

Excellence in Leadership Nominations

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Kelly Dowling – Fernwood Day Nursery and Out of School Club

Our manager has led the team extremely well during the difficult times due to the pandemic, she is so positive no matter what is happening and always puts her staff first no matter how busy she is and puts her own worries to one side. Even though Kelly has a busy work load she always finds time to regularly check in with her staff to see how they are doing using a variety of methods. Kelly always let's staff know her door is open whenever staff need to speak to her, she always pays close attention to staff's wellbeing and is very good at noticing if staff aren't their usual self. Kelly is so positive, very compassionate and has an excellent listening ear, staff find her really approachable to talk to her about anything and she likes to help by offering strategies, advice and always let's staff know she is there to support them. Kelly is excellent manger the staff feel very valued, her positivity makes staff feel happy to come to work which in turn makes an excellent environment for all.

Kelly works as the manager of the setting I work. She has supported me and my team by offering support and training and mentoring many aspects of our provision. She has a positive impact on the nursery leading practice, leading by example and building close relationships with the families we work with. Kelly has regular supervision meetings to support our mental wellbeing and is always available for support. She makes me feel valued and encourages new ideas and innovation. I have nominated Kelly as she always goes the extra mile to promote quality practice that meets the needs of all individual children including this e who have disabilities. Kelly ensures a fully inclusive environment where equal opportunities is an integral part of daily life. Kelly holds regular management and team meeting sharing information and ensure the whole team can impact positively and openly. I think Kelly is an asset to the early years workforce and she should be acknowledged for her hard work.

Kelly has supported me numerous times through my time within the nursery. Kelly always reiterates the open door policy and will listen to how we are feeling and will try to suggest ways in which we can work together to help better my mental health. Kelly ensures staff are kept up to date with their training and receive any extra support that is needed. If there is anything that needs to be changed or improved, Kelly will address this and suggest ways in which to do so. It is evident that the staff's mental health and wellbeing is very important to her.

Kelly is my manager and I always feel she offers me support and guidance in my role. Kelly has a lot of knowledge which she shares to enable me to fulfil my role. She provides lots of training and leads by example supporting children and their families. Kelly leads group training, staff meetings and ensures the nursery is led positively to achieve a high quality care and education. I think Kelly deserves this nomination to show her that everything she does to lead our team is appreciated by us.

I would like to nominate my colleague for her outstanding commitment to our setting. She has supported the staff team through huge changes made to our planning and assessment due to the revised EYFS. She spent time training us all and ensuring that all staff were involved in the development of our curriculum as well as making sure we all understood whilst developing depth of knowledge.

I have known Kelly for 8 years since my son started at the nursery. She has always been extremely positive and warm and always goes out of her way to cater for all the children in her setting. During Covid, she kept us in touch all the way and nothing is ever too much trouble. She has a heart of gold and it's extremely obvious that each child is at the heart of everything the nursery does. Kelly has been an excellent manager of the setting throughout the 5 years my daughter has been there. She cares about the children and will talk with the parents in an open and honest way,

working and suggesting solutions if any matters ever arise. Kelly genuinely cares about not only the children, but the whole family.

Kelly is an excellent manager. The nursery is well organised, the staff are happy and so are the children. Kelly is professional and polite, welcoming to both parents and children. It's clear she knows each child that attends the nursery. Information is shared with parents regularly with newsletters, emails and a Facebook page. She does a great job in managing a large setting with many staff members too.

Kelly recently completed her PDP which she cascaded to the staff, supporting them to deliver it in their rooms, taking time out to support individuals who needed reassurance and extra help. Nothing is ever too much for Kelly she will always go above and behind for her team and also with parents.

Kelly Higham – Carnarvon Pre School

When covid happened 2 years ago and all childcare settings closed, I found myself having to find a new care setting for my then 2 and 3 year old when everything reopened and I was back to work as my previous care setting had moved on. All the restrictions in place made it hard to be able fully engage with the new setting we had chosen - not being able to look around the pre-school and meet the leaders that would be looking after my two children was horrible. As an anxiety sufferer this was tough - but - when pre-school opened and my two started at Carnarvon Pre School - I can honestly say I could not have asked for a better bunch of ladies and Kelly Higham (nursery manager who amazes me) Always keeping in touch, always there when needed and just all have such a great presence. I know my children are so happy there and can't thank them all enough for what they do.

