

Kayla: "I was treated like an adult with lived experiences and opinions."



**Kayla, 25, Student**

"I left school at the start of my sixth year without completing my Leaving Certificate (the end of secondary school exam in Ireland) due to illness and the fact my school never adequately put support for me to continue my education. I felt like I had been thrown onto the scrap heap as at the time, the Leaving Cert was seen as the only viable route to university. I then tried to complete my exams from home through a distance learning college but that ended up not suiting me at that point.

I then decided to attend an Open Day at my local Further Education and Training (FET) centre where I ended up completing two accredited courses in ICT Skills and Business Administration. At the time, I had no idea that those courses would even lead me

anywhere let alone university, but I was very much surprised to find out through meetings with an Adult Guidance Counsellor that it would. My experience in VTOS Roscommon (an adult education centre) couldnt have been better. It was a refreshing change from secondary school, and I was treated like an adult with lived experiences and opinions. My teachers were so beyond supportive and approachable, and they are still to this day cheering me on.

Im now in my second year in a Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Digital Marketing in the Technological University of the Shannon in Athlone and I couldnt be happier. I wouldve never considered pursuing a career in marketing had it not been for the courses I completed. They prepared me hugely for university life and gave me a great base of knowledge for my degree."

**Ireland 2023**

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Deborah: "I am here, and I belong here, I am a part of something."



**Deborah, 43, Postgraduate student in Advanced Family Law, UCC**

"I believe my journey to recovery started in a coffee group at the Cork Migrant Centre because apart from just going and sharing as a migrant woman, they also offer short courses and training, that was where I did the Train the Trainer course that later allowed me to facilitate parenting workshops to help other migrant women who were struggling with the new law and the cultural difference. We also got information on workshops happening in the community. They let me know about the intercultural dialogue training, and I attended that and now facilitate it. Truly in that space, we all got empowered.

**The Benefits of Learning for Wellbeing-**

When you start a course, you get into a routine. You wake up every morning and have something to look forward to. You meet people with like minds to connect with. Then

you start reading, your mind starts getting bigger, and your imagination gets bigger. You start learning different things. You become a part of a group of powerful and interesting people who bring stories. You start feeling you belong to something. You get an education. You get empowered. It just shifts everything!

Particularly for migrant people, when you arrive in another country, you feel isolated. But when you start learning, you suddenly feel like, "I am here, and I belong here, I am a part of something". New friendships are formed. Believe me, it is never too late! A lady in my class, turning fifty, shared with us: "This course is a gift to me turning 50!" Education is a gift no one can take away from you.

Education has helped my mental health and has positively impacted my life and my family. Now, I am back in college studying a post-graduate in Advanced Family Law at University College Cork."

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