I think in the long run it would save a lot of time and money as well.

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*What, what sort of.. I mean, are there any kind of examples you can come up with just off the top of your head about things where statutory service might be worried about a safeguarding issue?*

To be honest, we’ve never had any… We’ve never been involved in any safeguarding. So, the only thing we would do: we would report something then that’s it. So we’ve never been involved in a case or anything like that so I can’t really comment. But we would like to do that kind of… I think, especially our staff have got enough experience and skills to go in and, you know, maybe help out on certain cases.

*Yeah.*

Yeah.

*Erm, for a role that presumably, like you said, a lot about making relationships with people, are there any characters that you’ve met at your time at SubCo that you’ve particularly like enjoyed spending time with?*

Erm, there’s actually one gentleman I think his case was quite serious, ‘cos it kinda went to safeguarding. I remember I felt really sorry for him; he was such a nice gentleman, he had dementia, and I used to go visit him at his home. This was like my first case when I came in here as a student, so, obviously, I think I felt an attachment to him because it was my first case. Yeah, I remember he had dementia and a few issues being around with his, his wife and son. I used to go visit him at the house, then he fell ill and he was in respite. I used to go see him there as well. And he was just one of them clients I had a bit of an attachment to. And then he moved away from this area—went up to North or South London—and, erm, a couple of months later we found out he’d died. He fell down and died. So I think he’s one of them clients I’ve never ever forgotten.

*Mmm.*

Yeah, so he’s always sticks in, n my mind as well, you know? I think he’s one of them cases where I think, ‘But what if I did this?’, you know? ‘What if I said this?’ You know? Maybe he’d still be here today, but… You know what I said to you about statutory and voluntary organisations? We’re only allowed to do things up to a certain amount, and then statutory take, take over, yeah. Just one of them… Yeah, he was, he was probably the client that I remember the most. Yeah.

*Is it hard obviously working with elders that, you know, some of them do just die, I guess, at some point?*

It is hard, especially, I think especially some of our health and wellbeing sessions you’re just so used to seeing them. They’re just like part of your, they’re like your family. They’re part of your life. And, I think, you know, now that you’ve asked me that question, some of them, if they weren’t there, you know, I would really, really miss them. Like yesterday, when I went in to Trinity, two of them weren’t there. They’re the quite lively ones in the group. And the first thing, ‘Where’ve they gone? Why aren’t they here?’ so you notice their absence straight away.

*Yeah.*

Even the ones that complain a lot; you get so used to their complaining just the way they are. But I think because you’ve got that bond with them, we’re known them for like three years now, we see them at least once a week and they come to all our events. We’ve done some kind of befriending advocacy work with them. Yeah, so they’re like part of your life aren’t they?

*Yeah.*

Yeah. So if you do… I think when they’re… If they’re not around you would really miss them, yeah.

*Is the Trinity Centre… That’s fairly new thing, right, that you’ve had that space there?*

Our project it’s… We’re working with the Trinity Centre and Hibiscus Centre, so it’s like a joint initiative, but so it’s only recently, I think this year, I can’t remember, we’ve actually hired some offices there, so we’ve got offices here at SubCo and we’ve got some at Trinity as well. It does make life easier…

*Yeah.*

Especially with the paper work an typing things up. You don’t have to wait ‘til Monday to type everything up. Yeah.

*Erm, I think I’ve sort of reached the end of the questions I had, but is there anything else you want to add, or any other memories? Or is it…?*

Mmm… Yeah, I… When I first came to SubCo, I think before that I used to be in a placement in Leytonstone, and, erm, that was just predominantly white. Everyone who I worked with was white. And I remember, everyone used to say to me that, ‘You Asians, you’re so lucky. You Asians just all look after your own.’ ‘Cos a lot of them, the older people we worked with, had no family, their children didn’t really care about them… And I used to think, ‘Yeah, you’re right’ And then, I remember when I came to SubCo I did have that thing in my head, ‘Your own look after you’, meaning like your kids look after you, or your family look after you. When I came to SubCo I do remember that it was just the same. Everywhere you go. Yeah, so I think that was quite upsetting for me as well. I do remember one of my reflections I was, I was actually writing about how upset I used to get when I’d go and work with a client and, you know, they were like XXXX [00:27:26] didn’t have food or had no one seeing them, but their kids couldn’t be bothered. So, yeah, I think that’s one of the things. I think SubCo’s kinda opened my eyes to that. Just ‘cos we’re Asian doesn’t mean we’re any better.

*Yeah.*

Yeah. Yeah, and I… Also as well I think here we have people from lots of different religions and cultures as well. To be honest, since I moved to London, I’m actually a Muslim Gujarati, so I only kinda just like stuck within my Muslim Gujaratis as well. But I think it’s been quite… The reason I… Mixing with the Sikhs, Hindus, Tamil people, it’s actually been really eye-opening, ‘cos I think even for myself as well you, ‘cos you don’t mix with any other religions you’ve too built a stereotype of them. But it’s nice to know that they’re just like us. They’re not any better, they’re not any worse, they’re just people, innit? And I really like that everyone gets on. We don’t bring religion or race into it. Whereas when I was on my other placement they always, erm… There was something about… I don’t know if you remember, Pizza Express they were selling Halal chicken, but they didn’t tell their customers, and it got reported on the news. One of our drivers came in: ‘So Shirin, what do you think of, erm, this news?’ I went, ‘What news?’ ‘Erm, about Pizza Express selling Halal chicken? Don’t you think it’s absolutely ridiculous we never got told it was Halal?’ He was just going on and on and on. I remember saying to him, ‘You know when you’re pissed on a Friday night and you go get a kebab right, from a Muslim owner? Do you care about it being Halal then?’ They didn’t say nothing at all. The thing is, I never got picked on for my religion anything like that here, but there, he started it. After that you could tell he just hated me, you know? And I was the only one that used to wear a scarf there as well, and they used to try taking me to places like the pub, and I didn’t wanna go, first of all ‘cos I don’t drink alcohol and secondly I think when you have a scarf on and you walk into a place like a pub everyone will just stare at you. Yeah, so that’s a reason. So you know, they used to think, oh I don’t mix with them, I don’t wanna be seen out with them… So, yeah… But I don’t feel any of that here, you know? Is it because I’m just Asian and I fit in? I don’t know. Yeah, but this is what I really like about SubCo. You’re not kind of like judged here, and everyone just gets on with anyone. Well you’ve been here Francis, what do you think of us?

*Oh you know, I’ve been I’ve judged terribly Shirin since I walked through the door.*

[Laughs] But you love our food don’t you?

*Yeah, oh no it’s lovely here and everyone just seems so friendly so…*

Yeah. But we’re like that here, so you do learn to get on with everyone here. Yeah. That’s it.

*Excellent. Well, thank you so much.*

**The End**

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**Interview Details**

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**Project: Growing Old Gracefully - SubCo**

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