Case study: Childcare Works Project - Trainee Nursery Assistant Experience

Nicola Harrison participated in the 1st cohort of NDNA Cymru's 16-week Childcare Works programme that was delivered in England from October 2024 to February 2025.

The programme was funded by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and the supported 5 partners of serving military personnel as Trainee Nursery Assistants.

The trainees completed 4 weeks of training, followed by 12 weeks on placement in a childcare setting.

Nicola completed her placement at Strensall Montessori Nursery in York and this case study shares her journey and experience of participating in the programme.



After 25 years of service in the British Army, I found myself seeking a new direction—one that would allow me to build on my passion for nurturing others.

As a mum to my 4-year-old son, I have experienced firsthand the joy and importance of supporting a child's growth, which inspired me to pursue a career in childcare. When I came across the NDNA Childcare Works Project through an advert, I instantly felt it could be the ideal stepping stone into this field. The application process was seamless, and I was thrilled to be accepted.

From day one, the programme exceeded my expectations. The 4 weeks of online training were not only informative but also engaging, providing a solid foundation for my transition into childcare. Lesley, the project coordinator, was incredibly supportive, striking the perfect balance between professionalism and approachability, which made the learning experience both effective and enjoyable.

After completing the training, I began my 12-week placement at a nursery, working in the preschool room. This placement was an eye-opening and rewarding experience. I had the opportunity to observe and work directly with children, supporting their daily routines and learning activities. Although I was initially scheduled to rotate through the other rooms later in the placement, I was thrilled to be offered a job opportunity before reaching that stage.

By the sixth week of my placement, I successfully interviewed for and secured a position as a Level 3 Early years educator apprentice at a different setting. This role marks an exciting new chapter, allowing me to continue gaining hands-on experience while advancing my skills and qualifications in childcare.

Looking back, joining the NDNA Childcare Works Project has been one of the most rewarding decisions I have ever made. The support I received throughout the process gave me the confidence to step into a completely new field after my military career. Lesley's guidance and encouragement have been invaluable, helping me to discover a new passion and purpose. I am excited to continue this journey in childcare, where I can make a positive impact on young lives while growing both personally and professionally.

For further information contact

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