

Sue Thurlow

Where are you working now and what are you doing?

After ten years working in Child Services as a Social Worker in the West Midlands, I did further training to work in the Educational Sector and also ran a private practice. Currently I am **Clinical Lead of a University Counselling Service** at Coventry University.

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

I enjoy direct therapeutic work and the challenge of administering a busy counselling service. I enjoy working with a range of issues and ages, although still have daily contact with young people. Also, there are better IT resources and a lot less paperwork in the counselling sector than the social work sector. I also give support to social work students at the University, especially when they are on placements.

What was the best thing about your time as a student at Birmingham?

The course was fascinating and challenging so I made the right choice. I met very interesting people and admired many of my lectures/tutors. Also, now I have kids at university, it was State funded! I think there is a bursary scheme now so I hope this continues.

In what way did living and studying in Birmingham live up to your expectations?

It was a campus university within a city so there was a lot of choice in things to do. I became a theatre addict but also enjoyed debates and events at the university. The accommodation was good and varied and the transport links were excellent to the city centre by train and bus, then to other parts of the country. I have visited a few times in recent years for training courses and I thought it looked good, with a blend of old and new buildings.

What advice would you give to current social work/social policy students?

I would say that it is very challenging but there are many opportunities, so consider all the different roles when thinking about your future. A lot of the skills will be transferable so even if you change direction, they will always stand you in good stead. I am due to meet with 11 people from my original course as it is the twenty fifth year reunion of us leaving Birmingham University. All of them have been continuously employed within the sector or jobs linked to it. It is not an easy profession, but always worthwhile so you need to look after yourself!