

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THURROCK - The Community Route



Achieving against all odds

Renae Laybourn, student

Renae Laybourn has successfully completed her first year of a Psychology/Sociology Degree with Anglia Polytechnic University.

Renae, 31, suffered an extremely difficult childhood and adolescence, leaving her dependent on drugs and alcohol in her teens.

Against the odds she began a nursing course and also married and gave birth to a daughter. However, her childhood experiences continued to haunt her and she was unable to finish the course.

By the time she was 25 her past abusive experiences had left a

legacy of debilitating trauma symptoms. In desperation, she sought help from a local women's counselling service.

From here, she made huge efforts to address her past, embarking on a courageous journey starting with a



New Directions course at Thurrock Adult Community College.

Three years ago, she and her partner decided to teach their daughter at home, with Renae taking a lot of responsibility for this.

Last year, Renae started a degree course. She says she was drawn to the course because of her childhood experiences—and that it has added to her understanding of her past.

Stella Benton

*Thurrock Adult Community
College*

Stella Benton has lived in Grays for most of her life attending Little Thurrock Primary and then Torells Secondary School. Stella says, "I left school with Maths, Biology and French in CSE and Cookery and Nutrition in GCE. I was delighted when I was accepted on the NNEB (National Nursery Examining Board) course working at West Thurrock Day nursery. After passing the NNEB I embarked on my career in childcare working as a private nanny, in a day nursery and also in a family centre.

"After raising my own family I returned to work and was employed by Thurrock Adult Community College to run the Crèche and for me returning to childcare was the opening of the door into higher education. With the support of my employer, I have recently completed an NVQ4 in Early Years Care and Education and have become an NVQ Assessor.

For me higher education has given me confidence and self-esteem, which I never experienced in school life and with the support and encouragement

from senior staff at the Thurrock Adult Community College and work colleagues.

I am going to continue my learning by branching out into tutoring and taking the next step into gaining an adult teaching and training qualification".



Open University

Over 600 adults in Thurrock are studying for a degree through the Open University. It is a flexible way of learning. You don't have to be at a set place at a set time each week and there is a good support from the tutors

John Ramsay, BP employee and part-time lecturer

TAKING part in work place training got **John Ramsay** hooked on study with the Open University (OU).

Now in his eighth year with the OU, Mr Ramsay, 48 already has a degree in psychology and is now working towards a Masters Degree in Education (MEd).

The Quality Assurance Advisor for BP was taking part in some training when the process and psychology of learning started to fascinate him.

He said: "I have been working for BP for just over a year and the company has been very supportive and encouraging about my OU studies and I am very grateful to them.

"As well as working for BP I work part time teaching psychology at an adult education centre. Eventually I am hoping to be able to do this full time which is why I am doing my MEd."

Mr Ramsay, who lives at Corringham in Thurrock added: "Seven or eight years ago I was taking part in a training exercise and

it fascinated me to learn about the teacher and student relationship and the views of the students. I was very interested in why the students were not necessarily buying in to what we were saying to them.

"When I began my OU my wife was studying too: that was great as we could work together. It has also been very good for our children and I feel sure it has had a positive influence on their education.

"One of them has just graduated, another is about to go to university and another will go up next year so I do feel that my study with the OU has enabled us to demonstrate through practice the benefits of study.

"I would recommend the OU to anyone, it is an excellent way to study. I have been advising some of my students to sign up as well."

There is a local Open University Study Centre at the Nethermayne Campus of Thurrock & Basildon College.



Kathryn Deane

Kathryn Deane from Grays in Essex spent so much time having fun at university as a teenager that she did not manage to complete her degree.

However, the vicar's wife and mother of five boys got a second chance thanks to the Open University. Mrs Deane, 54, now has a BSc in Mathematical Sciences.

She said: "I graduated last year and

I really do miss my studies. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I have thought about doing a Masters or just a one off maths course.

"I love maths and I have done it just for me. I love the fact that you can work through a problem and sometimes I get thoughts in my mind in the middle of the night or while I am cooking about how to solve something!

"That is what I really enjoyed about the course - the fact that I could sit down and really work through something. It is very satisfying."

