

## **My Journey with Adult Community Learning**

### **Chris O'Brien**

**I am the Curriculum Manager for Early Years, Counselling and Personal Development in the Adult Community Learning Service across Essex. I am managing a large team of Tutors, planning and monitoring the curriculum.**

**My story begins when, 30 years ago, my eldest son started at pre-school. He did not settle so I stayed with him in the pre-school. Someone mentioned to me that Bishops Hill College, the Brentwood Adult Education Centre, were running a pre-school course and that I should attend and so I joined this course. During this time I worked part time at a pre-school which helped me as a young parent to earn some extra income to support my family and training needs. Up to this point I had tried a variety of roles with local businesses but was unsure of the type of career path I would like to take.**

**An inspirational Tutor, Mrs Bobbie Clark, was part of the Pre-School Playgroup Association (PPA) then, and I got involved with them as a Volunteer. After some more training courses in Early Years the PPA offered me employment which I accepted. It was suggested to me, as I was so good at my job and with the knowledge I had already gained, I should consider becoming a Tutor. I then undertook tutor training and joined Bishops Hill, as a Tutor, teaching Early Years.**

**Some years later an opportunity came up for me to be a Team Leader and then a few years after that a Curriculum Manager position which I applied for and was successful. This role was not only Early Years but developed into other areas of the curriculum.**

**Adult Community Learning gave me the opportunity to do more training but this time in Adult Teaching and Management. When the service was restructured my role changed from a local one to a service across Essex. I have received qualifications such as the Certificate in Education (FE), and Assessor and Verifier Qualifications.**

**Whilst working with Adult Community Learning I have gained confidence, communication and problem solving skills, an understanding of teaching and training and how adults learn. My roles have helped me to be more creative about problem solving and confidence in dealing with authority and bureaucracy.**

**I have enjoyed working with ACL and found it rewarding. I still meet people or get phone calls and letters from those I have taught who have achieved results such as Degrees or a Masters in Early Years. It is a terrific feeling knowing that you were a small part of the changes and achievements they made to their lives. It is great to see those whom I have interviewed blossom into a role and become a really great Tutor.**

**My influences along my journey have included Zan Charlton and Irene Tracey whom, in different ways, confronted and challenged me to move into more demanding areas away from the safety of what I knew.**

**My advice to others who might like to take this career path is that this role is so absorbing and at the same time enjoyable it can make you change direction so many times and in so many different ways. You may find you would rather be more creative and preparing work for your class and therefore find yourself skipping your favourite TV programme.**

**My personal goals are two fold, firstly linked to my starting point, is to raise the standards of Early Years staff so that young children get the best start in life and secondly to ensure that all our tutors deliver high quality experiences because you never know where inspiration will come from.**

