
Karen's Story

Although Karen thoroughly enjoyed her training scheme in retail management when she left school, settling down and having three children soon became a priority.

And, like many other mums, she found she really lacked confidence when it came to thinking about getting back to work.

"I wasn't motivated – I did a bit of cleaning work, but I was worried about getting a decent job after so many years, even though I had really enjoyed my YTS training when I left school," she recalls.

But when her youngest child started school, Karen was invited to go on a PATA course in childcare at Dursley College. "I was helping out a bit at playgroup and someone suggested I did the course. I was really worried about it – I thought I was going to look stupid. But it was great – I made a lot of friends and my confidence grew."



Karen, 37, went on to study child protection and first aid and even considered moving on to an NVQ qualification – "but I still wasn't really ready, so I did an assertiveness course which fitted in well with the children because it was in the evening. Then I saw a leaflet about a massage course in Dursley and I just went straight into it – I had gained so much confidence from my other learning that I knew I could cope with another course. I also did an Introduction to Forest School at the GL11 Community Project."

The next stage for Karen was a part-time Access to Higher Education course at college in Stroud – but changes in her personal life have forced her to put that on hold for the time being. "The difference is, I now have the confidence to know that, when the time is right for me, I will be able to start the course knowing I can do things, I can learn," she says.

"For me, the most important thing about getting back into learning was that the courses were held locally – there is no way I could have travelled, and when you lack confidence you find all sorts of excuses not to do something. My friends encouraged me, and I have met lots of people at the GL11 Community Centre.

"We need more chances locally to do different things and I am happy to help spread the word."

The Learning Community (TLC) in Dursley and Cam is campaigning to get more flexible courses and training in the local community, geared to skills which local employers need and local people want.

Karen is one of a band of TLC Learning Champions who will encourage friends and neighbours to get more involved in learning and training, helping to make the area a better place to live and work.

