I have always had an affinity for animals, as a youngster I had the opportunity to help out at a working farm in Ulverscroft, Leicestershire which belonging to family friends. They bred and showed Shetland Ponies and were highly regarded in the native pony world. Being quite petite I was usually the ‘volunteer’ to do the backing and soon learnt how to ride and drive. We entered and did well at National shows and I was lucky enough to behind the scenes of what has now is the ‘Shetland Grand National’ at Olympia, The Horse of the Year Show.

I struggled at school with dyslexia, in the early 70’s it was not tested for or recognised, so secondary school was difficult for me. I hid away in the art room whenever possible or in the domestic science kitchen where I volunteered for any extra curriculum events. Art became my solace and I found any form of crafting and sewing rewarding and therapeutic.

My adult career has mostly been in teaching and lecturing. I trained to teach while bringing up a family of four and looking after my elderly parents, a hard time but I achieved a first-class degree and I dedicated my career to supporting those with dyslexia in specific curriculum areas at Loughborough College.

My retirement took me to Scotland where I enjoyed the beautiful surrounding countryside, riding my native ponies, walking my rescue dogs and caring for hens. I did a bit of teaching, helped run a café in a local museum got involved with running the community restaurant and fully emersed myself in this way of life. Crafting and learning new skills was both mentally simulating and rewarding. I learned to make clocks out of slate, reclaimed wooden lamp bases and fabric shades, put my skills to making cushions and throws and the rest is history!

I started a Shade Different formally in 2018 after relocating and a long and difficult divorce. I located back to Leicestershire to White Hill Farm, known as ‘Maggie’s Farm’ where I now dedicate my time to rescuing Alpacas and hens also four pigmy goats which were needing new homes. I have been here since 2016 and have used my time to help not only animals rehabilitate but people too. I see Maggie’s Farm as a sanctuary for those in need of rest and recuperation, which in turn helps my animals learn to trust and be around humans. I have accommodation for those who wish to stay and visits can be for a day or half day. I teach lamp shade making and encourage visitors to get hands on with my Alpacas. We have yoga in the summer and picnics too. All the monies help support my animals. We are also using the Alpaca fleece to make bedding which is hypoallergenic and luxurious to touch.

Animal care and being creative have helped me to recover and re energise, I have found a new me! I strive to help others feel better about themselves, by purely learning to relax and find peace here at my sanctuary. Mindfulness is at the heart of what I do and I thrive on the opening people’s world to my wonderfully curious Alpacas.