



Case Study

Cambridge Housing Society
Voluntary Teaching Assistant Project



“I'm still in shock! All the training that we did with James where we were told that the skills we learnt will lead to employment- I thought that he was just saying that to make us feel better. I didn't believe a word at the time!”

Suzanne Jones, Teaching Assistant
Thongsley Fields Nursery & Primary School

Project: Skills For Jobs
Business Sector: Education
Location: Huntingdon
Job Outcomes: 3

Using Skills for Jobs funding, Cambridge Housing Society provides support to people looking to return to work. One of their recent projects has seen 3 of its 4 initial participants successfully find paid work in local Primary Schools.

James Lewis, a tutor from their Community Outreach team explains how it all came about:

“We started the voluntary Teaching Assistant programme as part of Skills for Jobs. I'd heard from speaking to people we have helped in the past, that the idea of becoming a Teaching Assistant was popular. A lot of people we help have had a break for maternity leave and they want to work with children.”

“We advertised the scheme and selected the best candidates to go for an interview at Thongsley Fields Nursery & Primary School in Huntingdon.”

One of those candidates was Suzanne Jones who left work on maternity leave in April 2001 to raise her children.

“I was originally doing an English and Math course for adults when the two organisers put me forward for the Voluntary TA course. They knew that I'd had some experience at my daughter's school, but I didn't have the confidence to apply for jobs.”

“The original interview was with the Head and the Assistant Head and although James was there, I was still really nervous. In the end I had to sit on my hands because I kept doing silly actions with them! But in the end I managed to contain my nerves and was offered a voluntary position, starting in September last year.”

James continues, “We often work with people who aren't confident in their skills. Even though Suzanne already had some previous experience, she was still very nervous and yet managed to impress during the interview.”

Suzanne continues, “The school is absolutely lovely. When I started I almost instantly felt as though I fitted in. I like the values and the atmosphere around the school, everybody is so nice, both the staff and the children, I really feel at home there. My colleagues really make me feel like a valued member of the school in my own right.”

“When a permanent vacancy came up, three of them encouraged me to go for it and when I got the job they were all so happy for me.”

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