



Case Study

My Experience as a Level 3 Apprentice Working at a Nursery

Introduction

Starting my Level 3 Childcare Apprenticeship felt exciting but also a little scary - I wasn't sure how I'd juggle full-time work and studying. Looking back now, it was one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had. This case study is my honest reflection on what I learned, the challenges I faced, and how it shaped me.

Background

I've always loved working with children. During my A levels, I worked at a school-aged childcare club after school and in the holidays, and that really confirmed for me that childcare was the right path. So, after finishing my A levels, I joined a nursery in January 2024 and started my Level 3 apprenticeship in April. It was a big adjustment - suddenly I was balancing coursework with a 40-hour work week!

At first, I worried I'd never keep up, but I was determined to make it work because I knew this was the career I wanted.

What My Role Looked Like

One of the best parts of my role was planning activities that were fun but also helped the children learn and grow. Seeing their faces light up when they mastered something new was the best feeling. Safeguarding quickly became second nature to me - I realised how much responsibility comes with this role, and it made me feel proud to be trusted.

I also spent a lot of time observing the children and recording milestones, linking them to the EYFS framework. It was eye-opening to see how much detail goes into early years education. Working alongside experienced practitioners was amazing too - they shared tips and tricks that you just don't get from a textbook, and I felt part of a team that really cared.

Another area I grew into was working with parents. At first, I was nervous about talking to them - I worried I'd say the wrong thing! But over time, I learned how important those conversations are. Whether it was sharing a child's progress or reassuring a parent who was worried, I realised that building trust with families is a huge part of the job. Now, I feel confident and even enjoy those chats at drop-off and pick-up.



Challenges and What They Taught Me

One of the hardest parts was time management. I worked over 40 hours a week, so most of my assignments were done late at night or on weekends. There were times I felt exhausted and wondered if I'd ever finish. But pushing through taught me resilience - I learned that I'm capable of more than I thought.

Another challenge was my dyslexia. Every assignment felt like a mountain, and I often doubted myself. But the support I got from college and my manager was incredible - they gave me extra time and encouragement, which reminded me that asking for help is okay. That experience taught me to be kinder to myself.

Skills I've Gained

I'm so much more confident now, whether it's chatting with parents or calming a child who's upset.

I learned to think on my feet - when an activity didn't go as planned, I could adapt quickly. And professionalism? Policies, safeguarding, confidentiality... these aren't just words anymore; they're part of how I work every day.

The Outcome

By the end of my apprenticeship, I felt proud of how far I'd come. I didn't just gain a qualification - I grew as a person.

The highlight?

Being nominated for Loughborough College Apprentice of the Year in 2025... and winning!

That moment gave me such a confidence boost and reminded me that hard work really does pay off.

Looking Back

This experience confirmed that early years education is where my heart is. It taught me resilience, adaptability, and the importance of lifelong learning. I've learned that challenges don't define you - they shape you. Now, I'm excited to keep growing and see where this career takes me.



If you are interested in becoming a childminder and starting your own business, or want to gain a qualification there is plenty of free support and guidance available if you visit

leicestershire.gov.uk/career-in-childcare

