

## **Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) full-time pathway case study**

### **Lateefah Afinowi**

Lateefah Afinowi commenced the full-time Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) programme in September 2008 after hearing about the Status from a friend.

Here she shares her experiences of studying to become an Early Years Professional (EYP) and how hearing about the programme transformed her original career plans after she arrived in England from Nigeria. Lateefah also reveals how she is “thankful” for the support given by NDNA and the Open University during the course of the programme and how the programme helped her to discover herself.

### **Choosing to become an EYP**

As EYPS is a relatively new Status, like many candidates, Lateefah had a different career path in mind. After she arrived in England she intended to study the Montessori method of teaching but after hearing about EYPS from a friend decided to apply for the programme.

She shares that the advice and information session, which all prospective applicants need to attend before starting the programme, confirmed her decision to undertake the Status as the right one as it “gave me an insight into how much more there is to working with children in the early years.”

### **Building skills and confidence**

Lateefah says she found the Open University course relating to children’s learning and development highly useful, as it helped her to begin to understand how theory works in practice. She says: “I found the theories about how children learn very useful. I could relate these to different behaviours I had experienced in children in the past...I also found it interesting how much children learn through play and I gained insight into how to plan quality play to ensure children enjoy themselves whilst learning.”

She was thrilled to find that the EYPS programme included Institute of Leadership and Management training to support leadership skills. Lateefah feels that this really helped to build her confidence and equip her with vital communication and organisation skills needed to succeed in the workplace. “I was able to discover myself, how I liked to learn, the kind of leadership skills I possess and my role in a team,” she reveals. This learning really came to the fore on Lateefah’s second work placement “when I was given a leadership role to co-ordinate a programme at a children’s centre, I did not find it so daunting, even as a student!” she shares.

However, she says one of the biggest skills she has learnt is coping under pressure through effective planning and communication – she shares that despite a busy family life with a husband and three children, she discovered how to manage placements and studying with the demands at home – all essential skills in a working environment.

### **EYPS in reality**

A core part of the programme is work placements as these enable those studying EYPS to put theory into practice and understand the realities of working with young children. Lateefah believes the work placements were highly valuable, and that these experiences supported her in giving an impressive interview after the course was

completed. She says: “It was good to learn theories but particularly more important to have the opportunity to practise them...this made me gain confidence in myself as one of those making change in the early years. At my first interview after the course, the interview panel was very pleased because I displayed a good level of theoretical knowledge combined with valuable experience.”

### **Support to achieve EYPS**

NDNA candidates often report how valuable the support NDNA offers is in successfully achieving EYPS. Lateefah reveals that “the NDNA team were always there to support and sort out issues. I enjoyed training with the NDNA/OU Partnership and I am very thankful for all their support. The programme gave me something beyond a Status and I have recommended the programme to two people who are already on the course!”

Lateefah has a bright future ahead of her, having already gained employment within a children’s centre and she credits “my employment was definitely as a result of the knowledge and skills I gained during my training”. She plans to continue her learning with a degree in youth and childhood studies and concludes that the skills and knowledge EYPS has given her are already providing very useful.

Lateefah is now a mentor on the EYPS pathways – helping new candidates along the way.