



## **Learning to Change**

*Juggling a Job & Family*

### **Voiceover**

We are always learning - whether it be from trying a new recipe to finding out how to change a broken headlamp on the car. There are many different aspects to learning and a good way to start is to gather evidence about your current knowledge, skills and qualities. Doing this makes it very likely that you'll begin to think about your own learning and this process of reflection is the basis for personal change and development.

### **Karen**

Because I understood a lot of the needs of my own family I could automatically lay this on to the people I was looking after as a social worker. Going from home help to being an assistant care co-ordinator it helped me to understand how social services worked as well, and what I could actually ask for and generally expect for the public.

He's coming on Monday and I'll come a little bit later than Anthony so you've got some private time together...

So I was actually on the front line and I learnt a lot about people skills while I was working with people then, and then I actually came into the office in a role of a senior. So I learnt people skills working with other home helps and their needs as well as the people that they were caring for on the patch.

### **Shehnaz**

When I was a child minder I used to have to work with the children - I had to plan my own activities with them. Now that's come into my work as well and obviously because I had to plan activities for the children, have a time limit, that's helped me towards doing my course and setting the time limits to actually complete my assignments and things like that.

### **Levene**

In my previous life as a project manager in electrical industry my work really involves communicating with a range of individuals – contractors, main contractors, sub-contractors internally and so forth. An example would be – of a difficult situation – would be a supplier failing to deliver on time. Now my work would involve me arranging and negotiating with various bodies to commence work on a particular site. So a supplier failing to deliver on time creates a lot of problems for me, embarrassment for my organisation as well as difficulty with the main contractor on site. So, it would involve me perhaps renegotiating one with the main contractor a new start date or possibly with the supplier a new delivery date, but in any event it creates an environment where I am having to use a certain amount of skills to get the organisation out of a difficult situation, because quite often in circumstances like that we would be hit liquidated damages – that is paying for doing the job. So my task would be to minimise those eventualities.

### **Shehnaz**

Obviously as my family grew I had to start to think about how many people were involved in our house and how much I was cooking for, like budgeting how much ingredients I would need to get, things like that. And still having money left over to go and enjoy ourselves as well at the end of the month. It had to be in a routine in order to get...sure...to make sure that the food was ready on time. Now that routine is the same kind of thing that you need to have when you are studying because you need to set yourself a timetable in order to finish your assignments and get them in on time. Before I went back into studying I thought that my life skills and academic skills were completely different but when I did go to learning I found that what I had learnt through life I could apply to my academic learning to help me succeed in what I was doing.

**Voiceover**

Reflection is useful, but it is important to seek out other perspectives – family and friends can provide you with other points of view – so can your tutor. You may know someone who is prepared to talk to you about your learning.

**Karen**

I think I have developed the life skills through being a carer, through being a home help and to also learn the skills - to actually work within a team and to value other people's opinions and also to work in the wider area, to work with District nurses and physiotherapists and GPs and to understand and listen to what they are saying about the person in the centre of it all. And whatever I learn and remember or think about later that was a good thing I did, I try to apply that again. I reflect on what I have done; reflect on my past life and reflect on how I have dealt with other people and bring forward the good things and the positive things to enable me to work with other people.

**Shehnaz**

When I was studying I was...I did it with a group of friends so we helped each other in my first Openings course so we were able to help each other through the course. I think it was very important in the beginning because we were all in the same – we were all doing it as a first course and having each other to reflect on it helped us a lot.

**Karen**

My husband used to proof read because sometimes you get too close to things and you can't see the wood for the trees. He was very good at that. My son bought me a memory stick. I had never used it before and he showed me how to use that. My work colleagues were very supportive throughout. If ever I came back to the office when I was on placement they would always be very supportive. "You can do this." and "Of course you can." And my...the people I was studying with they were a lifeline. I knew that I could ring them up and ask them for help and they would help me. And exactly the same applied to me. I knew I could contact my lecturer. He would be only too happy to discuss any problems I have.

**Voiceover**

Students can also find support from their tutor and from online conferencing with other students. Was it easy to find the time to study – juggling jobs and family life?

**Shehnaz**

When I first started I did two thirty point courses which was in effect like nine months study compacted twice over, but because I was only part time I was able to jig that and do the work while the kids were at school and then I got my job and I was working for about twenty hours and now I am full time and I am studying as well at the same time it still is very easy because I have got into a routine of how to study and where it all fits in.

**Karen**

I worked full time during my course but I think before I started I did discuss it with my husband and the one son that's still remaining at home because I did realise that it was going to impact upon their lives. I wasn't going to be around to do a lot of the cooking and the cleaning and I actually thought it through very carefully because I realised I was going to have to dedicate a big chunk of my time to the course.

**Levene**

You have to take yourself away from your family, the TV and all the rest and work in a room on your own. So I did find the discipline of that very, very difficult initially, but of course when I submitted my assignment – what I thought was perhaps pretty poor – and getting a good result in terms of marking I suppose a bit of a triumph I suppose.. It felt good that I did do something right.