

Victoria's Career journey at Making Space

At 46, Victoria (Vic) Lawton-Bates has found her perfect fit as a Bid Manager in the Making Space Development Team, a role she never imagined for herself when she left school at 16. Her journey is a story of resilience, reinvention, and seizing unexpected opportunities, showing that it's never too late to grow, learn, and find a career you love.



Vic began her professional life in retail banking, joining Santander straight from school and working her way up to Department Management Consultant. After years of success, she decided to take a career break to raise her children, two of whom have disabilities. Those years offered new perspectives and skills as she navigated the health and social care system to advocate for her family.

By 2018, Vic was ready for a fresh start, one that aligned with her growing passion for helping others. She retrained as a Complementary Therapist and, encouraged by her tutors, fulfilled a lifelong ambition by enrolling at Leeds University to study a Foundation Degree in Health and Wellbeing.

"I thought I was too old to be going to university at 35, but I soon realised I wasn't the oldest by far, and that I still had plenty of learning and growing ahead of me."

When COVID-19 disrupted her studies and placement, Vic faced an unexpected challenge. Her work providing complementary therapies for cancer patients had to stop due to shielding restrictions. Determined not to defer her degree, she found a new placement at a Dementia Day Service in Doncaster. It wasn't the direction she'd planned, but it opened the door to a whole new passion.

After transferring to Hull University for her final year, she focused her dissertation on wellbeing activities for older adults, including those with dementia, graduating in 2023 with First-Class Honours.

When she spotted a part-time Dementia Advisor role with Making Space in Rotherham, she saw the perfect opportunity to apply her academic knowledge and placement experience in a meaningful way.

"I discussed my dissertation in the interview, and the Service Manager, offered me the job there and then."

After nine months, Vic's dedication and skill led to a full-time role supporting both the Rotherham and Doncaster teams. Six months later, she stepped up again, this time as Team Leader for Doncaster. Working closely alongside her former manager, she gained hands-on experience in leadership, contract compliance, and social value delivery.

When the Doncaster Carers Service was taken back in-house in late 2024, Vic faced another crossroads. Instead of moving with the service, she was offered a new opportunity in the Making Space Business Development Team, as a Bid Manager.

"I'd written several reports, policies, and proposals as Team Leader. I think that's what caught the team's eye, and I realised how much I loved writing."

Since joining the Development Team, Vic has thrived. She's completed a bid writing course, attends regular webinars and conferences, and continues to learn from a supportive network of colleagues.

She credits Making Space for believing in her potential and providing opportunities to grow, saying:

“When I had the option to TUPE, I admit I was upset. So when I was offered the chance to stay with Making Space, I didn’t even have to think about it. They’ve always supported my development and my role as a working carer.”

Reflecting on her career journey, Vic says her biggest lesson has been about letting go of rigid plans.

“I thought I wanted to be a Complementary Therapist, but the universe had other ideas. Once I stopped fighting against the flow, everything became easier. I really love what I do every day.”

Her advice to others looking to grow at Making Space?

“Don’t be so fixed in your views. I didn’t leave University thinking I’d be a bid writer, I didn’t even know it was a job! Stay open, because the right opportunity might be something you haven’t imagined yet.”

Vic’s journey is proof that career development isn’t a straight line, it’s a series of moments, decisions, and chances that shape who you become. At Making Space, she’s found not just a job, but a place where her skills, passion, and experience can truly make a difference.

Inspired by Vic’s journey?

Explore your next opportunity at Making Space: <https://careers-makingspace.icims.com/jobs/intro>

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