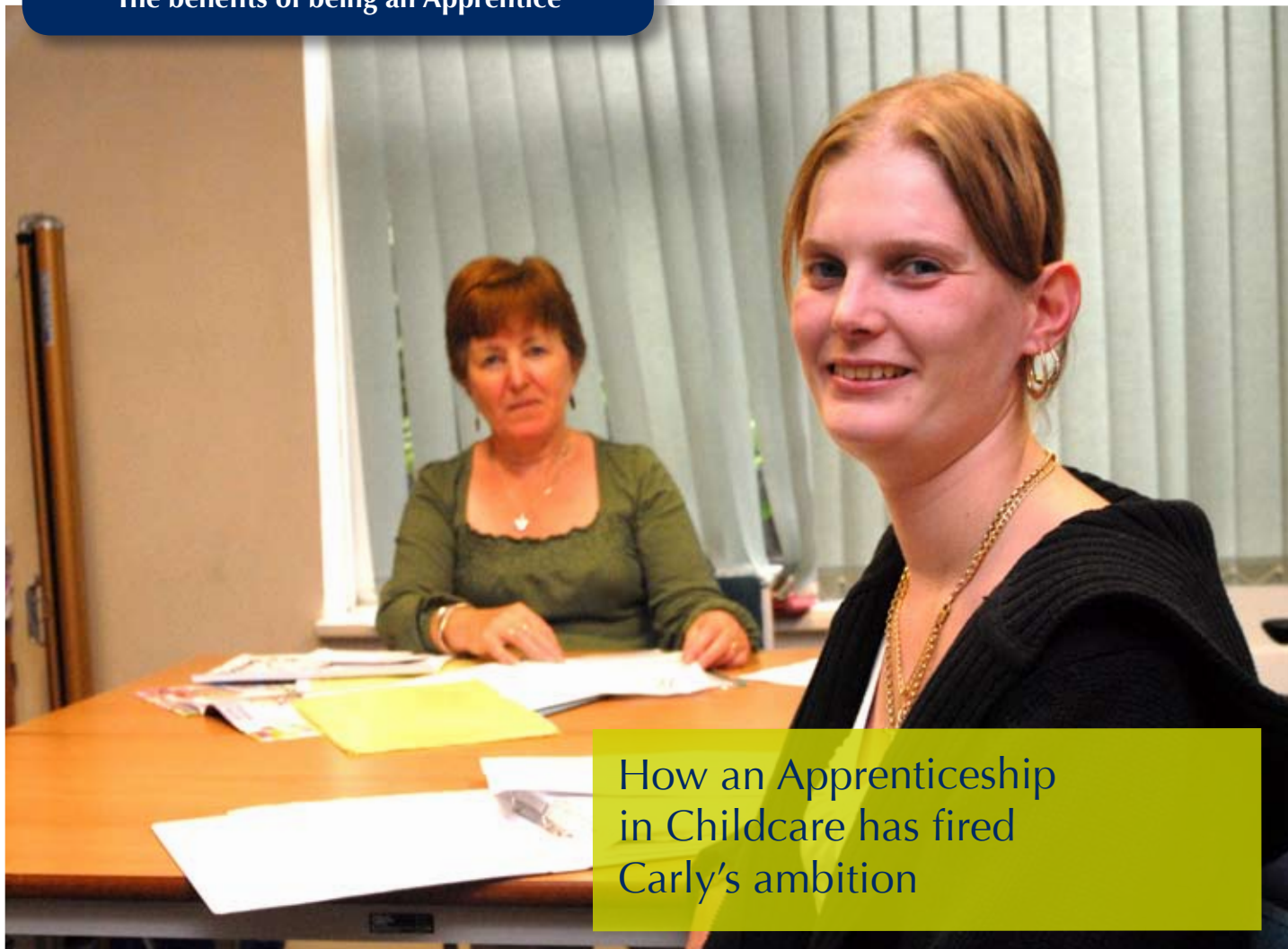


The benefits of being an Apprentice



How an Apprenticeship in Childcare has fired Carly's ambition

“When I left school, it was a money thing: I worked just earn, not to learn. Now I’ve found something I love doing, something I’m good at, I’m back in business and eager to get on.”
Carly Dalton, Advanced Apprentice in Childcare.

Carly Dalton left Warlingham School in Croydon at age 16 with no idea what she wanted to do, but determined to earn money. Now, at 23, she’s discovered a career she loves, ambition she didn’t know she had – and yes, she’s earning money too.

Flower power

“When I left school, I started work full time in the flower shop I’d spent the last few years in as a Saturday girl,” she says. “Three years later I decided to move on and do something else.”

That ‘something else’ turned out to be a few jobs, all of which earned her money, but none of which gave her much job satisfaction – until she began working in a children’s nursery, where a job agency had found her temporary work.

Temporary to permanent

“All of a sudden I’d found something that interested me enough to think about training,” she says.

With the support of the nursery, Carly began a Level 2 in Childcare. Then her life was plunged into crisis when she was diagnosed with cancer and was off work for a year. When she returned her tutor had not only left, but all her work had disappeared.

“It was a big disappointment, but compared with everything else I’d had to endure over the previous 12 months, I felt I just had to get on with it,” she says.

Three years ago, Carly left the nursery and began work at Thornton Heath Early Years Centre – initially just filling in where they needed help.

"After years of upset and turmoil, I just wanted to get on with my life and my career, so starting at Level 3 wasn't such a hard decision for me," she points out, "I'd done a lot of the work already."

Experience but no qualifications

"I'd got a lot of experience, but no qualifications to prove it," she explains. Quickly, her new employers discovered her talent and offered her full time work, so Carly approached YMCA Training, a local training provider, who organised her apprenticeship. As she'd almost completed her Level 2 before becoming ill, Carly decided to jump straight to Level 3.

"After years of upset and turmoil, I just wanted to get on with my life and my career, so starting at Level 3 wasn't such a hard decision for me," she points out, "I'd done a lot of the work already."

Now she's almost at the end of her Advanced Apprenticeship, Carly can't wait to finish.

Hard work pays off

"It's been hard work, with a day each month at college, my assessor coming in most weeks to support me and work to complete, but I'm nearly there now."

Linda Bellhouse, Head of Thornton Heath Early Years Centre, says that Carly is indispensable. "She's brilliant, totally reliable, totally committed. She's taken on a more experienced role even though she's still training because she's more than capable."

Training encouraged

"We encourage training at Thornton Heath for a number of reasons: Lifelong learning not only keeps our staff up to date with ever-changing trends and innovations, but it also makes them more lively and interested in their work. Attending training classes allows staff to swap ideas with those employed by other nurseries and brings fresh ideas into our workplace. For these reasons we welcome Apprentices, although Carly definitely stands out from the crowd."

Linda explains that Carly is also good with the parents – working with them to support and encourage their children.

Good teamwork

"It's teamwork, and parents are part of that team," agrees Carly.

Now that the successful completion of her Apprenticeship is approaching, Carly is already focussing on her future.

"In a few years I might like to train as a teaching assistant, or go into Social Services," she says. "At the moment, though, I love what I'm doing and the children that I'm caring for. Finally, I've found a career that gives me what I didn't realise I was looking for."



If you would like further information about Apprenticeships in South London call the Apprenticeship Hotline on 0800 169 4824 or visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk