

Working in the early years

a work experience case study



Hannah Ellis

aged 15 during placement, 12 years ago

Work experience at Uplands Preschool in Lowestoft

How did your work experience opportunity in early years come about?

I was at Dene's High School and didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't like school but had a good teacher who guided me and sorted a work experience placement at Uplands as she thought it would suit me. My family laughed as I had no experience with young children, no young cousins or anything but I loved it!

What do think the benefits are of doing work experience in a childcare setting?

At 15, you don't have the confidence to talk to adults and you don't get taught about the ways of adult life at school. Doing work experience really helps your social skills and confidence and life skills as you see the real world as you're treated like an adult. Placements are so important to help you see if a type of job works for you. It taught me to use my initiative, show willing and ask!

What did you enjoy most about your work experience placement at Uplands Preschool?

I enjoyed feeling like an adult and trying early years work made me realise I was good at it. I realised I was important to the children and that I made a difference to their day. Sam encouraged me and made me feel ready for the next stage and explained that there are courses and career options in early years.

What's next for you in your early years career?

After my work experience here I went to college to get my Level 2 in early years and my Maths and English then did my level 3 apprenticeship here at Uplands. I'm now deputy safeguarding and special educational needs coordinator. It's the most challenging but most rewarding job ever and things change all the time but I want to keep improving to be the best I can be.

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Sam Howlett – manager at Uplands Preschool

What have been benefits of having work experience students or volunteers in your setting?

At Uplands we have offered both volunteer and work experience opportunities. We find it is advisable for people to do work experience or volunteering before undertaking a qualification. Several of our work experience students went on to do an apprenticeship with us after leaving school and then remain with us becoming permanent staff which helps with our continuity of staff.

What does a potential volunteer or work experience student need to know and do to be successful in an early years setting?

Be punctual. Use your initiative and be willing. You need to show your passion for the role. You need to be a good team member and to follow the policies and procedures of the setting. We need people dedicated to working with children who have a passion to work together as a team.

What did you do to prepare your students and volunteers?

We provided a good induction and sought references. We also agreed a trial period.