

# IN training

**Gail Greenwood** is studying for the National Award for SEN Coordination with Best Practice Network. *TN* spoke to her about her experiences of the programme...



## What's your background in the early years, and why are you taking the SENCO programme?

**GG:** I work in an infant school, where I'm the Foundation Stage Coordinator. Day to day, I work in the nursery with 3–4-year-olds. I took on the SENCO role close to three years ago this Christmas, and taking the course came as part of the role. I started it after I'd been in the SENCO role for about a year.

## What does the programme involve, and what topics have you covered?

**GG:** The course is at Masters Level, so it's very involved. There are five days of instruction: the first is about the professional content of the role; the second looks at strategic development of your SEN policy; the third covers coordinating provision; the fourth is about leading and supporting your colleagues; and the fifth is about working in partnerships.

Alongside these days, you have to put together a portfolio that meets a very wide range of criteria – you put in pieces that you'll hopefully use at work and explain how they meet said criteria, and they're then ticked off. On top of that, you have to write a reflective account of about 3,000 words, and then a piece of action research, which is about 7,500 words.

## What form does your study take, and how much time have you had to devote to it thus far?

**GG:** There is a lot of research involved. Best Practice provides some titles, but you also have the option to visit Bath Spa University's website for information and relevant books, and to get a card that allows you to visit other universities. You can get access to online journals too.

When you're working at home you can contact a tutor by email if you have any queries. One thing I found useful was that response to these queries is incredibly prompt – I asked a question last Sunday night, for example, and sent it to two people in case either was on holiday: one replied back on Sunday night and the other got back to me the next day in the morning, which is really helpful.

In terms of workload, you can work at pretty much your own rate, though you do have to do it within two years. I spent four or five days last summer holiday writing solidly and this summer, because the second piece is longer, I've put seven days aside. On top of that I'll spend time whilst carrying out the SENCO role thinking about bits to add to my portfolio and the gaps I need to fill. It is a lot of work, but you do get an extra five days to spend working on the course in whatever manner you choose.

## find out more

For more information on courses available from Best Practice Network, visit [www.bestpracticenet.co.uk](http://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk)

## What have you found most useful about the programme?

**GG:** Some of the elements that we've had to gather together for the portfolio have been very useful, and have moved on my practice in the school – the simple fact that I've had to compile it for the course has meant that I've got on with it, for example, provision mapping. It's also been very useful to have had the opportunity to get together with other SENCOs at the same stage in the job – rather than those who have been doing it for 15 years – as it's meant we've had opportunities to share ideas.

## FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES...

### A matter of degrees

The Pen Green Research Base offers degree level programmes specifically designed for early years practitioners. These part-time courses are delivered in convenient one-week study blocks at Pen Green. They are currently recruiting for their Foundation Degree, BA Top-up and Masters programmes – you can find out more at [pengreen.org](http://pengreen.org)

### Work and play

NEC has 48 years' experience in distance learning. The New Award, Certificate and Diploma in Playwork is delivered through an online learning programme and e-portfolio, with support from an expert tutor.

Enrol at any time by calling 0800 389 2839. Further information about the courses on offer can be found at [nec.ac.uk](http://nec.ac.uk)

### Convenient CACHE

The Childcare Company is a CACHE-approved training provider, delivering work-based qualifications in Children and Young People's Workforce, Supporting Teaching and Learning, Playwork and CPD short courses. Its LASER programme combines teaching resources, lessons and videos, while giving students instant access to their e-portfolio. Funding or co-funding is available, subject to eligibility. Call 01753 596 004.