Kelly joined the preschool in September 2021 as a new manager / team leader and has been exceptional. It feels like she has always been a part of the team and it has felt like a seamless transition. She is so approachable and always has time for the children and their families. She really gets to know everyone well and always brings so much energy and new ideas. Kelly is fantastic at introducing new concepts such as using Tapestry as a communication tool and having themed weeks such as sports week and mental health week. There are always fun and engaging events too such as religious festivals, the Queens jubilee etc and they are always very inclusive. Kelly's communication with parents is spot on- we feel well informed and know the forward plan for the term which is great, and feedback on our child's progress is given regularly. The whole team are amazing, and I think Kelly is a wonderful leader for the setting and this deserves to be recognised!

Since taking over pre-school Kelly has truly inspired a whole new way of learning. She has raised awareness on certain topics, driven diversity, and inclusivity in some brilliant ways! My daughter's eyes light up every-time she sees her.

Valentine's Day Kelly wanted to spread the love. On the morning drop off she made a lovely table full of breakfast items, teas coffee snacks for the parents to spread some love. She always makes you very aware she's here for parents too. To Support or just even a chat.

My daughter leaves preschool for primary school in September and it's very mixed feelings. As she has truly fallen in love with all the ladies at the pre-school. They've made a massive, beautiful impact on her life.

Hugely professional, has ever Childs best interests at heart and is excellent leader of a team.

Ashleigh Jackson – The Ark Pre-School

I joined The Ark Preschool team in November 2021, and I have been constantly amazed by Ashleigh's commitment to the children and ensuring that they have the best experiences possible. She works closely with parents and carers and always goes above and beyond to ensure that children and their families have the best support available. She is professional yet nurturing and because of her The Ark Preschool is a brilliant place to work and a very special place for the children that attend. She always strives for the best, encouraging staff to further their knowledge and professional development and offering the children opportunities to challenge themselves and have a sense of pride in what they do and in the pre-school setting. Her role doesn't just stop when children reach school leaving age, she ensures that all schools and teachers have been contacted and that they have an understanding of each individual child, their likes, dislikes and what support they will need after transition.

Ashleigh has been an amazing lead throughout the past 2 years, she continues to put her staff team 1st and has kept moral up during the pandemic, she has put her own life on hold sometimes for the good of the preschool and everyone in it, Ashleigh ensures staff are always supported and she is empathetic to things going on in our lives, we all feel Ashleigh puts everyone before herself and is only happy when she knows all staff and children are happy that is why we feel it's time for Ashleigh to finally get the credit she deserves. I have never worked with a more motivational and inspiring manager, and I know every single parent/staff member and trustee member would agree with me. Throughout the pandemic Ashleigh put her own fears and worry's aside and she calmed staff who were worried and nervous, she worked more than any of the staff and even had to bring her own young child with her to work during this time, putting her own fears aside knowing she was helping during the pandemic.

I have worked at the Ark Pre-school for a year now under the management of Ashleigh. She is a fantastic manager who cares about all her staff, children, and parents. She goes out of her way in her own time in the holidays to check on children and their parents who may need a little more support. She has transformed the Pre-school since becoming manager 2 years ago, making it a fantastic place for children to grow, develop and be very happy little people.

Emma Varley – Church House Day Nursery

In the same way that Emma supported the children and families of her Church House Family from day 1 of the Pandemic, her colleagues received the same incredible level of love, support and understanding. Some members of her team required more support than others due to their circumstances, so she went above and beyond, reached out and ensured that they never felt alone. The team WhatsApp group proved crucial in providing much needed light and laughter during some very dark times. Emma has always been a mother figure to her Church House family, so she did what every good mother does; she made sure that they were all eating well, sleeping well, having fun (but not too much!) and generally 'hugged' them all throughout the duration of the Pandemic. Her mental health training proved crucial in picking up signs that all wasn't well with some members of her team, so as well as offering her own support, she ensured that they had professional Occ Health help if required. Emma is truly amazing!

Where does one begin to give a true reflection of an Amazing Nursery Manager. Emma is a warm, kind hearted person. Her experience with children and her tact when supporting Parents is remarkable. I truly value her input and she always has time to chat no matter how busy the days can be. I have learnt a lot when talking to Emma be it about something specific or just in passing. Thank you Emma for your support. It really does mean a lot to us parents.

