

Getting on the career path

(These were Ewan's views before he went away to attend his university course last year)

Want a fresh start? Want a career rather than just a job? That's what one of our students decided, and now he is looking forward to beginning his studies at Perth UHI.

24 year-old Ewan Loudon said he had two reasons to get back into learning.

"I wanted a career, rather than a job. And the referendum result on 24th September 2014 still makes me angry, so I am determined to get a career where I can make a difference," he said.

Fitness adviser Ewan said he knew what he wanted to improve and knew exactly where to get help.

"I had been to The Learning Link before to get help with my driving theory test. Now I needed help improving my writing style and punctuation."

Ewan began working with his tutor Kim in October last year. His aim was to begin a foundation course at Perth UHI, which would eventually lead to a degree in politics and sociology.

"As an individual I am incredibly self-determined and driven. I was prepared to do the work and do the homework, and that's how my writing improved," he said.

"Kim knew exactly what I needed and she knew how to make things make sense and come alive.

"As the writing got better I was able to get the punctuation right.

"Kim's determination matched mine and that was the reason we were able to cover so much distance in a relatively short space of time," said Ewan.

Tutor Kim said: "It was a real pleasure to tutor



Ewan - ready to go!

someone so focused and willing to learn.

"Ewan took the whole thing seriously, had a real goal to work towards and it paid off for him. It was as rewarding for me to be part of that."

Ewan is really looking forward to studying and the next stage of his life.

He added: "Through coming to The Learning Link I would really like to become a tutor. I've got a lot out of this place and would like to give something back".

Jack's story...

"I have been coming to The Learning Link for three years. My goal was to improve my maths, reading and writing skills. I have been coming for an hour a week and recently passed my SQA Numeracy 2. Sometimes it was hard and other times it was easy. To improve my math skills, card and dice games were used as well as quizzes. I have been working on reading by getting library books and practising at The Learning Link.

I have enjoyed my experiences and would recommend it to anyone who feels like they need some help."

by Jack Cromarty

L Do you have Driving Ambition? L
Do you find the driving theory tests' questions hard to understand?

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NEWSLINK

Taking courage in both hands!

It takes courage to move out of your comfort zone and seek help. It takes courage to start your learning journey. And this was certainly the case for former student Sharon Heddle.

"It was pretty scary walking through the door to The Learning Link," said Sharon. "I was shaking and underneath you feel you should ken things after being in school all those years."

Mother of three Sharon, has been working towards improving her maths and English skills and now feels more confident in her abilities.

"I'd been thinking about learning for years. When my first child was born, I wanted to be able to help him with homework," said Sharon.

"Then I got my new job and I wanted to do it better. Doing the job right was really important to me.

"I was becoming anxious about work, so I decided to get help to make myself feel better and it's really helped, because now if I don't know something, I have the confidence to ask," she said.

Sharon, who is hoping to begin para-legal training at the beginning of the year, is busy with work, children and building a new house. How

And Sharon's advice to people reading her story?



"Take courage, go through the door and see what happens. If you don't try it, you won't know how far you can go."

did she find the time to fit in studying?

"You definitely need to want to learn and you have to do it wholeheartedly otherwise there is not much point.

"I was out of work for five years, looking after the children and you tend to forget what you've learned and you definitely lose confidence in your own abilities," said Sharon.

And a year on, Sharon is not only confident in her ability to continuing her learning journey: she is relishing the

coming challenges.

"I absolutely feel more confident and if I don't know something, then now I will ask.

"I'm more confident at work and I'm going to start a distant learning para-legal course," she said.

"I'm really excited about learning, but more importantly, I feel ready to learn," said Sharon.

Sharon would like to say thank you to the staff at The Learning Link and her tutor Mervyn for their help, encouragement and flexibility.

What could you do at The Learning Link?

Look inside to find out! Look inside to find out! Look inside to find out!

Don't worry about the destination - it's the journey that matters!



Linda - enjoying the journey!

Isolating mental health problems meant that Linda Mellor hadn't left her home for two years.

When friends told her about The Learning Link she decided that it was time to find out what she could achieve.

"I was so nervous when I made the phone call; and it took some courage to go through the door for my appointment to see a tutor," she said.

"I was expecting a room full of people sitting on computers working their way through a course.

"I never expected one-to-one tuition and it was such a relief."

Linda brushed up on her English, mainly grammar and punctuation, and went on to Orkney College and passed her Higher English. She believes that learning

"I still don't know what I want to do for a career, but that's OK. I'm just enjoying the journey," added Linda

has not only increased her confidence, but has opened up a whole vista of possibilities.

"It was my tutor's belief in me that made me go to college and study for my English qualification. When I passed the exam I came to believe in myself," she said.

"I've had mental health problems all my life and these have felt like huge barriers for me," said Linda.

"At the Link they treat you as an individual. You have a plan which is tailored to what you want and need to learn. It's just great!"

Linda is currently working towards her maths qualification and is also volunteering with The Learning Link's Senior Computer Club.

"The maths is slow going as I'm not very maths orientated. But thankfully I've got a lovely and very patient tutor called Jack, who just works with me week, by week. I don't know when I'll take the exam - but that's OK

"I love working with the people at the Senior Computer Club. It feels great helping people. I feel useful and that's such a good feeling," said Linda.

Linda believes that the learning she is undertaking has helped her to become more outgoing, more open to opportunities and new experiences.

"We got IT together!"



Cheery ICT members at club get-together in December

The Senior ICT club started meeting regularly again for the winter months in October 2015 and will run until the end of March 2016, just in time for spring and getting back into the garden.

Every Thursday afternoon, the club meets at the Town Hall, usually room 2 from 1.30pm until 3pm, and they bring their own laptops, iPads, tablets, etc... with them. What we all have in common is that continually updated technology often causes us to lose confidence, especially when messages 'pop up' asking for information or suggesting updates.

This year, we were extremely lucky that Trading Standards were able to supply information on current scams and staying safe online. We were also fortunate that Sergeant Kenny Walker, from Orkney Police, was able to give a talk to the group in person. It was an ideal opportunity for us to listen to what

is happening both locally and nationally, and also a chance to ask questions and raise concerns.



Linda helping Margaret and Geoff

Here is some feedback from the group:

"I came to learn how to use my new iPad. I now know how to do a lot of different things, including sending emails and shopping online."

"I've enjoyed the companionship of the club."

"I have told my family and friends about the club."

"I have enjoyed the companionship of other strugglers, learning how to use my computer and solve problems."

"I came to the club to clarify how to

work different functions."

"Friends had told me they had been given helpful advice."

"I enjoy the relaxed atmosphere, meeting up with contemporaries who, like me, are trying to learn more. I have gained confidence, learned more computer functions and am more aware of security."

"I have enjoyed learning from everyone, problem solving and sharing skills."

"Dare I say it - I have enjoyed the company; every-one is so friendly and helpful."

"After 4 years retirement, I needed to update my computer skills."

So - if YOU would like to be among the next club members - pop into The Learning Link and see if You can Get IT Together too! You will undoubtedly learn something new - and may even make new friends!.

The Learning Link Frequently Asked Questions



What could I do at The Learning Link?

You can come here to improve your grammar, spelling, writing, reading, communications skills, numeracy, basic computing or self-confidence.

How much does it cost? Nothing - it's free.

How long do I have to attend?
You just need to attend once a week for a minimum of one hour and practise at home.

Interested? Just give us a ring on 01856 879200 to get more information.