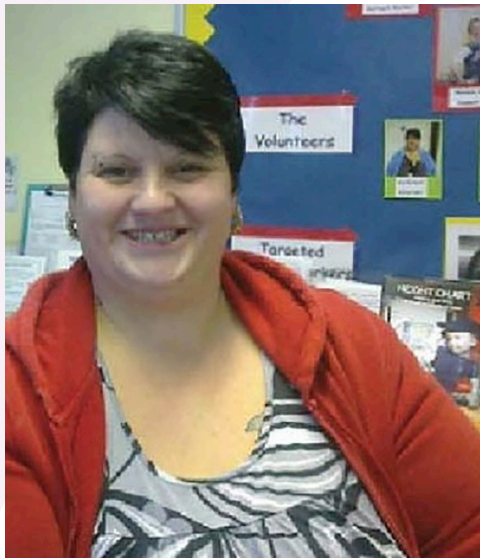


Further Education

EDUCATION SUNDAY – THE POWER OF A SECOND CHANCE!

Val joined a Level 1 customer service course as an opportunity, which was part of her role as a volunteer at a local children's centre in south-west England. She admits that she was nervous and sceptical about the course at first. She had very low confidence, did not feel she had the time and thought a 'college' style course was not for her. Val slowly warmed to the idea of starting something new, as her children were growing up fast and she was already planning ahead to get back to work. Her two girls were in their teens and both her boys were under five when the course started, so this meant a hectic home life. But with support from the learning provider, her tutor and her colleagues, Val took the brave step to enrol on the course. Val has not always enjoyed education. She had a destructive home life in her childhood and this had led her to feeling unsupported and not very capable. She regularly truanted and was an irregular attender at school after the age of 13. At 16, with no qualifications, she moved out of home and started work.

Val had two children in her early twenties, but found herself in an abusive marriage. She managed, after many struggles, to end this marriage, with lots of support from local charities and support groups. Since marrying her second husband, this has given her a strong foundation and the courage to start again. After studying this course, part-time, over a year, Val proudly completed her certificate.



Val in 2013, after achieving her first Customer Service unit

Val feels grateful for all the support she gained during those hard times, from local trusts and church groups. Over recent years, Val has been a successful and active fundraiser for all sorts of groups – now she has chance to give something back to all the groups who helped her in her time of need.

CONTINUED...



The Customer Service course, with the local adult & community learning provider, has helped her to see things differently; she had always felt confident getting along with people, but the course helped her to work with people from different backgrounds and helped her to learn how to encourage others to feel good about what they can achieve.

Val is now in full-time work, in a customer service role. She is feeling fit and healthy and enjoys her working and family life. Her children are thriving at school and college. She is an active and committed member of her community. Val feels like she is living life, in all its fullness, thanks to this second chance to take a course. Val has had to overcome many challenges to study in further education, but her progress and achievements have been remarkable. She says, 'If I can do it, anyone can!'



Val in May 2016, taking part in a public health campaign

Did you know?

Last year in the UK over 3.5 million people were involved in learning with a further education provider. This makes up a huge part of our own communities and is something with which we could get more involved.

What can we do?

Are there courses in your area that you might have the courage to apply for?

Are there people in your church who might enjoy this kind of course?

Find out about what is happening in your local area.

What ways might your church get involved in further education and adult & community learning?





Read all about it!

You can find out more about why further education matters to churches, by reading a recent report commissioned by the Free Churches Group:

<https://www.freechurches.org.uk/news/2017/4/25/free-churches-and-further-education>

In our churches, we may well be used to praying for schools, so why not include prayers for young people and adults who are taking courses in further education? Or perhaps you could do some fundraising for adults who need books and bus fares to get to college?

Let us pray...

Loving God, on this Education Sunday, let us give thanks for the courage shown by those who are in further education.

God of the marginalised, we pray for those for whom learning can be a challenge and when people have had to overcome obstacles to begin and progress in further education.

Merciful God, we uphold to you all the tutors and support staff who work in further education, that they have the skills and the patience to work with the young people and adults in their community.

Living God, give us, as churches, the knowledge and the will to work with our local education providers, so that we can all learn to serve our communities more fully.

In the name of Jesus, our teacher, Amen

There are lots of ways to get involved – for further information contact Revd Sara Iles, sara.iles@freechurches.org.uk, Education Assistant with the Free Churches Group.

