Dockleaf Project NVQ Diploma Case Study – Alison Lewis

After leaving school with GSCE qualifications, completing an NVQ in Leisure and Tourism, followed by Business Admin and working within a variety of sectors, Alison Lewis, 29, decided to change direction in her employment and embark upon a career in childcare, an area which she had always wanted to work within! Initially, she began the Foundation Studies in Social Inclusion qualification, which she found immensely interesting, but due to the need to return to employment, she was unable to continue this course. However, when her children began attending Pembroke Dock Community School, a member of staff recommended the NVQ Diploma, which could be undertaken at school. Alison seized the opportunity, worked two days a week voluntarily and started her NVQ, which she completed in just under five months! She now has a position within a class, which is going amazingly well and the NVQ has helped her so much.

Alison was referred to Dockleaf Project by a member of staff, then spoke to the Headteacher, who was happy for her to complete the NVQ through Pembroke Dock Community School, working two days a week voluntary and Alison was signed up and starting the NVQ within two weeks! Alison was unaware that she could start an NVQ course, assuming that she had to attend college for 4/5 days a week and complete the course via that route. As a young parent, the option available at Dockleaf was a much easier way for her to gain the qualification, especially as the school is virtually on her doorstep.

Prior to commencing the NVQ Diploma, Alison started working in Withybush Hospital. As she was missing her children so much she decided to change her career. She discussed this with her husband over Christmas and she was determined that, as soon as her child was in Flying Start, she would investigate. In January, a member of staff told her that she could complete the NVQ at Pembroke Dock Community School, accompanied by voluntary days, which was the perfect option for her, being so close to home, instead of having to travel to college.

Alison wanted undertake the NVQ Diploma, in order to gain a qualification in childcare, and experience. She likes working with younger children, seeing them grow and seeing what they are learning, e.g. the children she is currently working with have been in school for 6/8 weeks and when they first came in, they didn’t know any letters and sounds, but now, as soon as a letter is held up, she loves to see the smile on their faces, as they proudly recognise it! She feels that what she is currently learning, she can bring into the class setting and the children are also gaining from her new skills. This area of study was new to Alison, but she wanted to learn as much as she could about childcare and she has now progressed to NVQ Level 3 and wants to keep going, as she can bring everything she has learnt back into her work setting, which benefits the children, so everyone is gaining from her achieving qualifications!

When she started her NVQ in January, she spent two days a week with in Reception, with children aged 4/5 years, which was a completely new experience, as she had not previously been in a class setting. She learnt a lot during this period, but felt that two days wasn’t enough to learn as much as she wanted to. From April to July, she provided 1:1 support to a child with autism and she learnt so much from this opportunity. Prior to undertaking this role, she carried out research into autism, with regards to ways that she could help and support the child. As she had responsibility to plan activities which the child would benefit from and enjoy, she set out in a daily plan, so that the child knew the order / structure of the day and what would be done next.
Her NVQ Assessor carried out regular observations, approximately once a month and saw her during literacy, numeracy, topic and lunchtime sessions. Alison developed a really good relationship with her tutor, who was always on hand to give advice and support. Alison set herself the target of achieving Level 2, as soon as possible, so committed to working from 7-9pm five nights a week. She has gained so much from every unit of study, as she has undertaken so much research and reading, in order to gain as much knowledge as possible. She ‘fast-tracked’ her NVQ Level 2, due to her personal commitment, as she felt it was important to have all the information fresh in her mind, in order to put into practice everything she had gained.

Alison feels that the whole experience has been incredibly positive, she enjoys coming to work every day, which makes her wish that she had done this sooner. Her placement was so positive and being given the opportunity to work as well was an additional bonus and she feels that she wouldn’t be where she is today, in such a good position, without the diploma. This route to learning, of gaining a qualification whilst being able to put into practice what she has learnt, has been a very beneficial pathway and one which she would recommend.

The process of obtaining the Diploma was challenging, as everything was new and she didn’t find it easy, but learning so much was very rewarding and she is eager to continue studying. However, without the support of her family, her two day voluntary placement would have been more difficult, due to childcare needs. On a personal level, completing the Diploma has given her more confidence, in realising that she can achieve a lot. She is very proud of how quickly she obtained the qualification.

Alison has ambitions to complete her Level 3 NVQ and is motivated to continue her learning experience, by studying to become a Higher Level Teaching Assistant. She has investigated this option and has decided to re-sit her Maths GCSE or gain an equivalent qualification, as this is one of the requirements for the course.

Alison could recommend 100% this route to learning, because, alongside learning, you can gain experience within the setting, which can be used within the Diploma. This enables you to put all your learning and research into practice and bring it all together within the setting, whilst gaining advice from other professionals within the school environment.

She had such a good experience; everyone did as much as they could to provide help and support, with reassurance and guidance. Personally, there couldn’t be any improvement, as Alison had all the support she wanted and found it really, really good! She has a clear vision to move forward, with high aspirations, to keep learning as much as she can.

If you have been inspired by Alison’s journey and wish to find out how you could also work towards achieving National Vocational Qualifications then please call into Pembroke Dock Community School and ask to speak with Mrs Amanda Edwards, Deputy Headteacher.