

Since Asma was a child, she had always dreamed of doing medicine, and had worked towards it all her life.

However, when the pandemic hit, her caring responsibilities were drastically impacted and her grades declined as a result. Forced to take a gap year and retake her A-Levels, Asma decided to seek a job in a different sector in order to support herself financially throughout the year, leaving her dream of medicine behind.

Three years later, Asma is now studying a degree in Biomedical Engineering and well on her way to achieving her dream career. She credits Smart Works for supporting her on this journey, and helping her hold onto her dream.

Asma





This is Asma's Story



“It was very hard hitting, as a student that had been getting high grades, working really hard whilst being a carer, to then suddenly feel like ‘How am I going to live through this year, or my education, or my dreams?’

I realised medicine was no longer an option for me, seeing how my grades went down, and I was going to have to take a gap year. But I'm also from a low socio-economic background, so I needed to financially sustain myself, especially through a gap year.

So I turned to IntoUniversity for help through their Big City Bright Futures Programme and decided to apply for internships in finance. I managed to secure an interview with Bloomberg and got referred to Smart Works for more support.

The coaching was extremely helpful – when it came to my actual interview, I was grilled, so I was thankful for the preparation. It helped me look at my CV and turn it around, because it was all medical based and I needed to prove that I really was interested in finance. And the coach really treated me like an adult, not like an 18 year old. I had a sort of prejudice that I was too young for it, but I wasn't at all.

And the dressing, which I initially just saw as an extra... I was completely proven wrong. I felt so comfortable in that session. As a Muslim, I dress modestly, and the fact that they were so accommodating, and I didn't have to mention it first, gave me so much breathing space.

So I got my first set of smart clothes, and I realised how big of a difference it makes. I've never really had smart clothes before, mainly because of my financial background but also because I was fresh out of school. And just walking to the interview in

those clothes, made me feel a lot more... Not just confident, but also my belief and faith in myself increased.

So I got the internship! And then in that gap year, I resat my A-Levels. The year after, I managed to get a part time job as a coding teacher, whilst I thought about applying to university.

I was still hesitant on if I wanted to do medicine. It had been my dream for the longest time, but also such a difficult field. I really questioned things, but Smart Works and IntoUniversity both allowed me to hold onto it... They reinforced my potential where I didn't really see much of it anymore. So I kept on with it, and held onto my dream.

I carried on working with Smart Works during my gap years as well – I joined the Client Advisory Group, and I'm now a Client Champion. There have been so many events and happy social moments, that were such nice moments community wise, because when I was going through what I was going through, it did feel very lonely.

Now, I'm studying biomedical engineering at university, and I have all doors open – I could do engineering, I could go into finance still, I could do graduate medicine as well. Without the support I've had, I would have had to completely change my dream, but I was able to hold on to it.”



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