

# Creative Careers

## Gail Beard

Personal carer



Starting her career in a nursery setting, Gail has supported children in a special needs school and now provides personalised one-to-one care.

“Anything is possible.” That’s the quote I learned at school, and it continues to support me through all aspects of my life and career.

Working one-to-one as a carer for people with different abilities, it’s my job to support them to achieve their full potential. Human skills are essential as together we often face obstacles, but there’s no such thing as impossible. If something can’t be done one way, we find other ways instead. Creativity plays a huge role in helping me think outside the box.

### Inspired by care work

When I started my career 25 years ago, 10% of the children in the nursery had a diagnosed special educational need (SEND). We used Makaton to communicate, and I really enjoyed building connections and finding new ways to support them.

From there, I moved to a special needs school, where I was asked to be a one-to-one carer for a 12-year-old with severe cerebral palsy. That experience shifted my focus from a whole class to providing individualised support. Since then, my career has revolved around offering focused, one-to-one care to both children and adults, and the rewards are amazing!

When you work with one person, your role becomes about discovering how to help them be the very best they can be. If you assume someone cannot do something, they never even get the chance to try. And trying costs nothing!

"Anyone can be creative no matter what their ability or disability. If you can't hold a painting brush, fingers and hands can be used instead. Creative design can overcome situations to make things accessible. Music is a great stimulant and anyone can join in. By being creative, there is always a way."

## Getting creative

In daily life, I use my creative skills often, whether that's finding a solution for one of my clients – like attaching a trolley to a wheelchair for someone who can't carry bags or cases, or getting creative outside of work through *Puppets4All*, a puppet group I established over 15 years ago.

Through my work with children and adults, I saw how puppets could make people of all ages laugh, break down barriers and spread important messages in an informal and fun way. Before I knew it, I found myself buying my first puppet!

My idea grew quickly, and now our core group of eight volunteers brings a cupboard full of puppets, outfits, props, and scripts to every performance.

Watching the group perform at the local church, primary schools, and care homes is a complete joy. Hearing people laugh and call out for more is priceless. From constantly communicating and problem-solving to support my clients, to using my imagination in puppetry, I truly don't know where I would be without my creative skills.

## Seeing the bigger picture

Alongside English, maths and computer skills, which are vital to young learners today, creative subjects hold equal value. It's through these that you can nurture and expand your own thoughts and ideas.

For any students thinking that creativity might not help them in their career, I'd say: go for it! Give it a try.

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