

Jacqueline Mills

Jacqueline's Story.....

Jacqueline was diagnosed with Juvenile Chronic Arthritis at 6 years old and it continued into adulthood: affecting all her joints, causing pain, stiffness and lack of mobility. Her condition has worsened over the



years and she has had bi lateral knee and hip replacements as well as a wrist joint replacement. This creates some mobility challenges for Jacqueline that she has had to adjust to.

Jacqueline was 21 years old when she first became involved with GCIL in 1997, as a volunteer, and it was as a result of this that she successfully gained her first job in the first GCIL employment project in 2001.

Jacqueline explained that she was unable to gain employment despite having qualifications and applying for a high number of jobs.

"GCIL gave me my first job through the employment project in 2001 at the age of twenty five and I have always been grateful to GCIL for that opportunity as I managed to remain in employment for ten years after I completed my traineeship."

Jacqueline worked for 4Ward Thinking, a community project, before securing an administrator post with Dalmuir Park Housing Association where she worked for six years. Unfortunately, she had to resign due to ill health. She underwent several major joint replacements in a year and wasn't well enough to continue working or indicate when she would be fit to return.

In March 2011, Jacqueline found herself unemployed for the first time in ten years, but was determined to get well and return to employment. She contacted GCIL when she heard about the Professional Careers Programme to see if she would be a suitable candidate, which she was.

Jacqueline is a highly qualified and intelligent individual who faced a number of barriers to accessing a suitable career. She had achieved eight standard grades, three highers, HNC Social Sciences, NC Housing Administration Levels 1&2, SVQ Housing Law Advice and European Computer Driving License (ECDL) and yet she struggled to gain employment prior to her involvement with GCIL.

Jacqueline faced multiple barriers to accessing employment, including physical and attitudinal barriers which led to her diminished self confidence.

“My self confidence was really low for a number of years after leaving school as I was restricted in the kind of work I would be physically fit to do. I kept getting rejection letters from organisations I applied to for work. Even career advisors would tell me that I wasn’t suitable for certain careers that I wanted to try; in particular nursery teaching and social work. Due to the nature of my condition, I was considered physically incapable of looking after children, which was really upsetting. I was told I didn’t have the right temperament to be a social worker either. I kept getting told I couldn’t do things but never given support to find something I could do. I felt useless. The attitude of careers advisors was not always encouraging. Even just having arthritis and the various mobility hurdles that come with it as well as the chronic pain greatly affected my self esteem and confidence. I got to the stage where I didn’t think that I would ever get a job. I often felt forgotten about and didn’t know what I should do with myself. There didn’t seem to be any support for me at all.”

Jacqueline explained that she would specifically apply for jobs with employers who claimed to be ‘positive about disability’ and would attend interviews, but never got the job. She said that she always felt that even

from the beginning of the interviews, she was not being properly considered for the posts.

Jacqueline was therefore overjoyed to start a 30-month paid placement in August 2011 with Queens Cross Housing Association, as part of the Professional Careers Programme. GCIL provided in-work and educational support throughout the duration of the placement.

Jacqueline achieved a Masters Degree in Housing Studies in August 2013 with the support and funding from GCIL. Jacqueline graduated on 4th December 2013 from University of Glasgow. Just prior to the end of the placement period Jacqueline attended an interview for a permanent post within Queen Cross and was offered the position of Policy and Performance Assistant. Jacqueline continues to work at the Housing Association.

Jacqueline tells us

“I was really pleased to obtain my masters degree in Housing Studies and decided to put my psychology degree with the Open University on hold for a little longer. I still hope to complete this at some point in the future.”

Jacqueline is incredibly optimistic about her future. She is really happy to be working in a housing association.

“I have always been thankful to GCIL for giving me my first paid employment and the confidence to carry on working. Everyone at GCIL has been very supportive to me over the years and I don’t know where I would be now if I hadn’t become involved with GCIL.”