

Cris

Cris's story...



As a mature student Cris accomplished a personal challenge. In 2014, at the age of 40, he fulfilled a lifetime desire by graduating from the University of Edinburgh, with an MA (Hons) in International Relations. An experience that he says changed him, his life and his career prospects positively and immeasurably.

With the assistance of the University disability office, Cris was assessed and was given a diagnosis of dyslexia and a package of support was put in place to help him manage his academic

workload. Cris always suspected he had dyslexia because of difficulties with memory, reading and writing and understanding complex information. Cris says:

“The diagnosis helped explain much of my career choices and inability to significantly progress despite having the creativity, desire and disposition to do so.”

When Cris was offered a position in NHS Borders as part of the Professional Careers programme his motivation included being supported without judgement allowing him to finally flourish in a professional environment; and to better learn about his impairment and to use it to the advantage of his employer, others and himself.

At the start of his placement Cris said:

“My weakness is a lack of understanding of my disability. Through time, I have developed some of my own coping mechanisms however I would readily enjoy learning about my disability so that I can develop a greater understanding and harness my dyslexia so that it is an advantage to me and my employer rather than a hindrance. This also applies to my access requirements. Further to this, my readiness to articulate my access

requirements to my employer needs some improvement, as I have always just coped I feel (somewhat erroneously) embarrassed and like I am making an excuse for my inadequacy.”

As part of the Professional Careers Programme, Cris was supported during the DwP Access to Work application process for reasonable adjustments to his working environment. Following an assessment funding was granted for a range of equipment and training, including Dragon speaking professional (voice activation software, an audio medical dictionary, auto spelling correction software, claro read professional, mindview assistive technology (mind mapping tool), audio notetaker, livescribe echo bundle (live scribe writing tool, software training and workplace strategy sessions. The software helps Cris plan, organise and work with greater confidence, as he can check his spelling and grammar with increased speed and accuracy.

During his time at NHS Borders Cris gained further practical experience and skills working with teams responsible for Corporate Governance and Planning, Project Management and Training and Development. He was supported and mentored by experienced and professional colleagues within NHS Borders, and GCIL Equality Academy focusing on strengthening his skills and helping him prepare for a sustainable professional career beyond his placement. Prior to moving to his new permanent post of Internal Sales and Engagement with Glennon Brothers Timber Ltd Cris reflected on his time with the programme and said:

“I have benefited greatly from the experience and have grown in confidence and increased my skills, particularly delivering training, engaging with patients, delivering presentations, project management skills and so on. I was very supported in the workplace by NHS colleagues with particular focus on my development and openly challenging my areas for improvement. This was highly beneficial. Accepting the post with GCIL Equality Academy was the best decision I could have made. I wouldn't have got the experience or support elsewhere. I have accepted my impairment since its late diagnosis and welcome the support and guidance received. I found the technology to be particularly beneficial.”