Mrs Deane received her degree at a graduation ceremony at the Royal Festival Hall. She said: "All my five sons were there with their girlfriends and they all cheered as I walked onto the stage! It was a great moment and it was like having a fan club! All five of my children have degrees, and one of my sons has married a girl from the Czech Republic who was so impressed with the OU that she has started a degree as well.

"I recommend it to everyone - I really am a great fan of the Open University!"

Heather Foster-Byron From interest, through study, to a career

Being elected as a Parent Governor at Kenningtons Primary School in 1994 was the start of a new life for Aveley resident Heather Foster-Byron.

Heather undertook training for her voluntary role, gaining the nationally accredited BTEC Advanced Certificate in School Governance and then qualifications as an Assessor and as a teacher of adults, despite having no "A" levels or degree. Changing career Heather became a part-time governor trainer, juggling family and work responsibilities at the same time.

Heather enrolled on a degree course at the University of East London in 1999, gaining the MSc in Leadership & Management in Schools in October 2003.

Inspired by being a school governor in Thurrock and the training she undertook Heather applied for – and was appointed to – the Senior Officer post of Co-ordinator of Governor Services for Bournemouth Borough Council in September 2001, where part of her role is the provision of training for governors and others. What greater inspiration can her governors have in their key role in supporting and encouraging school improvement?

From her voluntary role as one of 370,000 School



Governors in the country Heather has achieved qualifications and employment beyond the expectations of many – yet providing positive inspiration to us all.

Heather is an outstanding example of achievement through learning.

Want some help and advice on how to get started?

In Thurrock you don't have to struggle to find the information you need to help you get started.

You can contact either Thurrock Adult Community College or Thurrock & Basildon College for an initial interview for information and advice.

If you wish, you can follow that with a more in-depth session and have a free one hour confidential careers guidance interview through Thurrock's Integrated Guidance Network. Thurrock Learning Partnership bid for funding so that Thurrock residents could have free careers guidance in their local area.

As you can see from the stories in this pamphlet, there are lots of different ways to study and

lots of different starting points. The important thing is to choose the right way for you. You do not have to go away to study for higher level qualifications. You can study at a local College, via e-learning at home or work, through



Technology Access Point (TAP) at Thurrock Racial Unity Support Task Group (TRUST)

the Open University - there is even a local OU Study Centre at the Nethermayne Campus of Thurrock & Basildon College.

There is also the ACE (Active Citizenship Entitlement) Partnership led by Thurrock Council for Voluntary Service which offers free learning opportunities for voluntary and community groups. The ACE Partnership is about supporting communities to help themselves. For more information, telephone **01375 399742**.

You can find out about the internet and using computers at the local colleges or one of Thurrock's Technology Access Points located in over 30 venues. To find one near you, telephone **01375 652538**.

Even if you have no qualifications and have not studied since you left school, you can start again – just see how successful some of the people talking about themselves in this paper have been.

Some started with absolutely nothing but, with help and support, recognised their skills and experience and climbed the steps to success.

YOU CAN DO IT TOO!

It might be hard work
but it will be rewarding — and enjoyable.



KEY CONTACTS:

Thurrock ACE Partnership www.thurrock-community.org.uk/tcvs	01375 399742
Thurrock Adult Community College www.thurrock.gov.uk/adultcollege	01375 372476
Thurrock & Basildon College www.tab.ac.uk	0845 601 5746
Palmer's College www.palmers.ac.uk	01375 370121
Anglia Polytechnic University www.apu.ac.uk	01245 490835
Open University www.open.ac.uk	01223 361650
Free In-depth Careers Guidance Interviews (Adults) www.thurrocklearningpartnership.org.uk	0800 169 7002
Connexions (Under 19) www.estconnexions.org.uk	01375 413735
To become a School Governor www.thurrock.gov.uk/education/governors	01375 652533

THURROCK LEARNING PARTNERSHIP—Working together for you

Partners:

- Anglia Polytechnic University
- Connexions
- Government Office-East
- Jobcentreplus
- Link-Ed Consortium
- Palmer's College
- Private Sector Training Providers
- Thurrock Association of Schools and Colleges
- Thurrock Adult Community College
- Thurrock & Basildon College
- Thurrock Business Forum
- Thurrock Council
- Thurrock Council for Voluntary Service
- Thurrock District Association of Industries
- Thurrock Libraries and Cultural Services
- Thurrock Primary Care Trust
- Thurrock Youth and Play Service