



Polly Bolshaw

Lecturer Professional Studies in Early Years  
Canterbury Christ Church University

Whilst studying for a degree in German and Business, Polly worked part-time in her university campus nursery and was considering applying to do the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) qualification after graduation. However, she found a press release about the New Leaders in Early Years programme on the Children's Workforce and Development Council (CWDC) website and immediately applied. She was attracted by the strong link between academic knowledge and the opportunity to apply it practically through a range of placements, including at a children's centre, with a childminder and in a private nursery setting. During her final placement within the children's centre, in November 2011 she was offered a part-time position as a Playworker, and following the successful completion of her EYPS, was promoted to Early Years Professional in April 2012 where she worked in a part-time capacity until December 2013.

As a member of the first cohort of NLEY students, she had the opportunity to act as mentor for Cohort Two students after gaining EYPS. Polly found this to be a valuable opportunity for her to share ideas and advice on her EYPS experience to support other students to gain theirs. Then, in October 2012 she began to teach first-year students part-time on the Early Childhood Studies BA degree programme. This role allowed her to draw on and develop aspects of the academic information she gathered over the course of the programme. In February 2013 Polly began to write a monthly NLEY newsletter publishing student research, sharing practical early years ideas and informing students of opportunities available to them. For her these multiple job roles as a member of the Early Years workforce as well as a sessional academic ***"combined the essence of the New Leaders in Early Years course...all of the skills that I learnt during the two-year programme are being continually put to use and expanded upon."***

In December 2013, Polly successfully applied for a job as a full-time Lecturer on the Foundation Degree (Professional Studies in Early Years) at Canterbury Christ Church University. She has also started studying for a Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education at CCCU.

As she reflects back on this professional journey she is struck by the personal transformation which she has experienced. ***"For my undergraduate degree I only applied to Universities where I wouldn't be interviewed as I completely lacked confidence and to think that now I can stand up in front of a group of students and teach for a whole day..."*** For her, the thing which the NLEY programme provided above all was a supportive environment and a belief that she could achieve and make a difference. This is illustrated by her proud recollection of when the former Head of Department was discussing the challenges of writing a book with her and said ***"You'll find this out for yourself when you come to write your first book."*** Polly reflects ***"I genuinely believe I will write a book now. I would never have thought I would be able to write a book before but now I believe I can!"***