



Hi, my name's Jan. A couple of years ago in November 2004 I became a volunteer for Pathway. I was working for a local newspaper at the time, two children in their teens and feeling a bit unfulfilled.

The Lichfield refuge not yet open, was where I started, putting up furniture, cleaning, sorting donations. I tell you I never saw so many tins of baked beans in my life!

My volunteering days were numbered as I was soon asked to do a little sessional work. The odd evening here and there, soon became regular nights, a lot to fit in at the time, but I enjoyed it. I was learning new skills and to my surprise learning a lot about myself. I was meeting new people, making new friends.

It wasn't long before I was popping in on my day off putting up shelves, organising cubbyholes, putting up lampshades/curtains, all manner of practical things, I was enjoying myself, and I hadn't chipped a finger nail yet, bonus!

If, I'd learnt anything in this period of time, it was that I'd had enough of working for a newspaper. So I took the plunge and left to find myself at the tender age of 46!

For a while I was happy catching up on those tasks at home, you know the one's you keep putting off, cause your too busy or just don't want to do and doing my bit at Pathway. Until, a Maternity Cover position came up. That would do me nicely, I thought. The fight was on, between myself and another sessional worker KG. Now, interviews are not my speciality, I'd rather clean the kitchen cupboards.

Thankfully KG felt the same, 'may the best women win' we said. And she did. KG got the job. Not bitter or twisted, I cleaned the kitchen cupboards and congratulated her.

Don't fret, says Mandy (manager), there could be another maternity position coming up very soon. A babyboom I thought. Never, not this lot. But 4 months later, the Senior Support position became available and I jumped at it, no more kitchen cupboards for a while! I was really looking forward to it. Eight to twelve months of an interesting/challenging position and it would give me time to reflect on my life. I was raring to go.

Although I'd been with Pathway for a couple of years, there was still a lot to learn. Thankfully I'd be working with KG, there would be a lot she could teach me in office procedures. Thankfully again, we have a large team of workers both paid and unpaid who all do a wonderful job, so I was feeling confident I would be eased into my new position gently, bringing into play my own ideas.

Then they started dropping like flies, the staff' that is. 'Dropped in at the deep end' is a phrase that comes to mind! I don't mean to sound harsh but a few key members of the team decided to have surgery, yes SURGERY in the middle, yes MIDDLE of the holiday season! Hello! What



about my plans of being 'eased gently'!!! Oh did I mention that one of the key members of the team was my mentor, manager Mandy! Sink or swim, is another phrase that comes to mind. I know your reading this and thinking 'drama queen', well you're probably right because I had offers of help coming from all directions. Both managers Lyn and Sue from the Burntwood/Tamworth refuge were only a phone call away.

Kathy who comes to work around 8am, hibernates until around 8pm was supportive and patient and only an office away, although sometimes I think she'd have liked to have been a lot further away! And of course the remainder of the Lichfield team who put in extra hours, took on extra work, they were fantastic, the team work, the camaraderie I was proud to be apart of. It's been a huge learning curve, I'm sure I ruffled a few feathers on the way, did things a little unconventionally perhaps, but they all stuck with me, and we had a laugh on the way and for that I can only give my sincerest thanks.

I should mention at this stage all surgical operations went well and all ladies are back in their rightful place, putting me in my place!

And, in case you're wondering, I haven't found myself but I had a blooming good rummage.... Thanks Pathway, I had a blast.....