

Joined Up Careers Derbyshire

Journey into health and social care story Richard, Vocational Qualification Assessor (Adults) workforce learning and development sector, Derby City Council

“When I made my exam subject choices in school I chose the subjects I felt or others told me I was good at. I didn’t take biology at O-level as I was told I could do an A-level in biology without an O-level in the subject (I must have been thinking about medical or scientific careers at that point). By the time I came to the summer following my exams I didn’t know what I wanted to do.

“I remember standing in the vegetable plot in my parents’ garden when my mum, dad and my older sister came to talk with me. During the conversation my sister said that her mate had become a bricklayer; so that’s what I did. I wrote to 30-plus construction firms asking for an apprenticeship and finally got an interview. Things went well until I had an accident on site and a visit to the company doctor identified the onset of my sight loss. Back to school and thought about becoming a physiotherapist. I finally got to do a human biology O-level and obtained an O-level in maths; but I couldn’t get on with or settle to study at A-level. I learnt how to programme computers but still didn’t find a job and felt I didn’t fit – I could do programming but realised I liked people.

“I had volunteered in place of my college mate at a local technical college to support adults with learning disabilities to access the mainstream college curriculum and felt part of things. I returned home from college to volunteer in a similar role with people with learning disabilities in adult education in London.

“Over my career in adult social care I have used the logic thinking training I needed for computer programming, the analytical skills learnt for computer analysis, the art and craft skills I love, the gardening I am drawn to and the problem-solving skills I learnt from my tutors and fellow students at the College for Visually Impaired People. So don’t give up, take the first step no matter how many first steps you need to take and think of what you enjoy as well as what you feel you will be good at.

“I do at times - when money seems the issue - think I may have been made by being at the beginnings of the personal computer age; or that I may feel better in the physiotherapist role within the structure of the National Health Service. Then I meet a family member of someone whose life I helped improve or I meet someone working long hours in computers and I count the good things I have and remind myself of the riches I have.

“I still garden but don’t miss the cold early mornings on the building site.

“I am 60 years old and have worked as a day service worker, community development worker, assistant manager, rehabilitation worker, life coach, vocational qualification assessor and now learning and education officer; and whatever comes along next.”