

## Cathy Prior



### Social Impact Programme – Education Lead, Provident Financial Group

I come from a working class background, born and bred in Bradford. Dad was in the wool trade, Mum worked part-time evenings at Provident. I left school with just 2 O Levels, one in English and one in History. My family as well as my teachers had big hopes for me in school... until I got in with the wrong crowd. During my teens, I started having issues with my mental health and struggled to see the point in going to school anymore. I ended up spending most of my days hanging round the Kirkgate Centre in Bradford with my mates.

I didn't know what I wanted to do when I left school but I was eventually persuaded to go to Shipley College to do a Business and Finance diploma. Whilst I was studying there I fell pregnant, got married and moved into a local authority flat in Shipley, both my husband and I were unemployed. We struggled to make ends meet so I took on several part-time admin jobs and somehow we were offered a mortgage and we moved to a house on the Ravenscliffe estate. Unfortunately we got further into debt, our house was repossessed and I became a single parent living back at home with my own parents. During this time my mental health issues worsened.

My mum managed to get me a job at Provident as a Visual Display Unit Operator and this is where I have spent the past 30 years of my life. I have worked my way up the business by developing my skills and knowledge through roles in a variety of departments such as the call centre, customer services and internal communications. and knowledge of the business.

I now work on the Corporate Affairs team for Provident Financial plc, the parent company to Provident and its sister business, leading on the education pillar of our Social Impact Programme. Through this programme we seek to raise aspirations of young people and adults who live in disadvantaged communities, just like I did, so that they can have a better chance of a future that sees them included in society. I believe my life experiences have stood me in good stead for this role because I can relate to the people we are supporting and can understand some of the issues they face.

I spend lots of time travelling around the county in my little company car visiting projects we fund and meeting some of the amazing young people and families we are supporting. We have an office

# Bradford Community Champions

in the Walkie Talkie building in the City area of London, where I spend a lot of my time meeting with our charity partners and attending events with them to talk about our programme. Last year I attended an afternoon tea event at the House of Commons!

I'm also happily re-married and have two beautiful grandchildren who I adore!

It would bring me great pleasure if I were able to use any part of my story to be able to inspire young people and encourage them to dream bigger and get a good education behind them, so that they can become more resilient and see the challenges they are facing in their lives as learning curves that will help them become stronger, more confident individuals.

Sectors worked in and routes taken.	
Finance	As above

What I would like to get involved in (Please tick)			
Inspirational Talk	Visits to my place of work	Mentoring / Coaching young people	Other (please state)
✓	✓		