



Vivien Hindley's story

Learning champions changed my life

Taken out of school at 12, becoming a learning champion was Vivien Hindley's stepping stone to university.

Vivien Hindley, aged 43 from Chester, is off to university next year. What's special about that, you ask? A lot because Vivien's schooling effectively ended at 12, when she became her little brother's carer. After a brief spell in a remedial unit, where she was labelled unteachable, the next step was a job and then an early pregnancy.



Twenty odd years later, after a series of jobs in shops and with four small children, her marriage broke down. As often, the misfortune was also a catalyst. A close friend, who was a learning champion, encouraged her to think about taking up learning. 'But I wasn't in the right frame of mind and besides, I told her, I'm really thick', says Vivien.

Anyway, her friend persisted and took her to a taster session at her daughters' school.

'I met Chris Meacock, a lovely lady, from West Cheshire College, who was very approachable and supportive.

She said that lots of mums had done very well despite missing school'. Two years ago she enrolled on an English course, then a maths course and a listening skills course, and that led on to training to become a learning champion in 2009 at Burton Manor, the residential adult learning centre on the Wirral.

The next step was applying for and getting a part-time advice and development worker post at a community IT centre run by volunteers. Vivien is proud of her achievements there. 'I started a homework club, built up the centre from 100 to 700 users a month and recruited more volunteers'. Having started a second IT centre, she received a local award for community service. Then, she got a job at West Cheshire College, supporting the community learning team. By now she had started a level 2 English course and a pre-access course.

I wasn't in the right frame of mind and besides... I'm really thick

Vivienne Hindley

'There was this shop where I worked for five years', Vivien recalls, 'and every year I would gaze at the students in their go

wns as they walked past to the cathedral for their graduation. I dreamt of becoming a student but it was pure fantasy. It never crossed my mind that one day I would be enrolled on an access course leading to a degree'. Vivien had always struggled with her reading and writing and like many people in a similar position, developed ways of disguising the problem.

Seeing their mum's progress has had a marked effect on her children. 'Before they were borderline grade B', she says, 'but now seeing what I've being able to achieve has really encouraged them and they've become A star swots'.

The above case study is taken from the Community Learning Champions webpage:

<http://www.communitylearningchampions.org.uk/>

Note:

Community Learning Champion (CLC) is the umbrella term for people who want to share their excitement about learning with friends, neighbours, workmates and people right across their communities. CLCs are often volunteers and are in a unique position to enthuse and inspire others. When they are given the resources to flex their creative talents, backed by effective support and training, lives and communities are changed for the better. The achievements of the CLC National Support Programme speak for themselves: more people getting involved in learning, more parents raising their sights and those of their children, more people shaking off the damaging effects of depression and drug abuse, more people getting into work and more people getting involved in making their community a better place.