

Vicky takes the Stoke Challenge



At the beginning of 2008, the future looked bleak for Vicky. She had been excluded from one school and was in her third Stoke High School. Arguments with teachers and students were making it very hard for Vicky to achieve anything. It was whilst at Berry Hill High School that she was offered the opportunity to access APEX.

Vicky said: "I was struggling in school, my relationship with the staff was very up and down. I wasn't sure if I would make it to the end of Year 11. I decided to give the APEX project a go because it sounded interesting, something different."

Vicky started a work experience placement for one day a week over 10 weeks at a local hair salon where she built an immediate rapport with staff and customers. Vicky soon became invaluable to the salon, so much so that she was offered a Saturday job after she completed her extended placement.

Vicky added: "At my placement they treated me as an adult and allowed me to be myself. I really loved the environment and it made me realise what I wanted as a career. The support has also helped me improve my behaviour in school. I knew that if I messed up it would affect my placement.

"I also realised it was important to finish school and get a reference if I wanted to go to college to do my hairdressing course. My Connexions Personal Adviser, Cath, also helped keep me on track."

Vicky did complete school and in September 2009 started a full-time hairdressing course at Stoke-on-Trent College.

She concluded: "I am excited about starting the next stage of my life. I want to get qualified as a hairdresser and hopefully work for myself one day. APEX has helped me become more confident and helped me to work with new people. The team challenge day helped me make new friends and the college taster day made me understand more about college life. I think APEX has been brilliant and has made a big difference in my life. It has helped me overcome a lot of barriers. I think everyone should do it."

Vicky's improved confidence included her telling her story to everyone at the project celebration event. She deservedly received an award for being an outstanding student.

The APEX Project

APEX is an exciting project delivered by Staffordshire Partnership through funding from Stoke Challenge (a partnership initiative led by Connexions Staffordshire).

The focus of APEX is to motivate students from both mainstream and special schools who have learning or behavioural difficulties in order to help them achieve a positive outcome.

For further information on the APEX project, please contact Sean Connolly on 07977 985 308 or email sean.connolly@cxstaffs.co.uk.