

This story was filmed and recorded during early February 2006 for 'Hear all about it!'

This campaign is a wonderful selection of inspiring adult learning stories told by the learners themselves. The highlights from Kym's interview which can be watched and read; this is the transcript of the whole interview. The on-line learning champions would be delighted if Her stories were used to promote learning in your organisation, college or charity. You can link you webpage to the West Midlands Learning Directory – Hear all about it! page www.wmld.org/pages/hear_all_about_it/.



Kym's story -

"I've got 3 children, and I'm taking bits and pieces, courses, here there and everywhere. Trying to get as much in as I possibly can. I'm doing Maths, English, Food and Hygiene, an Art course – which is painting and drawing. And I've done . . .first aid in the past.

I was at school, when I last had any formal education, but there were doubts whether I had Dyslexia, or something like that. But nothing was actually done about it, so I was just bottom of the class, basically. Left to catch up – it was in the 70's and 80's. Now, I've just had a test and I am Dyslexic. So it's helped me a lot knowing why I can't do a lot of things. And we're looking at what will help me and I feel confident about it now. Rather than hiding and stuff. I couldn't even fill a form in before, so I feel more confident about things.

I got married. Had 2 children with him . . . Rocky relationship. Got divorced and they grew up slightly and I left a 7 year gap, started courses and had a 3rd baby and I've carried on doing my courses because the child care is fabulous and I haven't had to stop doing anything. So that's where I am at the moment.

I've always liked Arts and Crafts and I've enjoyed doing it. Lots of people have told me that what I do is nice. But you know, you always think 'not really'. So I thought I'd like to teach . . .anybody – now at the moment I'm thinking of teaching adults. But I thought I'd like to teach arts and crafts, so I thought I'd better go and do something about it . . .learn some more things. And I want to do a teaching course eventually but I'm not sure what sort of course I'll have to do to teach adults arts and crafts. I'll have to look in to it.

I'm doing a drawing and painting course at adult education in Northfield, Birmingham at the moment. And I'm very in to arts and crafts at home. I'm looking for an arts and crafts course at the moment.

I'm feeling as though I'm not really thick. I've got a reason for not being able to catch up. And I find difficulties in lots of things and now I know why. And it's a way of looking at things. I can't explain it really, it's just . . . I'm not thick. It answers loads and loads of questions to everything.

I've got a really good tutor, and she recognised some of my symptoms for herself. So she was very helpful. She goes over things with me twice if necessary, sometimes 3 times. Or she'll explain it in a totally different way for me and now we're looking at different remedies, to what will actually help me.

Different coloured sheets to put over the writing and things like that. And we're just basically looking at the beginnings of it at the moment. I found a lot of helpful things like that. I'll say 'well how come I don't understand that, this time' and she'll say 'it's ok, we'll talk about it a different way'. It's easy now.

Before I didn't want to show anybody what I'd written down. Say, if I was asked to fill in a form, it would take me a couple of weeks to get round to it. I was saying to my mum and people really close to me, 'is that right?' I've got a feeling that I might've spelt it wrong – most of the time I might've got it right but I wouldn't know. But now, I'll ask anybody – 'does that look right to you?' Its just confidence building, all the time. Now I know, I can just ask and it's there, and I've got help.

I'm spoken to like I'm an adult now, whereas at school it was 'you've done it wrong – go and do it again'. I'm an adult now and they'll speak to me in a totally different way. They'll explain why I've done it wrong. How I could've done it different. Just not talking down to me – talking to me, sort of thing. It's made me feel a lot more comfortable with learning and doing anything.

Last year I was voted Learner Of The Year at the premises where I do my courses. It's made me feel proud, but I don't say it a lot. It's just something you don't boast about but everybody knows. I think they voted me Learner Of The Year because I got off my backside and did something. At the very moment that I got the award, I was very embarrassed, I hid behind the bunch of flowers. And they've got a photograph of me on the wall at the community centre where I do my courses. You can only see my forehead. You can see the flowers but then just my forehead."

This project was managed by jo.knight@niace.org.uk - who can be contracted for more information. She works for NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education). Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council funded the project.