Church House Nursery are flexible and always willing to discuss any arrangements and make them happen. It never feels like a big ask they are always welcoming and willing to help in any way they can which is fantastic.

During the Pandemic, Emma and her Team at Church House kept us all fully informed on what was happening. It was a challenge to have a then 2.5 year old and a new baby in lockdown without nurseries as they closed. Emma and her team created a WhatsApp group and would send weekly emails and check-ins sharing activities.

Emma is the manager at Church House Day Nursery. She works closely with the pre-schoolers but also supports across the other rooms as and when required as well.

Emma is brilliant. She is approachable is always available to listen and support. Nothing ever seems like too much trouble for her.

Her leadership across the nursery and positive emanates through the rest of the staff who are equally as welcoming and attentive.

From the moment I stepped foot in the nursery to look around I knew Church House was the right nursery for my children and that was all down to Emma's kind, open and personable manner. I have every trust in Emma and the whole team at Church House. THANK YOU, Emma and the team.

Helen Luddington – The Playroom

When 'lock down' happened this not only continued at the highest level within nursery but Helen also encouraged her team to keep in regular contact with their key children, organising regular zoom conferences, 1:1 chats with children, planning supportive activities for the children and basically kept all the children and their parents connected with each other and the team. Given the worry we were all experiencing, she clearly had everyone's wellbeing in mind and was extremely supportive towards everyone. We later found that the Queen had given her an MBE for services to children and families in Nottinghamshire and we cannot think of anyone more deserving of this honour.

Helen is a complete inspiration, an amazing leader. She drives childcare in a way that is positive, trustworthy and exciting. She constantly encourages her team to be the best they can be and works on the basis that if they are happy, the children will definitely be. She regularly provides little treats and recognises excellent work. To keep the team going during the pandemic, she worked secretly with parents asking for their thoughts then made a special personal book for each team member "The Playroom family say THANK YOU!" A booklet of around 100 pages includes parent's comments such as:

"What a challenge this past year has been;
Hit by events we could never have foreseen;
The stress we have felt, at times too much to bear;
Was made more manageable, because you all were there;
Your unwavering support and cheerful faces;
Reassured us that the playroom was one of the few places;
That truly had our best interests at heart;
Committed to giving our children the best start.

Kat Whittingham – Fernwood Day Nursery

Kat works tirelessly to lead her room and support the manager. Kat managed the nursery during the pandemic, providing support to staff on furlough through calls, zoom meetings and training. She supported parents ensuring the nursery stayed open and safety measures were well thought out and kept people safe. Kat planned and supported the team during very worrying and challenging times and did so with a smile on her face (taking personal sacrifice) she supported many 2 & 3 year funded children when starting late due to the pandemic providing emotional security. Kat leads the team with a friendly confident and supportive way that staff feel they can approach her about anything. Kat works as the setting sendco and ensure all children have support plans, provision maps, health care plans etc to meet individual needs. I cannot express the dedication she has to the profession and feel she deserves this acknowledgment for her hard work and dedication through the pandemic and beyond.

Kat led the team during the pandemic and provided flexible service during a worrying time for our family. As a nurse I needed childcare but whilst everything was closing Kat ensured my children had a normal daily life making each day fun and interesting. She led the team in a positive way and shared information supporting us in a new way of working. She is amazing and I feel lucky to have her care for my children.

Michelle Ransom – The Village Nursery (Bramcote)

I enquired about The Village Nursery when my daughter was a few weeks old. Michelle really thought about how to make the best of Covid and offered us a tour on a Saturday so that we could fully view the facilities without compromising the safety of children and staff during Covid. Management then made further adaptations to their standard nursery induction, to enable children born in the pandemic to adapt to needing to integrate more with other children and staff as they began their nursery journey as a first time parent this was really appreciated!

Michelle is incredibly kind and hardworking. She can frequently be seen 'on the shop floor' ensuring appropriate levels of staffing and individualised care of the children. She has taken the time to build bonds with and get to know the children. She feeds back with the most wonderful stories about my daughter's day.

She has worked hard to move past covid; organising a parent's evening (day) and jubilee picnic to reintroduce parents.

