



Lee

- ▶ **Left school without even checking what GCSEs he'd got**
- ▶ **Worked in a warehouse then call centre, before being encouraged to go to Northern College**
- ▶ **Studied History degree at Sheffield Hallam University**
- ▶ **Now studying a Master's degree in Research in Modern History**

Learning wasn't something high on lads' agendas at school

It was more football and girls. If you were learning you were a bit of an outcast. I left school with no qualifications really – I didn't even go to check if I'd got any GCSEs because I knew I'd not done well.

The expected thing of the lads in Barnsley was to go into a trade. My mates were training to be bricklayers and plasterers, so I went to college to train to be an electrician. I only lasted a year as it wasn't really for me.

What I've really enjoyed about coming back to education is studying a subject I'm passionate about. When I was younger, part of me believed that I was bright enough to go to university. To see my son growing up knowing what university is and that it's an option is great.

Put yourself out there, ask questions. It's not just the qualifications you gain, it's also the process of learning and meeting new people.

There's nothing stopping you from going to university

I couldn't shake the niggling feeling that I'd missed out on something

As I reached my twenties I was consumed by bitterness, incredibly angry at myself and others for being left out to dry. Weekends were spent with friends, drinking and taking drugs.

I went to work at a call centre. During my time there I'd get in trouble for reading history books instead of taking calls. After a few disciplinaries my manager told me I didn't fit in to that environment and said I should go to college.

I went to Northern College, a residential college for adult learners in Barnsley. It just blew my mind and changed my life.

