

Alix Brown, MSocSci, CQSW (1987)

Where are you working now and what are you doing?

Since graduating, I worked first with school refusers in Wolverhampton for a year. I then went to work with Youth Justice in Telford. During my 5 years there, I set up the first country-wide project to assess and work with young people who showed sexually abusive behaviour. It was funded by Health, Education and Social Services and I managed the project for 4 years. It was cited in the 1992 NCH report as an example of good practice. When I left, the NSPCC took the project over.

I went to work for the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, setting up their adolescent assessment work and travelling all over the country providing assessments of young people with inappropriate sexualised behaviour and training social workers and youth justice workers. In 2001 I went independent, so that I could focus on longer term work with young people in residential or foster care because of sexualised behaviour.

I completed my psychotherapy training and I continue to work with the care system and with this specific group of young people, and to train residential workers and foster carers in therapeutic care and other social workers and youth justice workers in assessment and intervention.

What is the best thing about what you are doing now?

As an independent social work consultant, trainer and psychotherapist, this work continues to evolve and I see more young people benefit. Currently I am doing further training in animal assisted therapy in order to work with young people whose sexual behaviour relates to deeper issues such as attachment and abuse.

What did you think were the best points of the course and the University?

Birmingham was a positive experience - lots of time to discuss issues with others who had a range of experiences. I commuted to Birmingham to do this course (but had done my first degree there in the Chemistry Department and found campus life really great!). I did have great expectations of the course and was not disappointed.

What advice would you give to current students wishing to get into your career?

Seeing how the situation in social work is going my main advice would be to keep your clients in the centre. Despite the difficult financial situation, you need to stand up for your clients, be they young, adult or elderly, and fight for the best possible deal for them. But, also enjoy your time at University and use it to get as wide an experience and meet as many people as possible. It is an invaluable time - make the best of it!