

## Learning to live your best life: The Community Adult Learning Project

Learning does not just expand the mind, it can benefit the body too – something that the Fellowship of St Nicholas (FSN), which supports children, young people and families through its community learning courses, endorses wholeheartedly.

FSN believes that lifelong learning is key to overall wellbeing and have been delivering community learning courses in a variety of subjects since 1999. FSN Wellbeing Services Manager, Michelle Hooper, describes the support offered as, “aiming to encourage general wellbeing, improve confidence and resilience, offer coping strategies, improve mental and physical wellbeing and support the pathway into volunteering or future employment.”

Funded jointly by Sussex Coast College and East Sussex County Council, courses are open to anyone aged 19-plus. In addition, investment from the CCG's Healthy Hastings and Rother programme is increasing access to adult learning for the most vulnerable and excluded members of the local community.

Nicola, pictured below right, benefited from FSN's 'Build a Happier You' course and says she decided to attend because she wanted to: “build positivity, challenge negative thoughts and move forward with life. I felt isolated and being part of something attracted me to this course as well as being with others who would understand how I feel.”

The course focusses on a number of themes including stress management, assertiveness, communication, mindfulness, relaxation, building rewarding relationships, goal setting and developing resilience, as well as addressing other aspects of wellbeing such as diet, exercise, body language and posture. Seven 'Build a Happier You' courses have been delivered in the Hastings and Rother area between April 2016 and April 2018, helping 63 learners improve their wellbeing.

“The course has made me focus on my strengths and made me believe in myself again,” continues Nicola. “It has put me on a more positive path and given me the confidence to achieve whatever I want to achieve.”

Skills learnt through the course have helped Nicola in other ways too: her sleeping has improved and she now has the 'tools' to help her be a better parent. Her children have also attended cooking courses at FSN, which has improved their confidence too.

“I would encourage people to take the course because I got so much out of it – it's life-changing! Through this I have started to volunteer with FSN, I'm starting one of their level 3 courses and also looking to do a degree in psychology next year. Once I complete the degree I hope to start a new career path, help others, and work towards removing the barriers to good mental health.”

For more information about FSN courses visit [www.fsncharity.co.uk](http://www.fsncharity.co.uk)

