



CAREERS

Life-changing - 50 Futures has opened doors for Doug Hewitson.

How the council's 50 Futures programme got Doug back on track

The future's bright

When Doug Hewitson tried to return to the workplace after four years caring for his mum Linda, it didn't go as straightforwardly as he'd hoped.

Armed with degrees from Teesside University and a wealth of experience in his chosen field, Middlesbrough born-and-bred Doug felt confident his CV would attract an offer of work.

But after six months, nothing - only for an appointment at the Jobcentre to change his life.

He spotted a black and white flyer for Middlesbrough Council's 50 Futures programme - a scheme providing high quality work experience placements for people struggling to find employment.

Doug inquired and was given a placement with the council's Routes to Work programme. He completed and enjoyed it - to the extent that afterwards, he volunteered to help people on the 50 Futures scheme improve their IT skills.

But it also helped land him a job as a Route to Work key worker. And now he's been appointed development officer for 50 Futures - the very scheme which set him back on the road to work.

But Doug, 44, admits that had he not spotted that flyer for 50 Futures, things could have worked out a lot differently.

He told *Love Middlesbrough*: "When my mum became ill, I made the decision to step away from work because I'd accumulated some savings and had the flexibility to be able to do it."

"I figured that when I started looking for work again, it would be OK - unfortunately, I was wrong."

"I had my qualifications and a lot of experience in different areas, but as many other people discover, it wasn't that easy just to get back into a job."

"When I was at the Jobcentre, I saw a flyer about 50 Futures. I made the call and went along; all suited and booted, to the Grove Hill Community Hub for an interview

New role - Doug now works for 50 Futures.



even more employers on board.

He said: "A lot of the work placements are at a fairly basic level, although often that's just what is needed to get confidence back and get that experience of turning up for work."

"But as the council opens up more post-Covid, we can bring more skilled roles, and more employers, into the picture."

"I've seen the positive benefits 50 Futures can have, both from an employment and a mental health point of view, and I'd like to see more people take advantage of that."

The 50 Futures message is being publicised on posters in central Middlesbrough, via social media and at community venues around town.

But Doug - a former Kings Manor School, Kirby College and Middlesbrough College student - believes it's a message that needs to be spread as much as possible because, in short, it can change lives.

He said: "I've seen what 50 Futures can do. It's often just about getting your feet in the door, making a positive impression and getting in the back of an employers' mind. And I've seen it from both sides of the table."

"I've gone full circle but if I hadn't seen that 50 Futures flyer, it might not have happened."

"It's had a massive impact on my life and I want to ensure it helps other people too."

To view current 50 Futures placements visit middlesbrough.gov.uk/50futures

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Care leaver eyes dream career after exam success

A dream career beckons for a Middlesbrough student celebrating her exam success.

Marnie Rauf achieved an A* and two A grades at A-Level last week, and has been offered a place at Durham University to study English Literature.

The 19-year-old hopes to embark on a career in writing after her studies, and has now started a placement with Middlesbrough Council's communications team, as part of the authority's 50 Futures programme.

Marnie said: "When I received my results I was elated, and completely shocked.

"And then to immediately receive an email from Durham University that had confirmed my place made the experience even more surreal.

"I'm incredibly excited for university life, and all the fantastic opportunities that I know will come with it.

"However, I must acknowledge the role that Middlesbrough Council, Children's Services, and Pathways have played in my recent academic success, as they have continued to actively support me."

The council's 50 Futures programme provides a variety of high quality work experience placements, with Middlesbrough Council and our trusted partners, for people who struggle to find employment.

"Over the summer holidays I've taken part in the 50 futures work experience programme provided by Middlesbrough Council," continued Marnie.

"This has given me the opportunity to write some pieces for Middlesbrough Council, meet people in the field I'm interested in, and build upon my CV, all while being supported by qualified staff."

Marnie has already been recognised by judges of the prestigious Orwell Youth Prize for her hard-hitting, honest story, *A New Direction: Starting Small*.

It was based on her own experiences of turning her life around, after straying down the wrong path when she left her family home at 16 following a difficult childhood.

Marnie moved into supported lodgings with the help of Middlesbrough Council's Children's Services team, allowing her to concentrate on her studies at Trinity Catholic College in Saltersgill, Middlesbrough.

Supported Lodgings provides a stepping stone to independence for young people leaving care.

Sue Butcher, Executive Director of Children's Services at Middlesbrough Council, said: "Congratulations to Marnie on her exceptional exam results, I'm sure she'll be fantastic at Durham and excel in whichever career she chooses.

"Middlesbrough children matter, and Marnie's success is a wonderful example that our young people can achieve their dreams."





“The 50 Futures placement was a great experience and all the staff were very supportive. The placement was a massive boost to my confidence and this helped me greatly when applying for my apprenticeship. I am pleased to say I was successful and I am due to start my apprenticeship in the near future.”

After completing a kickstart placement that allowed Katie to work in the community and help other people she knew this was the type of work she wanted to do. She started looking for an apprenticeship and this is when she first learned about 50 Futures.

Katie met with 50 Futures and discussed the type of work she would like to do and what she hoped for in the future. Katie also has a young daughter so this was taken into consideration when identifying a suitable placement. We found a work experience placement in a Community Hub that was local to where Katie lives. Katie was looking for a work experience placement because she was concerned that childcare and her dyslexia might prove to be a barrier too far and she wanted the opportunity to show that she was very capable and keen to move into employment.

While on the placement she found the staff to be very friendly and supportive and any concerns she had were soon put to rest. Over a period of 8 weeks her confidence continued to grow and she was developing skills she knew would be invaluable when it came time to start submitting apprenticeship applications.

While on the placement she became very familiar with many of the day-to-day tasks in the Community hub such as interacting with members of the public on reception, answering phones, organising books and much more.

Her manager while on placement said “Katie attended a 4 week 50 futures placement in Easterside hub. The placement gave Katie a chance to experience first-hand what a community hub and Library means to the local community and the diverse customers we serve. She gained knowledge and skills throughout her time on the 50 futures placement which gave her the confidence to apply for the apprentice post available. Katie is now looking forward to starting a full time customer service apprenticeship in September and a bright future with MBC.

Katie is in no doubt that the 50 Futures placement contributed to her success. She was able to submit an application that illustrated she had experience in all the areas identified in the Job Description. She also went into the interview confident as she was already aware what the job involved and had practical experience she could call upon.

The support didn't end there. Katie required her Level 2 in English and Maths and she has enrolled on the course through Middlesbrough Community Learning.