

My experience of being a nanny

I came to be a nanny through my love of children, childhood is such an important time in a person's life, It is a time when we learn so much of what we take into adult life, particularly socially and emotionally and of course , the foundations of education. Being a professional nanny playing a part in the formative years of a child's life is such an honour and requires professionalism.

Nannying for me is not just a job, nor is it babysitting! It becomes your life. There are many professionally trained nannies out there working hard and dedicated to the children in their care and now we have a professional award that gives recognition to the role and aims to gain professional status for nannies within the field of childcare and early years - fantastic!!

It is a challenging, demanding and emotional career but the rewards are amazing. Developing a close relationship/friendship with the children and families I have worked for has been a definite reward. I am still in touch with my last family and even after not visiting for a while; it still feels so special when I do see them.

I'm currently working in London as a sole charge, live in nanny and have been working with the family for six and a half years. I look after two boys aged 5 and 6. I work from 7.30am till 7.30pm as well as two babysitting duties a week. My role includes nursery duties, arranging social activities for the children, and preparing meals. I also love developing and creating new arts and crafts activities for the children to do.

When my employers' presented me with the application for the Voice Professional Nanny of the Year Award and said they would like to nominate me, I was completely taken aback and surprised that they would want to put me forward for such a prestigious accolade. I am so thankful they did. The experience of completing the application and going through the interview process was both challenging and exciting. I had not been aware of the award previously, nor was I aware of Voice the Union for education professionals. I've since learned that the union is there to support professional nannies and as part of my prize for reaching the final I've been able to join Voice so can now be confident that should anything go wrong I'm not on my own.

Nomination meant so much to me. I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity. I met like-minded nannies and, at the interview I was able to demonstrate my skills and knowledge - something us nannies are not always good at.

Although nannies can nominate themselves for the award, I know I wouldn't have nominated myself. The process though challenging, was

straight forward and the people involved: Voice, The Chiltern College, Morton Michel, and Greycoat Placements were all there to lend a helping hand, to encourage and motivate.

The first stage of the application required that I updated my First Aid training which I did through St John's Ambulance. I also had to provide proof of my childcare qualifications; the BTEC National Diploma in Nursery Nursing and current CRB Full Disclosure Check. I also was required to write 500 words of my typical working day. A nannies day can be so varied and so to fit all this into 500 words required tight editing! I also had to provide two referees. After posting off my application I put it to the back of mind and carried on working and running the Sunday school group at my local church.

I received a call from Voice at the beginning of August followed by a letter of confirmation. I was shocked to hear that I had been shortlisted for the award....I couldn't believe it, I didn't tell anyone for about 6 hours, I just wanted to soak in the news...this was already such a boost to my confidence.

Interview day came. It was held at The Chiltern College in Reading, a college specialising in training nannies. The whole experience was very inspiring to me, we had a tour of the college, which was very interesting to see what they do there and this was followed by a tour of the college nursery. The nursery was amazing and we met some of the students working and training there. This part of the interview process was the easiest for me, being with children and interacting with them. We then had two panelled interviews, one before lunch and one after lunch. Lunch time was spent with the other shortlisted candidates along with the judges. The judges included a previous winner of the Voice Professional Nanny of the Year Award, Heidi Mc Fadden, Tricia Pritchard, Senior Professional Officer, Voice, Chris Lawrence, Principal, The Chiltern College, Kathy Beere, Morton Michel, and Stephanie Rough, Senior Executive, Greycoat Placements. It was a tough and tiring day and I came away thinking of all the things I should have said and thinking everyone else was much better than me!!! The family I work for were so supportive and encouraging all the way through the process.

Interview day done, we just had to wait but it was only one week. The Awards Ceremony was incorporated in the Annual Professional Nanny Conference held at The Chiltern College - a very interesting day. There

were talks from professionals on a number of topics and a chance to visit trade stands from nanny agencies, insurers, children's books, toys etc., and to meet and chat with other nannies.

At the end of the day came the Awards Ceremony and announcement of the winner. When they began the announcements, I began to feel nervous. As they announced 5th place and my name wasn't there I thought ok, then they announced 4th and my name still hadn't been said, I couldn't understand that!!! So when they announced my name in third place I was so thrilled. I received afternoon tea for two at the Ritz as my prize which was donated by Way2Paye. I was so overwhelmed. I got home and my family had already put the champagne on ice!

The whole award was so amazing; I got to meet some great nannies had my eyes opened to the Voice and other professionals working in the childcare sector. It really boosted my confidence as a professional nanny, it created awareness for me, and in particular, how much is out there supporting us in our professional role. I came away enthused about the job that I do and more aware that there are so many professional nannies doing a great job, taking their role seriously and, importantly, appreciated by others in the early years sector.

It is so important that the quest for the professionalism of nannies is built upon it is my view that the registration and regulation of nannies is one way we can gain accreditation for the work that we do. As a finalist I shall be supporting the national campaign and would urge all nannies to likewise.