I am currently a Data Manager working at the Birmingham Cancer Clinical Trials Unit.

In January 2017 I made the difficult decision to leave my undergraduate psychology degree course in its final year. I was struggling with my mental health and was not able to cope with the additional educational pressures.

I spent the next couple of months taking some time out to look after myself. When I felt ready to explore my future career prospects further,  I approached the Job Centre. After listening to my background, they recommended the UHB Learning Hub training programme.

I remember being so nervous walking up to the big glass building for the first time. But after the first induction morning, I was sure that the programme was the perfect match for my needs at the time. It would allow me to explore the various entry-level jobs available within the NHS, identify the skills required to obtain such a job and gain some work experience within a suitable working environment.

I was lucky to be paired with an incredibly understanding mentor who listened to my needs and concerns and worked with me to ensure I got the most out of the programme. I completed various classroom sessions building my communication, teamwork and leadership skills. I also had the chance to complete a first aid awareness and basic infection control course.

The small classroom sessions focused on different key topics with presentations from mentors followed by group discussions and activities which gave us all a chance to share our thoughts. We were introduced to the NHS applications process and the importance of the ‘Supporting Information’ section and what employers looked for within the application.

After discussing with my mentor, we decided the best place for my work placement would be at the Hub with the administration team. During my placement I worked with confidential student records, various IT systems, helped with reception duties, created job advertisements and helped set up classrooms. This short but worthwhile experience allowed me to utilise the skills I had developed within the classroom setting.

While discussing my progress, my placement advisor told me about a Customer Service Practitioner Apprenticeship at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

The apprenticeship would help me improve my current skills and learn new ones within an NHS setting while also working towards a recognised vocational qualification. I was able to use the Hub facilities to complete my application and have a mock interview. Luckily, I was successful in getting a place! I was placed within the Research and Development department where I was introduced to the world of clinical trials.

I am incredibly grateful for the team at The Learning Hub for having such a supportive and personalised approach assisting young people into work. Not only did my time with the Hub allow me to develop practical employment skills but it also allowed to me grow in confidence. I was encouraged to push myself and was able to gain back some of my lost confidence with the belief that I was capable of having a successful career despite my lack of degree.

After completing my apprenticeship with UHB, I joined the University of Birmingham’s Cancer Clinical Trials Unit as a Data Manager where I work on a varied portfolio of children’s trials managing complex data sets and monitoring patient safety. I hope to progress within this field and become a Senior Trial Coordinator.

I am grateful to The Learning Hub for their support, encouragement and kindness at a time when I needed it most.