



People 1st, the sector skills council for the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism sector, has been developing its Women 1st programme over the last six months. Following a high profile launch with Cherie Blair in October 2009, over 100 women are now undertaking CPD training or are working with a senior industry mentor to improve their personal skills and help them fulfil their career ambitions within the industry.

# Women & Work Sector Pathways Initiative

## Raising Skills and Unlocking Potential

One of these is Natalie Canavan, front of house manager at the Victory Services Club, and a mother of two who has achieved a laudable work-life balance. The Victory Services Club is the all ranks members' club for currently serving and retired members of the Armed Forces with 193 bedrooms and 11 event/meeting rooms, along with a restaurant and bar. Natalie is responsible for the management of all front of house operations ensuring that guests enjoy the best levels of service and customer care, and oversees a team of 20 staff.

Natalie left school in 1988 after sitting her O' Levels and joined The Adelphi Hotel in her hometown of Liverpool. Keen to get more experience, she moved to London a year later and began to focus on a

front of house role, giving her an overview of the key operational areas within a hotel.

Given the 24/7 365 day a year nature of the sector, it is no secret that working parents find hospitality challenging. When Natalie had her first child, in order to spend time with the baby and work in London, she commuted between Liverpool and London each weekend but did encounter challenging situations with former employers, including not being able to take time off to be at home for her child's first Christmas. A proud mum, in 2002 when she decided to have her second child, she felt the need to stay at home to devote time to raising the children and took a career break until 2007.





Natalie has found the Women 1st initiative a breath of fresh air to the industry finding the mentoring sessions invaluable. She just wished that the initiative was in place when she started – Natalie feels she could have taken her career to the next level much earlier. She hopes that her mentoring sessions will help her achieve her next career ambition and that is to be Head of Front Office at a five star property.



people1st

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