

# Course focus

## EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONAL STATUS

Clare Cane, an early years teacher working in Sussex, is studying for her Early Years Professional Status with the University of Chichester. *TVN* spoke to her about her experiences so far...

### What is your background in early years, and where are you working currently?

**CC:** I trained originally as a primary school teacher, and the first part of my career involved working with Reception, Y1 and Y2 children. I started to work in early years about 12 years ago when my third child was born with special needs, and really enjoyed it. Since last September, I've worked at Woodpecker Nursery, in Tangmere, Sussex, employed as an early years teacher working with the pre-school group.

### Which EYPS pathway are you on, and what has the course involved so far?

**CC:** I'm on the Graduate Practitioner Pathway, which is an intensive six months, and I'll finish by the first week of July. I probably put in about five or six hours a week at the moment, and work evenings and weekends, especially when there's a deadline coming up for an essay. I'm employed half-time, and because I go up to the university for lectures in my own time my nursery has given me a half-day in lieu, so I do have that time to study as well, which has been incredibly helpful.

You're assessed on your competence in 39 standards – you have to show evidence for each in order to be considered an EYP. So, a lot of time is taken up in assembling a portfolio, anything from photographs to emails and policy documents you've worked on – anything that can show that you're competent in these areas. Every week there's a three-hour session at the university, comprising a lecture and discussion, but a lot of the evidence I need comes from the work I do in my setting. For example, one

important aspect of achieving EYPS is showing competence with all early years age groups; so, because I haven't worked with babies, I've been able to go into our baby and toddler rooms to gain experience with those children.

You also have to write six, critically-reflective essays on your practice, which include background reading and show that you're keeping up-to-date with national policies and current legislation. On top of that, you need three witness testimonies from people who you work with or parents, or anyone who can vouch for you. And then you finally have a three-hour visit from an assessor, who both observes you, looks at your portfolio and essays, and puts it all together.

### How have you found studying at the University of Chichester?

**CC:** I'd definitely recommend it. Nearly all of our lectures are given by the same person, who has been super; she's managed several nurseries herself, so I've felt that she knows exactly where we're coming from and can really relate to our situation.

I'm lucky in that I'm local to the university, so it was an obvious choice, but there are people on my course from as far afield as Horsham and south London.

### Have you applied anything that you've learnt so far to your day-to-day practice?

**CC:** One thing I've already done is to introduce a treasure basket to our babies – I hadn't heard about them before, and it was lovely to see the babies' response to them. I'm very much trying to encourage high-



## The details

The University of Chichester leads the South of England Early Years Consortium, which delivers Early Years Professional Status across London and the South East of England. Four 'pathways', of various durations, are open to those who wish to those who wish to become an Early Years Professional:

- **Graduate Practitioner Pathway** (for graduates working in the sector; 6 months, part-time)
- **Undergraduate Practitioner Pathway** (for practitioners with a level 5 qualification; 12 months, part-time)
- **Graduate Entry Pathway** (for graduates looking to pursue a career in the sector; 12 months, full-time)
- **Undergraduate Entry Pathway** (for undergraduates completing a degree in early childhood studies; 12 months, full-time)

For more information, visit [www.chi.ac.uk](http://www.chi.ac.uk)

quality interactions between staff and children too; it feels like such a fundamentally important thing, to make sure there aren't missed opportunities, so I've been leading the way with that both indoors and outdoors.

I've had a lot of experience working in early years now, but I think that already the course has changed me – I feel a lot more confident in what I'm doing: I know what best practice is, and it's certainly helped me to get up-to-date with current legislation.

## NEW: Forest School training from Green Light Trust

Forest schools are run by qualified practitioners to enhance mainstream education, by focusing on children's emotional, social and behavioural development. Such sessions can be tailored to the needs of all ages and abilities. Green Light Trust is now offering a Level 2 Forest School Assistant course for people who wish to assist with the running of a forest school. For further information, or to book a place on any forest school course, contact Lindsay Limmer on 01284 830829 or by emailing [lindsay@greenlighttrust.org](mailto:lindsay@greenlighttrust.org). Visit [greenlighttrust.org](http://greenlighttrust.org)