

Rebecca: "A picture of myself at my graduation ceremony with my children by my side now hangs on my office wall and brings a smile to my face every time I look at it."



**Rebecca, 39, Senior Project Manager at Serco**

Rebecca enrolled on the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship while working as a prison officer at HMP Dovegate. For her apprenticeship project, she successfully pitched to invite a local assistance dog training charity, the Restart Dog Project, into the prison - a scheme which proved to have a significant benefit on prisoners wellbeing.

I hadn't known what career I wanted when studying for my A-levels and decided that university wasn't the right path for me. I came to regret this later on.

When the Serco Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA) was introduced at HMP Dovegate in 2017, I jumped at the chance to gain the degree I thought I had missed out on. I had just returned from maternity leave after having twins and wanted to set them the example that it is never too late to learn.

I was determined to reduce incidents of self-harm and suicide in our prison. I researched the positive effects of animals in rehabilitation and, for my apprenticeship project, put together a business case for bringing in an assistance dog training programme. My idea turned out to be incredibly successful: at the start of the programme, prisoners rated their mental health as a 4 out of 10. Their latest ratings show that this is now 8 out of 10.

The CMDA qualification was also pivotal in my promotion to senior project manager at HMP Dovegate. A picture of myself at my graduation ceremony with my children by my side now hangs on my office wall and brings a smile to my face every time I look at it.

Amy Crabb, Learning and Development Director at Serco, said: Rebecca has used what she has learnt to bring about a substantial and long-lasting positive impact on her workplace, her colleagues, her community and herself. She gives prisoners, to use their own words, hope for something better.

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Jason: "Learning has also made me feel like a man again, and

because of this my sons have got their dad back."



**Jason, 48, Caretaker at Together Housing**

Jason was recovering from severe brain damage and years of homelessness when he found training opportunities and a new sense of direction through Newground Together. Jason's success in learning led not only to an offer of work but the chance to reconnect with his family.

I have two adult sons, but for a long time after my brain injury, I couldn't remember them. As my brain started to rewire itself, I wanted to reconnect with them - but I was ashamed.

I started a facilities management course that included work experience at THG properties in Halifax. That taught me caretaking, cleaning and basic estate management. Since being offered an employment contract, I've also learned how to report damage, manage repairs and liaise with contractors.

Being a caretaker is an important job. There's a lot of responsibility and it's a great feeling

to know that the little things I do are improving somebody else's life. This is why I want to keep learning. I feel responsible for my tenants and the environment they live in, and it feels like a chance to repay the help I've been given by helping my immediate community.

My brain is working much better now, although the damage is always going to be there. I believe learning has helped the recovery process, encouraging my mind to keep making new connections and get stronger. Learning has also made me feel like a man again, and because of this my sons have got their dad back.

Hilary Lythgoe, Learning and Accreditation Coordinator at Newground Together said: Jason's story is a testament to perseverance and demonstrates how someone in even the most severely challenging position can, with help, make a transformative change. Now that his life is on a positive track, Jason is committed to seizing all the learning opportunities he can to place ever greater distance between his present and his past.

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Fakhra: "When I first started my ESOL course at Oldham Council's Lifelong Learning Service, I couldn't speak English"



**Fakhra, 35, Social Care Worker**

Fakhra spoke no English when she moved to the UK in 2010 and lacked the confidence to explore beyond her home environment. When her husband died shortly after she gave birth to her third child, adult learning paved the way for her journey to

independence.

When I first started my ESOL course at Oldham Councils Lifelong Learning Service, I couldn't speak English. I didn't have the confidence to go shopping by myself and always relied on my husband. I panicked when it came to making appointments and wouldn't pick up the phone.

After the death of my husband, I found myself in a low place that lasted for a long time and I was looking after my three children alone. I started to feel better once I had seen my doctor and started taking anti-depressants. I was able to go back to the Lifelong Learning Service and enrol on more courses. I wanted to develop my confidence and find a job so that I could support my children.

English language learning has allowed me to gain further qualifications, a job in social care, money, and new friends. I am confident speaking to my children's teachers and can also help other people in my community understand official paperwork, reading and interpreting their letters for them.

My friends have watched me develop as a person and tell me they admire my achievements. I always say to them, "If I can do it, anyone can do it, because I never thought I could do all of this." I am proud of what I have achieved, and I know that my husband would have been very proud too.

Julie Miller, a tutor at Lifelong Learning Service, said: Fakhra is a positive role model for her young family and members of her local community. She is always supportive of her peers in class and encourages them to enrol on additional courses to support their development. Fakhra is a passionate advocate for lifelong learning and will confidently share her learning experiences with others.

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