

adult success stories



Jill Johnstone

Jill has used Access to improve her academic profile, gain study skills and begin a new career.



When I was at school I didn't have a clue what I wanted to be when I grew up and was far too busy socialising to stop and give it some thought. I completed my GCSEs and remarkably passed, given the amount of effort I had put into revising. The following September I enrolled at college. This surprised my mum, given my attitude towards education, however I managed to convince her I had matured and was ready to focus on my studies and make something of myself.

However I failed my AS Levels & my attendance levels were pretty much non-existent, so I decided to leave college before I got kicked out!

At a loss with what to do with myself and a social life to fund I decided to apply for a job at the same call centre my brother worked at & was successful. However this was short lived & I quickly became restless in my role, completing the same tasks day after day.

I began to regret my former attitude and wasted chances. Staring at the computer screen with eleven hours of a shift to go & a call queue of 300+ I wrote my notice.

In hindsight leaving myself without a job or income, wasn't the greatest idea, but without a doubt one of the best decisions I have made. For the first time in my life, aged 20, I had decided to do something with my life that wasn't influenced by my peer group. Although I was still unsure of exactly what path I wanted to take I knew having my A-levels behind me would make it easier.

I rang the Queen Elizabeth College to enquire about going back to complete my A-levels, I was nervous as I thought they would look back at my previous attendance & refuse my application. I couldn't have been more wrong, they advised me of Access Courses & said they would be ideal for me as I was 19+ and I could also use these to gain entry into university. I decided to complete the Psychology course, it was ideal as it was one evening each week meaning I could work at the same time. I was instantly intrigued by the course material and decided I wanted to pursue the subject further as a degree. I spoke to the course tutor who advised me I would need to complete another two access courses to build up enough UCAS points to apply for university.

However three months into the course I fell pregnant with my daughter. I felt as though I had just decided to do something with my life but now it would all be put on hold, if achievable at all. The idea of starting university older than the majority was daunting enough, but as a mum as well, I worried about fitting in & being able to manage the work load.

I spoke to my tutor again & he was fantastic. He gave me the determination to complete my access courses and achieve my goals, because of my daughter, not in spite of her.

After completing three access courses I had built up enough points & applied for BScHons in Psychology. I was over the moon when I got accepted and was thrilled after all my worrying that the other students were lovely. I didn't once feel like I didn't belong at university.

Shortly after starting my course I applied for a casual job as a Mental Health Support Worker, and got accepted! Shortly after starting with the company they offered to put me through my NVQ Level 3 in Health & Social Care which I completed earlier this year.

Now my daughter has just turned four I can honestly say I am proud of what I have achieved in those four short years. I have qualifications to be proud of & a job I love. When I think about it I owe a lot of my achievements to the Queen Elizabeth College for firstly having the Adult Education Courses available & most importantly the encouragement the staff give their students. If only I had realised & appreciated it the first time round!

