

LEGAL EAGLE

Her background meant she started her career a little later in life, but Harbens Kaur, 39, now has the job she always wanted

Growing up in a very traditional Asian family, I was told my priority in life was to be a homemaker. So I left school with a handful of GCSEs, my arranged marriage took place the next year when I was 17, and we had two sons soon after. I loved raising my children, and I also worked full-time at a supermarket stacking shelves, but told myself that I wasn't going to do it for ever.

Ever since I was seven years old, I'd wanted to be a lawyer, like my uncle. I'd badger him to tell me what cases he was working on, fascinated by the way he gathered information and pieced the puzzle together. Once the boys were a bit older I decided to see what steps I could take to start studying law. I discovered www.ilex.org.uk, the Institute of Legal Executives website, which seemed perfect - they offered flexible training and welcomed mature students from many different backgrounds.

I hadn't studied for years so I felt apprehensive starting my course - what if I couldn't do it? But I knew I was hardworking and dedicated, and hoped that the best I could do would be good enough. It was a bit of a juggling act fitting in my family responsibilities, my job and my studies, but my boys were always my first priority. I was doing my legal exams while my older son was doing his GCSEs, so we used to take breaks together - and when I struggled with the maths element of the course, my younger son helped me with percentages. He lent me his pencil case on my first day of college, and I still use it today.

The day I qualified in 2009 was one of the best of my life. My sons were clapping away and crying with pride at my graduation. Now I've qualified as a solicitor and have a Masters in law, and I'm so happy with what I've achieved. I've shown my children that you mustn't give up on your dreams - no matter what hurdles you face, if you work hard, you will overcome them.

‘My boys and I were both going to school at the same time, so it was a bit of a juggling act’



Harbens: 'The day I qualified was one of the best of my life.'