Michelle has worked tirelessly through the pandemic, organising and arranging at short notice, balancing staff and children's needs carefully. She is a genuine person and makes every effort to get to know every child. She is a great communicator and clearly devotes extra time to the children. Her passion comes across clearly and we couldn't wish for a better person to lead the nursery.

Anne Prescott – Ryan House Day Nursery

Anne has run three settings for over 20 years. She ensures that children always come first and supports staff, Parents and children alike. She has supported us all not only in our work life but personal life too. Anne has supported us and helped us get outstanding in the settings. Anne always goes above and beyond and is an exceptional human! She has recently retired yet is still supporting us all whilst she takes on this new venture in her personal life.

Owner of 3 nursery who has been a great role model and leader and a pleasure to have worked for.

Mrs Helen Roberts – Rampton Primary School

Mrs Roberts is great and it shows through the happiness and wellbeing of her staff, which then has a positive impact on the children's happiness and learning.

Mrs Roberts is a fun, caring and enthusiastic headteacher, nothing is too much she will support everyone at school and eager to support parents.

Becky Whyte – Cherubs Wyndale

Becky is a great support and makes the transition into nursery easy as you can feel that they are a great team that enjoy what they do. I believe this is down to Becky's great leadership and organisation.

Becky is always ready to help and meet parents & baby's needs. She's always available, even on bank holidays! Nothing is too much for her. Thanks so much Becky for everything you do!

Amy Hill, Emily Simpson, Michelle Ransom – The Village Nursery Bramcote

Amy and Emily led the setting at the point of the Covid pandemic. Supported by Michelle throughout they tackled the unknown, showing remarkable character, humour and resilience throughout. This team has grown together - it looks for continual improvement and also to keep parents informed and part of the decisions made in the most unprecedented times whilst never losing focus on the most important element of their work - the children! They are the lifeblood of the nursery and lead by example - always willing to be on hand to help, support or offer guidance. The intuitive bond they share is remarkable and the pastoral care you feel for their staff team is evident.

Heather Gardener – Rampton Primary School

Heather is an amazing Early Years teacher. Whenever I have helped out in her class, she has inspired the children. She does this by being kind, fun and knowledgeable. She is also the Sports Lead for the school, on top of being a football player for Lincoln City.

Karen – The Wolds

Karen owns and runs various childcare settings across the city and county. She must come across so many children daily yet she knows each one by name. She knows the parents, the siblings...all through to the little likes and dislikes of each little person. Her passion for perfect childcare is one to be admired and emulated.

Kate Elrick – Sutton Centre Under 5s Pre-School

I would like to nominate Kate Elrick, she's the manager of preschool stated above. Kate goes above and beyond to ensure the setting is run smoothly and efficiently, she has great work ethics and works to high standards. She has worked with many children over the years and has always had a great bond with them making sure they are ready for the next chapters in their life. Kate is very committed to her role, has been for over 20 years now, she also works well to support staff and

parents too, should they require it. Parents past and present have been delighted with her, preparing their child/children for primary school, as have other professionals in various areas. I definitely think that this recognition is well deserved for Kate as mark of her dedication to the setting and role.

Kymerley Shepherd – Hucknall Day Nursery

Kym goes above and beyond everyday! She is our Deputy Manger and is an inspiration to us all. Her partnership with our parents is outstanding and each and everyone of our children are touched by her caring and nurturing nature. She knows all of our children individually and will be unique in her approach to them. For example, we had a child with EAL who was struggling to separate from mum and come into nursery following the pandemic. Kym was aware for her love of snails, so she would greet her in the morning, asking for her help to find snails in the garden. She now runs into nursery each day!

Kym will always reach out to parents and offer them support and reassurance where necessary. She will often call parents during the day to update them of their children's progress if she has had a tricky conversation with them at drop-off helping put their mind at rest. She is innovative in her approach which in turn, motivates and challenges our staff.

Michelle Edge – Cedar House Day Nursery

Michelle embodies leadership looking after both her team and the children they care for. She is always mucking in doing all the jobs she asks her team to. Throughout the pandemic she provided clear communications with families and continued to provide an outstanding level of care to families.

