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Real-life story - Rachel Williams

Rachel's bad back did not stop her from being voted Shropshire's apprentice of the year and becoming a full-time member of the team!

Rachel Williams

Administrative assistant

Employer or university

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust



The department has become like a second home to me. In fact, I spend more time here than I do at home!

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**How I got into
the role**

Expand / collapse

A few years ago, I developed chronic back problems whilst working in a fruit and veg store. Since then I experienced a dispiriting cycle of job rejections because of my back condition. In the end I gave up even looking for jobs.

When I heard that Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital was running a Get into programme, I was eager to seize the opportunity. To give myself a better chance at interview, I even decided to change my hair colour – it had been bright blue!

Whilst on the programme, I applied for a business administration apprenticeship within the therapies team at the trust. I was lucky enough to be offered an interview during my fourth week of the programme. By the end of that week I had been offered a 12-month apprenticeship!

I had just been stuck in this slump for so long I thought it would be another ‘no’ once I told them about my health issues.

Without the Get into programme, I'm sure I would never have got the post. I also found a more tolerant attitude within the therapies department. In fact, I discovered many of my colleagues also had back problems – it's just a really supportive environment.

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What I do

Expand / collapse

The apprenticeship involved providing administrative support to the four different therapies offered at the hospital – physio, occupational therapy (OT), speech and diet. I also helped run the reception area.

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The best bits and challenges

Expand /

collapse

To begin with, I must admit that I wondered if I'd ever get to grips with it all. But I got a lot of support and I made such progress that, at the end, I was voted Shropshire's apprentice of the year for business and administration. I then obtained a permanent level 2 post as an administrative assistant in the same department.

I love every aspect of my work and particularly enjoy running reception. There are quite a lot of regular patients and I get to know them quite well, so it's always [nice](#) ^[1] to have a chat with them.

The department has become like a second home to me. In fact, I spend more time here than I do at home!

I still have 'good days and bad days' with my back but I have been able to adapt my environment to accommodate these problems.

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**Life outside
work**

**Expand /
collapse**

I have an interest in health and wellness, and helping people to lead healthier lifestyles. I also have two pugs and like to spend time with them.

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**Career plans
and top tips for
others**

**Expand /
collapse**

As for my future, I want to stay in the same department but work my way up the career ladder. Following my 12-month apprenticeship, I was offered a Band 2 administration

assistant role.

A year later I was promoted to a Band 4 Personal Assistant to the therapies manager. I would like to undertake my level 3 qualification, and then maybe take a step up as an administrative supervisor and ultimately an office manager.

I strongly recommend the Get into programme to anyone looking for a second chance. I don't know where I'd be now if I hadn't done that. It's changed my life into a much happier one. I'm much more focused and I've got a reason to get up in the morning.

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[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NICE>