



Case Study – Jo Bryant

Course Title: Youth Justice Foundation Degree

Educational Establishment: Nottingham Trent University

Please can you briefly describe what you cover on your course?

From youth law to feral children, deaths in custody to behaviour management methods, the foundation degree in Youth Justice covers aspects of the theory of criminality right down to filling out the paperwork. For myself this course has been an insight into the careers of lawyers, youth justice workers, social workers, counsellors, inclusion workers and into the world of the young offender in this generation.

What did you need to be able to get on the course?

I had previously studied A- Levels, but some of my course mates had not and were able to get on the course.

What employment, relating to justice or community safety, are you involved with while you study

Before I started university I set up a volunteering opportunity with the YMCA youth service and began teaching an urban dance lesson alongside my first term of university funded by Connexions Positive Activities for Young People. I was able to sign up to a Social Work Agency who got me some work in a children's home. As part of the course I underwent a two-week observational placement at a Youth Offending Term. During my first year I was given a job at the YMCA, and was able to work part time for them, whilst studying, as a Youth and Alternative Education Worker which allowed me to put into practice skills and procedures I'd learnt about on the course. Due to the short terms on this course and assignment-based modules, I was able to start working full time in March of my second year and have worked ever since.

What has been your career path so far?

I have always been interested in the vocational side of justice, working to promote inclusion and prevent offending. The alternative education element of working with difficult young people continues to be my passion and I run an Entry to Employment course for 16-19 year old NEETS as part of my job, some of whom are already involved with the YOT, but for many of the learners E2E serves as a positive factor in preventing offending.

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What do you enjoy most about your course &/or employment?

Due to the course being relatively new, there weren't as many students as the larger more popular subjects, meaning that the lecturers could spend more time marking our work and giving feedback. The lecturers have been great fun and I've enjoyed university immensely, something I wasn't sure I would, having been out of education for a few years.

What has motivated you to do this type of work?

Watching boys in particular grow up and get involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, acting as though they have no hope or aspiration to do anything else with their lives, has influenced my decision to go into this area of work. I hope to support young people in seeing that they have potential and a future, as someone who believes they can make positive changes in their lives.

What skills and personal qualities are important on your course &/or in your employment?

Being creative and being able to think on your feet helps when working in alternative education, as young people can change in an instant and need reactive workers to meet their immediate needs. The course required a good deal of self-motivation to study independently, reflect on experience and come up with new ideas and challenges.

What do you hope to do with your qualification?

After achieving 84% in my foundation degree, I intend to go on to study the third year at some point in the future. The qualification in my opinion is one that provokes questions and interest from future employers and contacts in the justice world. On placement the operations manager told me that the Foundation Degree alone was not enough to enter into a job of high responsibility in his eyes, but that on completing the B.A. third year he would consider it an equivalent to the social work degrees. I am content in my current job, however, and plan to stay there for a considerable amount of time, gaining on-the-job training which compliments all that I have learnt.

What progress opportunities are there with your employment?

In the short amount of time I have worked as a Youth and Alternative Education worker I have been able to develop my own area of expertise and initiate projects all over the country.

What advice would you give someone thinking about studying a course relating to justice or community safety?

Youth Justice Foundation Degree is one which pokes in the right places, it allows theory to impact practice and will benefit anyone who wants to work in Youth Justice, but also in related careers. However, some of the course modules are very specific to working in a Youth Offending Team which is an element to consider.

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