



Kerry Lawrence

Senior Early Years Practitioner

Kerry began the NLEY journey having just completed a BSc in Geography at Canterbury Christ Church University. She was originally looking to do a PGCE but was told about the New Leaders programme by a friend's mum who works in the sector. She says **"The MA was a factor in my choice, being funded, although not the sole reason. I have gained a range of new skills, knowledge and theory around Early Years and I am amazed at how much I have learnt."** For her, the variety of placements she has completed has meant she feels that she has developed skills across the board and not just within the practical side of working with the children.

She started working as an Early Years Educator, in the pre-school where she was on placement. Initially contracted for just 12 hours a week, she was soon working the full 33 hours the setting opens. The setting manager soon recognised that Kerry was not being used to her full potential and agreed to develop a new role specifically for her as an Early Years Professional to reflect Kerry's EYPS qualification. However, the job was not without its problems. As Kerry explains **"The deputy manager didn't like me coming in. She didn't like a young person coming in and changing it. She's been there over 30 years!"** Kerry had to manage this situation sensitively but had the support of the rest of the team. The job worked well whilst she was studying for her MA as it was term-time only. Once she had completed the programme the pay remained low and she wanted a new challenge.

She saw a job advertised in an extremely deprived area. The position was a senior practitioner role, where EYPS was a requirement for the role. She was successful in gaining this job, and began there in August 2013. Based in the pre-school room, she has made steps to create a better learning environment for the children and works with the senior management team in order to provide stimulating learning experiences for all the children at the setting. Future plans include working with the team in the Baby Room to create an exciting environment for the youngest children.

"It is nice to feel valued for my skills and to be able to share my experiences with the team who I work with. More importantly, I am doing what the programme set out to achieve, improving the education and learning of children in the most deprived of areas."