

Laura Mandelson

Laura's story.....

Laura began studying Social Sciences through college and university, but she was not quite content and began losing interest. She did however like the element of welfare and social class conflicts through Sociology.



Laura worked part-time in retail and she knew that she wanted a change in career and the opportunity arose when she was 25 and applied to join the Professional Careers programme.

After an intensive interview process Laura was delighted to be offered a 30-month salaried work placement at Glen Oaks Housing Association in partnership with Money Matters, starting July 2012. Laura was sceptical at first about the partnership but it worked. As a

Financial Inclusions/Benefit Adviser Laura received training in debt and welfare rights from CPAG, Glasgow City Council and in-house training from Glen Oaks and Money Matters. With funding provided from GCIL and in work support from her placement Laura completed units in a Post Graduate Welfare Rights Advice and Long Term Illness from Stirling University.

Although Laura did not need specific adjustments in her work place she knew she was in an environment that would give her support, from a GCIL Placement Coordinator, throughout the duration of the traineeship to address any access requirements; while working in a field she wanted to pursue.

During Laura's traineeship she commented

"Many people did not understand the nature of my disability; a very hidden form of communication difficulty. My demeanour meant people most likely did not notice how I felt or how I coped with everyday

situations. Within welfare rights reading is a big part of the job. With a slow reading speed an interpretation of words can be very difficult. However, what I lack I make up with enthusiasm for my work, I engage clients with my personality and this helps me to cope with the workload. I have become more social and had to engage with my colleagues; I had to come out of my shell. I often find social engagements difficult but with the help of my colleagues they have made this possible.”

At the end of the placement Laura commented:

*“GCIL and the Equality Academy has allowed me to **Gain, Confidence & Initiative in Learning**. The Equality Academy has given me more than just a new career but a new perspective and outlook on life”.*

“I just want to thank GCIL Professional Careers for the opportunity and their support. I want to thank Money Matters for their training and support and Glen Oaks for the placement opportunity and the opportunity to work for them after my placement finished. Your goals may not be so hard to reach if you face difficulties as opportunities need to be grasped. I have gained so much more than a career. I have gained confidence in my abilities where in the past I was often called stupid as I may not have understood something. I found education very difficult due to this but through GCIL and the Equality Academy I have found a new love of learning.

The Professional Careers programme has been one of the best decisions I ever made and it has changed my life as I would not be working with such amazing people and working in a field and sector that I feel is making a difference to people’s lives”..

Laura said of her future:

“My hope is to work within the Registered Social Landlords as a Welfare Rights Officer but I am looking for even more experience in fields of work to progress with my new career. I hope to make a future for myself within my new career and work hard and most of all make sure I am happy with my life decisions and embrace every opportunity that arises.”

With hard work, dedication and ambition Laura has continued to work in Glen Oaks Housing Association as a member of their staff in the role of Welfare Rights Assistant and she is *“loving it”*.

As of May 2016 she was made a permanent member of staff at Glen Oaks Housing Association and is continuing to make a difference to her clients lives.