

Stand Together Network

Future Career Pathway Learning Support - Fatma Akkoyun

Background

Fatma Akkoyun is a 58-year-old Turkish woman residing in private accommodation in the Enfield borough. She is not in paid employment and has no prior formal education. Fatma has several health conditions that significantly affect her ability to work, making her eligible for Universal Credit, which she relies on to manage her financial hardships.

Upon joining the ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and Digital Skills course, Fatma expressed a keen interest in improving her English language skills digital, numeracy and literacy to build her confidence and potentially enhance her qualifications. She highlighted her struggle with the English language, particularly in everyday situations like asking for correct change at her local grocery store. This challenge has been compounded by her limited social network—she has minimal family and friends in the area and finds it difficult to seek support.

Fatma was referred to the course by a social prescriber after facing difficulties communicating with the Universal Credit (UC) team. She shared that she felt overwhelmed by her inability to describe her situation to them without help from someone who could translate. This frustration motivated her to seek support through education.

Fatma is now enrolled in the ESOL and Digital Skills class, an accredited course by the Workers' Educational Association, and is already showing progress in her journey.

“Before joining this class, I felt stuck and alone. I couldn't ask for help because I didn't know how to say the words in English. Now, I am learning step by step, and I feel like I can do more.” – Fatma Akkoyun

Barriers

Fatma faces multiple barriers to her personal and professional development:

- **Health conditions:** Complications with her right leg restrict her physical abilities, making it challenging to find suitable employment.
- **Language barriers:** She cannot speak English and is limited to speaking Turkish, which makes it difficult to navigate daily activities and official processes.
- **Lack of formal education:** Having never received formal education, either in Turkey or the UK, Fatma initially felt a lack of confidence in her ability to learn.

“Fatma’s journey has been inspiring. Despite her initial hesitations, she has embraced every opportunity to learn. Her determination and positivity are remarkable.” – Course Instructor

Support and Guidance

Fatma received tailored support to address her specific challenges:

- **Language support:** The class instructor speaks Turkish fluently, which immediately helped Fatma feel more comfortable and confident. Many of her classmates also share the same language, creating a welcoming and relatable environment.
- **Physical support:** A supportive chair, designed to accommodate her health needs, was provided to ensure her comfort during lessons.
- **Encouragement and flexibility:** Fatma’s teachers have been patient and supportive, encouraging her to take her time and embrace the learning process. This approach has helped her gain confidence and improve steadily.

“The support from the teacher and the class environment has made a big difference for me. I feel like I am part of a group now, and I am not afraid to try.” – Fatma Akkoyun

Advice Focuses

- **Overcoming language barriers:** Fatma was advised to practice conversational English daily, starting with essential phrases used in her immediate surroundings, such as at the grocery store or the doctor’s office.

- **Digital/Numeracy/Literacy:** She has been taught basic digital skills such as using a smartphone, sending emails, and navigating websites. This has empowered her to handle some Universal Credit-related tasks independently.
- **Building confidence:** Fatma received encouragement to focus on small, achievable goals, such as introducing herself in English and completing short online forms, which have greatly boosted her self-esteem.
- **Creating a social network:** The course facilitated connections with classmates and community groups, reducing her feelings of isolation and creating a supportive circle of peers who understand her struggles.

