

Summary

DK never knew that at the age of 52 years old she would be starting a second Modern Apprenticeship in SVQ in Hospitality Supervision and Leadership at SCQF Level 7. She never knew that she would share an insight of her childhood on national television. She never knew that she would rediscover her passion for cooking again. But most importantly she never knew that she would find herself, her confidence, her own identity. Thanks to Sikh Sanjog and Social Enterprise Punjabi Junction, DK has not only become a provider for her family but has had many doors open which have enabled and supported her to do. They have given her the confidence, morale and encouragement to step out of her comfort zone and prove to herself she is able to do anything.

Issue to be solved

Being part of a large family of seven children and having to uphold the responsibilities of the oldest daughter, DK's earlier life was quite limited. At just 16 years old DK was required to leave school to help raise and take care of her younger brother and sister, as her mother was not always well. She was required to help cook dinner, clean the house, sew and mend clothes and run every day errands. And then at 19 years old, DK had an arranged marriage – this meant her husband was chosen for her by her family. This was the normal arrangement at this time. And so DK moved from her family home in England to her new family in Scotland.

Now a daughter in law in a new city DK had to quickly adjust to her new surroundings, new family and new role. It was time for her to implement her learnings in household activities and fulfil her duties and responsibilities as daughter in law to the family. This meant again cooking meals, taking care of not only her new husband but also his extended family, cleaning the house and any other chore which was needing taken care off. However, unlike in her young adult life she was not allowed to go out on her own to do shopping or for leisure, she was always accompanied by a family member. After a few years, DK had her first child and now she had another new role of motherhood. And so responsibilities again increased. This meant throughout all this time DK never really put herself first, she has always been the 3rd or 4th person she has taken care off. She never really had friends or a life of her own. There was always other responsibilities and people which needed seeing to first.

Result

After a few more years DK started to come to Sikh Sanjog's Youth Group with her (now) young children. She was able to socialise with other young mothers outside of the family group. And although it was only for a couple of hours a week DK enjoyed herself. As the children grew older and started school she was able to find a part time job. This again allowed her a handful of hours a week to get a break from looking after her family and gave her some alone time with other people.

However it wasn't until 2015 when DK discovered what it she really wanted. With her children now grown and at high school she more time on her hands than ever during day. She began volunteering at the nearby charity shop and quickly picked up new skills such as greeting customers, restocking shelves, using the cashier til and chip and pin machine and creating new window displays. She was turning colleagues into friends and was being recognised around the area by regular customers. DK felt good that had something new of her own, and was always excited to share with her family what she was learning each day. This shop experience made it very easy for Social Enterprise Punjabi Junction to hire DK as one of their kitchen assistants – she already had the cooking ability and now customer care experience. It was not long before DK completed essential courses such as Food Hygiene and Allergen Awareness. These small achievements were a big deal for DK as they represented education, something she has been with out for a long time.

During her time at Punjabi Junction we could see her confidence growing with each shift, was becoming comfortable in this busy environment and was finding her element. She was happily coming out front to greet customers, to take their orders, to speak with about their day and then to take payment also. She also started to tutor cookery classes at Punjabi Junction, sharing her knowledge and techniques in a lifetime skill she has always had. This is a true representation of how much DK has grown as a person.

Next Steps

Using all her knowledge and experiences gained at Punjabi Junction, DK has stepped into the head chef role and taken more responsibilities in her job. Since gaining her first Modern Apprenticeship in SQV in Food Production, SQVF Level 5 in 2019 DK takes lead on most external events including large catering orders and local markets. But she also takes lead and runs the fast food outlet Punjabi Junction have in partnership with a university. She opens, prepares, run and then closes the establishment. She can serve up to 50 customers a day, five times a week on her own. DK feels really proud of this establishment she runs, as it is like it is her own. She is constantly coming up with new ideas which not saves money but also makes more. She has become so well known amongst the staff and students who purchase from her and is highly appreciated for all her work she does.

As acknowledgement of DK's achievements, the manager of Punjabi Junction has put her forward for a second Modern Apprenticeship as mentioned at the start. This will again challenge and encourage DK that she can go further still in her personal development, and for her to see and be proud of all the achievements she has made to better her life.