



Karen - Birmingham

I started out basically working in a factory. After many years I had a child and took on various cleaning jobs. Whilst my child was in school I decided I had to do something better and I got some training in catering, but then I couldn't get a job because my daughter was so young. I catered for various community events. After that I got involved in voluntary work with young people. I was told that if I wanted to get paid I needed to get qualified and so I got a degree in Youth and Community Studies. While doing that I got involved in regeneration, here in Birmingham, and did my dissertation around anti-social behaviour and mediation as a possible solution.

I left university and continued to do sessional work. Then I became ill and stopped working. I think, for me, my illness doesn't stop me from doing a bit of work. There are not many jobs that take on people with a disability. I stay on incapacity benefit, my health goes in swings and roundabouts. I can't commit to a job that won't give me time to rest. I am active in community stuff that I think deserves some kind of financial reward. The work that I do means that other people have benefited. It almost feels as though I am doing all this voluntary work and helping people move up the career ladder or put them in a position for a better job but I don't get recognition for what I do.

I think the fact that some one is on benefits and can't do a full time job but a couple of hours or 6 hours a week should be OK. I don't think people should be penalised for that and have benefits taken off them. The benefits system is quite strange.

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