

## Nicola Shah Funding Report



I am currently working in North London as a full-time gardener for a garden design and maintenance company. I left my career in administration to pursue a career in horticulture and this is my first job on my journey. I had been working as a Programme Administrator for the University of Westminster and after completing a part-time professional gardener course at Capel Manor I quit my job, used all my savings and successfully completed a City & Guilds diploma in horticulture (level 3). Before completing the qualification, I had secured my first (and current) job.

My current work includes many aspects of gardening such as mowing, weeding, planting, staking, and so on. However, it became apparent if I wished to further my career I would need the PA1 & PA6 qualifications. Immediately my salary increases from £9.50 p/h to £10.50 p/h and my employability has now increased as often employers are asking for this qualification in the job description. The award was for £750 which covered the training cost of £525 plus some of my loss of income which was 3 days. This was incredibly helpful as I would not have been able to complete the course without this funding. The training was the Pesticide Application PA1/PA6 at Capel Manor College, which took place over 3 days in May and was awarded on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017 after completion of the practical examination.

The training involved a mixture of classroom theory work, including current statutory regulations, environmental implications, health and safety issues, and practical training in the calculation and application of pesticides. I found all aspects of this course interesting, especially highlighting environmental and personal safety issues which would not have occurred to me had I not partaken of the course. I particularly enjoyed the calculation process but found translating this in to practice particularly demanding purely because of regulating my walking pace. I was already aware that environmental issues and health and safety issues are important regarding pesticides, but this course has clarified the extent of what is involved. For example, considering the time of day of application is quite common knowledge regarding safeguarding bees and beneficial insects, however, I am now aware that it is important to consider neighbouring areas for impact on been populations, such as a close-by flower garden.

The course was very well run, especially as the tutor was friendly and approachable so we were encouraged to ask questions and participate. This suited me very well as I could ask questions and clarify any point I was not entirely sure about, which reinforced my learning. We were not rushed to complete our practical application training which meant we were able to practice until we felt fully confident.

I feel more confident in my new career now that I have had this training, and I am able to apply for a wider range of jobs that are more suitable for my future learning in horticulture. Unfortunately, I have not been able to apply all my learning as my boss is resistant to compliance in this field. However, this has made me more determined to look to working for a company that takes its legal obligations seriously.