

# Course focus

**LEVEL 3 DIPLOMA FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORKFORCE**

TM spoke to Sarah Savidge about the benefits and challenges of studying for her Level 3 Diploma from home with the National Extension College...

**How long have you been involved in early education?**

**SS:** For me early years has been a career change. I used to be in Human Resources, but I decided to give up work to look after my first child. Then, after I had my second child, I decided that I'd retrain and go into early years. I started helping out in my daughter's preschool, when she started there in September 2011 - and that was how I got onto the course, really, as it gave me a bit of experience.

I started the Diploma in the January of 2012 and finished in September this year, during which time I was working part time at the preschool and, after my daughter left, helping out at her primary school as well. Now I've finished I'm keeping my hand in at the preschool, gaining some experience in Key Stage 1 at the school, and on the lookout for a job too, to use the experience I've gained - whether it's a full-time position at a preschool, or working at a school in the Foundation Stage.

**Why did you decide to study with the National Extension College?**

**SS:** The course was actually recommended to me - a friend's sister was doing it, and she mentioned how good it was to be able to do it from home. It means that you have a bit more flexibility than you might if you were having to go to college. Because I have two young children, having everything online really helped me to juggle things.

**How much time did you have to devote to the Diploma?**

**SS:** I tried to finish it in a year, but the time passed very quickly, so in the end it took me around a year-and-a-half. I was trying to work on it six evenings a week, for about three hours at a time. And of top of that, obviously, I was doing my voluntary work at school and preschool - you had to do a minimum of six hours of that per week, in the environment you wanted to specialise in.

It does seem a lot on paper, but it's actually not too bad. You just need to be committed and motivated so you don't slack off. That was probably the biggest challenge I found, at least initially. Once you get going and you know you want to meet your goal, you keep persevering. Some days you do think 'I don't want to do this', but you make yourself, and you get there eventually!

**What sort of topics does the Diploma cover?**

**SS:** The course covers a great deal. There's obviously a lot of reference made to the EYFS

**The details**

The Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce is a flexible home study course designed to provide aspiring practitioners with all the knowledge and skills they need to work in an early years setting. Based upon the early learning and childcare pathway of this CACHE qualification, NEC's course features a diverse range of units that cover essential subject areas, and combines different types of activity and assessment with an element of workplace assessment.

There are no formal entry requirements for the course, but students must be at least 16 years of age and working or volunteering in an early years setting in order to apply.

**For more information on the diploma, or to enrol, contact the National Extension College on 0800 389 2839 or visit nec.ac.uk**

and the learning goals - I'd just got to grips with the 2008 EYFS when it was changed, which wasn't ideal! There was a big unit on safeguarding, which was one of the most challenging we had to cover, and optional units to choose from. I did five, and looked at things like physical activity and creativity, as well as more on safeguarding. I wanted to keep my knowledge broad, but you could also do fewer and specialise more if you wanted to.

**How were you assessed?**

**SS:** For each of the units there were questions to look at, for which we had to provide page or half-page answers. I had a main text book to work from, which was very useful and a good starting point. As the course is all done on-line, there were links to further reading provided for each area too. My tutor was there if I needed any extra guidance; I could email her and she'd usually get back to me within 24 hours, which was very helpful.

The only face to face contact I had was the observation we had to undergo, which is worth 25 per cent of your final mark. My tutor came into my preschool, and observed me leading the setting, basically, which was quite nerve wracking. But it was a very good experience for me. Luckily, the kids were quite good on the day in question - phew!

**Would you recommend the course?**

**SS:** If you're a parent and you want to get into childcare, it can be a bit daunting knowing that you've got to go and get a qualification - but doing the course this way makes things easier. It's hard work, I don't want to lie to people about that, but it's very rewarding as well. I have lots of options now, and hopefully employers will take me seriously because I've trained and have a bit of experience. I'd recommend it for anyone in a similar situation to me.