Milly Luddington – The Playroom Day Nursery

Milly is our nursery manager. Not only does she manage the day to day running of nursery but ensures that she spends time with each and every child. Forest School trained, she takes the children out on expeditions three times a week, heading off to new and exciting places, ready to roll down hills, watch animals, explore living things, enjoying bug hotels and greenery, pond dip, bark rub, puddle jump and more. She uses her masters in early years education to help children enjoy and achieve and encourages the team to go the extra mile, every day. She is an amazing asset to have on board and I am really proud of her. Well done Milly for all the amazing things you do.

Mrs Round – Crabtree Farm Primary School

I have had 3 children go through the full school over 13 years during Mrs Rounds time at Crabtree farm. She was the first person to welcome my son into early years during a stressful time of moving to a new area where he didn't know anyone and has continually exceeded beyond any expectations in the care and support she gives the pupils.

She has furthered her career over the years and done absolutely amazing work throughout the school.

I believe this lady deserves great recognition for everything she has done and everything she continues to do.

My eldest has now just finished his final exams and throughout his whole school life I have really never met any other teacher who comes any where close to Mrs Round.

Natalie Chambers – Upton Crickets Day Nursery

Natalie has been my right hand woman for several years and in recent years she has been an incredible support to me in and out of nursery. She always goes above and beyond to ensure the smooth running of our setting, jumping into any and every role when needed. Working with me is more than just a job to Natalie, I struggle to do it without her.

Natalie Summer – Leahurst Road Preschool

Natalie is a competent and caring preschool manager. She has excellent people skills and communicates well with parents and children.

Nicola Brown – The White House Day Nursery

After lockdown Nicola literally begged to be one of the first to come back off furlough - since then she has put so much energy and determination into her role with supporting the team with post lockdown life at Nursery. She is the first to step in and support at times when children have been unsettled, lunch times and break times to ensure the team feel supported and that the children are ultimately prioritised above all.

There have been many times when team morale has been low due to government policy changes, covid regulations and recruitment issues. Throughout this she has been driving the team forward and supporting their emotional wellbeing by regularly checking in with them and offering an open door policy. As she is integral to the smooth running of the nursery there is very little that passes Nicola by. I couldn't ask for a better role model for the team. Having been with us since the year 2000 her commitment to her role has never wavered.

Nicola Carter – Childrens House Nursery Southwell

Nicola has been by my side for more than 30 years, and is more than my right hand person. Nicola is an exceptional manager, leader and childcare practitioner. Her dedication, loyalty and knowledge is unrivalled.

We have gone through many things together, the most recent being Covid where Nicola became known as the 'Queen of Government Guidance' as she navigated the ever changing rules, providing daily support which ensured we remained open throughout the pandemic and are proud we were the only local setting to do so.

Despite the lows there have been many highs and we are so proud of our wonderful Children's House. Nicola deserves recognition for all that she has done for hundreds of families across Nottingham; she manages to create magic on a daily basis and helps keep the children safe and happy. Nicola defines the expression "how to lead a team, how to be professional, caring, thoughtful and human".

Thank you for coming to work with me, my life is enriched with you alongside me.

Pauline Nyblen – Home From Home

I knew Pauline from attending the toy library which she has run for many years, with my own children. When I approached her with the idea of becoming a childminder myself Pauline went above and beyond to help me get set up. We are now very close and know I would not be where I am today without this wonderful amazing lady who I am privileged to call my friend and mentor.

Rebecca Whyte – Cherubs Wynndale

Becky is a wonderful manager. She knows the children within her setting by heart, including their needs and interests. She is well loved by the children and their families, she is often found sat in one of the rooms just interacting with the children, she has brilliant bonds with them as they see her all the time! During Covid she did her utmost to ensure the children attending were supported emotionally as well as physically, and that the children not attending were as involved as possible through the nursery Facebook page as well as home learning packs. As a manager Becky does everything in her power to support the well-being of the staff too, her office is always open if the staff need anything and she is a brilliant listener and mediator. Becky is a credit to herself and to Cherubs, and a role model for all of her staff.

Rebecca Whyte & Danielle Wilson – Cherubs Wynndale

The Management Team at cherubs Wynndale is amazing not just there for the parents and children but the leadership with the staff is outstanding. They are always there for their team and you always see them in the nursery supporting where is needed. They provide treats for the team for a pick me up and hand out other treats as a Thank you for all the hard work the staff do in providing excellent activities and experience for the children.

