

Title: **Case Study**
Land-based & Environmental
in Wiltshire & Swindon

Helen Marsden has always wanted to work with horses. Now aged 21, she is head girl at a livery yard in Wanborough near Swindon – and with the skills and expertise she has built up, she aims to set up and run her own business.

“I have a place at home which I would like to turn into my own livery yard,” she says. “It’s something I have always wanted to do.”

Helen attended Farmor’s School in Fairford, Gloucestershire. After taking GCSEs, she went on to sit AS Levels, but decided not to carry on and complete her ‘A’ Levels.

That year she took part in a two-month expedition to Central America where she helped in a voluntary project to renovate a village primary school.

“It was a really good thing to do,” she says. “I had never done anything like that before – it was a real eye-opener.”

Back in the UK she began a full-time job with Caron Roberts’ Livery Yard – she had worked there on and off as a volunteer since she was 12.

“I started out as a working pupil, which basically means you’re on general grooms’ duties – mucking out, doing day-to-day jobs, and getting to ride the horses occasionally.”

A huge benefit has been the training. She took a Modern Apprenticeship (now called

an Apprenticeship), taking an NVQ Level 2 in Horse Care, before going on to take an Advanced Apprenticeship at Level 3.

All her training was done in the workplace and was assessed by local training company Haddon Training, which specialises in Horse and Animal Care NVQs and Apprenticeships. As well as taking NVQs, as part of her apprenticeship Helen also took further British Horse Society riding instructors’ qualifications.

As an assistant instructor she is able to give riding lessons in her spare time, and soon aims to be a fully-qualified instructor.

She loves her job, though she admits it can be very hard work. “It wouldn’t be everybody’s cup of tea,” she says. “Many people probably wouldn’t even get out of bed for the wage, but I really enjoy it.”

She says you need to be hard-working, trustworthy and self-motivated. “And you have to be good at keeping to time – it’s always busy. It does take quite a strong person to keep going – and of course you have to love horses.”

“This has been the only thing I ever wanted to do. I’ve always wanted to work my way up the ladder and go as far as I can. I don’t want to stop until I know I have definitely reached my limit.”