



From the Classroom to Case Management: How I Started My Career as a Service Coordinator for Action for Children

My name is Simone McArthur, born and raised in Hackney.

Eleven years ago, my daily life revolved around lesson plans, playtime, and behaviour management. As a Special Needs Teacher Assistant, I loved helping my students succeed, but I knew I wanted to make a broader impact on my community. I wanted a career where I could still support people but lead the direction of that support.

That led me to my current role as a **Service Coordinator** for Action for Children

But if I go further back to fourteen years, I was a team leader for Action for Children, then the service coordinator decided she wanted to move on, I saw it as a perfect opportunity to make that jump.

If you are currently thinking about pivoting your career, here is the honest story of how I made the jump—and what I learned along the way.

Connecting the Dots: From the Classroom to Coordination

When I first looked at the job description for a Service Coordinator, I did have years of corporate administrative experience but for retail which is completely different to social care.

But as I looked closer, I realized that being a Teacher Assistant and retail deputy had prepared me perfectly. The skills translate directly:

- **Patience and Empathy:** Managing a classroom of children requires the exact same deep listening skills needed to understand a client's complex needs or an upset customer.
- **Crisis Management:** Handling an unexpected schoolyard incident translates perfectly to solving urgent scheduling, service delivery issues, balancing a till!
- **Collaboration:** Working alongside lead teachers and parents is just like coordinating between clients, families, external service providers, retail suppliers.

Support & Inclusion

Then looking at the support you get along the way once you start which really helped my journey within my role

- Visits to other services
- Meeting other service coordinators and registered managers to share experiences, look at their systems

- Introduction and ongoing training opportunities, this even included me being able to do a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social care and Children and Young Peoples's settings, which was fantastic because I could put my on-the-job experience in my assignments.
- The networks to name a few, Achieving Excellence, Breakthrough Race Equality, Celebrate LGBTQ+, Green Action, Gender Empowerment, which all go to you gaining more knowledge, sharing ideas, making changes for Action for Children

The Reality Check of My First Month

I will be completely honest: my first month on the job was a whirlwind.

Moving from the structured routine of a school bell to the fast-paced, unpredictable world of service coordination was a shock to the system. I went from managing student behaviour to managing case files, complex databases.

My turning point came when I with the support of my Cluster manager at the time, we did a plan for the next 6 months, what we wanted to achieve and how we were going to do it.

Bringing that focus helped me and therefore also helped my team, to see the bigger picture when I was changing up systems or ways we work.

What This Job Has Taught Me

Today, the spreadsheets and coordination systems that used to intimidate me have become second nature. Looking back on my journey, this role has taught me four invaluable lessons:

1. **Your experience is never wasted:** The communication and advocacy skills I built as a Teacher Assistant are the exact reasons I excel at coordinating services for my clients today.
2. **Organization is a superpower:** In coordination, details matter. Developing a strong system for tracking client needs early on saved my sanity. Excel is a life saver, especially when you colour code!
3. **Pivoting is possible at any stage:** You are never locked into one career path. The skills you have right now are more transferable than you think.
4. **Children and young people as with the teacher assistant role, are the centre of everything we do.**

Final Thoughts

Transitioning from education to service coordination was challenging, but it is the best professional decision I have ever made. I still get to fulfil my passion for helping others, just in a different way. My service continues to grow and change as we update and create new opportunities.

Joining Action for Children was honestly, the best reason for making the jump for my own personal professional growth. While I deeply valued my time supporting a classroom, I wanted a role where I could take ownership of my own decisions, manage my own cases, and drive projects forward independently. Service coordination gave me that autonomy with the backing of a great team.