Samantha Roberts – Mansfield Primary Academy

Samantha is a receptionist at Mansfield primary academy she plans events to help fundraise for the school for the children I am a PTA member and work alongside Samantha she has great leader skills and everything she does with us for schools 100%.

Sarah Cowely – Sutton Bonnington Preschool Playgroup

Sarah is an amazing supportive manager to all practitioners and parents. She is always available to listen to any concerns we have and will support in any way she can. She insists on going above and beyond her role as a manager often working way above her contracted hours. Playgroup would not survive without her continuing support, fundraising and kindness.

Sarah Whittaker – The Secret Garden Attenborough

Sarah is always there to support staff, parents and children and consistently goes above and beyond in her role. Implementing new ideas, supporting staff development and training and offering support to parents when needed. Making sure also that all children get the maximum support they need to flourish, even if it means seeking extra support elsewhere.

Sue Townsend – Brooklyn Day Nursery (Annesley)

From the moment I first visited Brooklyn Day Nursery back in 2017 when I was looking at nursery's for my new born baby Sue put me at ease. I never once thought I would be a Mother who got upset at the thought of going back to work and having to leave my baby with total strangers. From the minute I met Sue she immediately put me at ease and quickly it didn't feel like I was leaving my little girl with strangers. Sue is always honest and continues daily to strive to make Brooklyn even bigger and better than it was the day before. She is well liked by the parents of Brooklyn and is at the forefront of all events. She is not a manager who hides behind the scenes and I regularly have handover when she has been in the rooms of one of my children helping out. Sue is inspirational and I remember when she first showed me round I didn't believe she could know all the names of all the children... But now I have seen she does and I see a leader who loves her job and her passion shines through.

Vaughan-Luke Clarke – The Church House Nursery

Without Vaughan-Luke over the past few years during locking and covid many members of staff would of seriously struggled, he treated us like people and not numbers within a business, he helped us financially when we needed us most and personally offered me support outside of the work setting when I was going through a tough time during lock down as I'm sure he did with other members of staff. He really is an extraordinary person and deserves to be recognised. I'm sure I speak for everyone, staff and parents when I say we are glad he is our boss, friend and work colleague. He never expects anything from our staff but will give his everything. This is what make a small Nursery run so well and have a family feel to the setting. From using his own money to help the Nursery during tough times to the weekly WhatsApp's congratulating everyone when we need it most, there really isn't another boss out there like him. Without his hard work there wouldn't have been a nursery to go back to.

Caroline Gardner – Haywood Road Pre School

Caroline became manager during the pandemic in 2021 she had just completed her Early years degree. She built up a really strong team and supported them working through the pandemic. She encouraged them to become part of a team and take ownership of the preschool she encouraged the staff to try new ideas and be responsible for different areas of practice. She has brought the best out of every member of staff and given them the confidence to be brilliant practitioners. She leads by example and is a natural leader bringing the best out of everyone. As funds are limited it is hard to organise paid treats to boost staff moral but whenever possible the team get together either in the pub or more recently a trip to the sea side which helps to bond the team.

Caroline manages all the paperwork, staff, and working with a committee but is still very hands on with the day to day routines and working with the children. She alongside all childcare workers deserve the recognition for their hard work.

Claire Webster – Netherfield Childrens Centre

Claire always goes above and beyond her job role. Making sure that her staff find time to put themselves first and will always offer a listening ear and advice when ever needed. She will work alongside you giving you advice and support and go things through step by step even if she has done it a hundred times with you and will still treat you with the respect you deserve. Claire will guide and support you through your work and always build on positives and strong based approaches to be a better worker.

Gina Smith – The Enchanted Garden Day Nursery

Gina Smith is enthusiastic, dedicated and leads from the front. She appreciates how hard the team works and have worked over the last few years.

Gina at the start of the pandemic kept in touch with everyone and we had team meetings so that we could keep in touch and talk about to keep in touch with our families. We did a video for all the children to see us. As well as posts with ideas.

As we started to return to work Gina listened to our concerns and read up on guidance. Putting policies in place to support everyone and continued to keep up to date. Gina worked along side us with support.

Gina brought in new technology to go from paper to IT records both HR and reports. Giving staff support to maintain contact with parents when face to face was not an option.

A HR and support app was sourced for staff to access away from setting to help with all aspects of life but still there as a listening ear.

Gina continues with passion to make a good working environment for her staff regular praise.