



# COLLEGES IN THE BLACK COUNTRY

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Colleges in the Black Country are open to all, whatever your background or age, and can provide assistance where people need additional support to further their education.

Tom Palethorpe, aged 25, who was excluded from mainstream education as a youngster, is now laying the foundations for a career as a building surveyor.

Tom has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. It initially went undiagnosed and he left secondary school with no formal qualifications.



Tom Palethorpe

Although in full-time work for the past seven years he has returned to education as an adult at Dudley College with the aid of an Adult Learning Grant from the Learning and Skills Council.

Tom is on a two-year National Diploma Level 3 in Construction and his long-term ambition is to be a building surveyor for an insurance company.

"Learning how to study has been difficult for me because I missed out on so much when I should have been at school," he said. "The course is hard work but rewarding - it's worth persevering and I'm committed to seeing it through."

Tom said the £30 a week grant in term time was a huge help.

## CASE STUDY

### Promoting inclusion and access

Walsall College's Deaf Base provides many opportunities for those with hearing difficulties.

Nathan Rollinson, who studied English, Maths, Art and Performing Arts, especially enjoyed meeting like-minded people and felt he fitted in straight away. He praised the level of support to help him realise his ambitions to go into acting and presenting.

The experience gave a real boost to his career chances as he went on to become a presenter for the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust, working on the 'Make, Shake and Jake' show for the Disney channel and 'Wicked' for the Community channel. Now based in London, he is in the enviable position of having to turn work down.

Nathan said: "I had so many good experiences at Walsall College – the best one was when we went on a trip to London. It was brilliant to have a group of deaf people together, all chatting and having fun.

"If a deaf person was unsure about starting a college course, I would say just look at me and what I have achieved. Deafness has got nothing to do with your abilities. It takes hard work but you need to be proactive and do something about it."

Jonathan Payne, who attended Stourbridge College through the Assisted Continuing Education Department, showed students with learning difficulties can overcome obstacles and 'do it all' when he secured a full time job at B&Q.



Nathan Rollinson



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Jonathan Payne

Jonathan, 21, completed a two year Workright Programme which provides skills for learners to use within the workplace and then progressed onto the Leasowes Employment Training Unit studying horticulture.

Jenny James, Employment Link Co-ordinator, said: "Jonathan initially began a placement at B&Q, Mucklow Hill, one day per week and the line manager was so impressed with his dedication, flexibility and hard work and he was offered a job when he left Leasowes."

Jonathan works in the Garden Centre 39 hours a week after completing his City & Guilds Level 1 Horticulture. Store Manager Frank Saladoini said: "He's a credit to the store and a credit to his college."