

Real-life story - Cherie Lawrence

Cherie became a mental health nurse after suffering post-natal depression as a teenager. Her career took off from there and she isn't looking back.?



Cherie Lawrence Mental health nurse

Employer or university Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Salary range ?20k-?30k

What made you decide to become a mental health nurse?

I became a mother unexpectedly at 17 and suffered from (post-natal) depression both during and after my pregnancy. Unfortunately at the time there wasn't really that much information out there and neither me or my family really understood the condition. My doctor couldn't offer much help either.

To try and understand it better I did a community mental health course and discovered a passion for the subject ? I found it really fascinating.

At school, like many teenagers I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but I had from quite a young age always admired nurses, after all we trust our lives with them don't we ? they're the backbone of the NHS. So when I discovered a passion for the subject of mental health, becoming a mental health nurse seemed like the obvious thing to do. I also felt like becoming a mental health nurse would help me be a really positive role model for my daughter.

How did you become a mental health nurse?

I studied for my degree in mental health nursing at Nottingham University - I was actually the first person in my family to go to university, which was a little scary but I needn't have worried as there's so much support

out there for nursing students.

I really enjoyed my degree and particularly the variety of placements I was given ? I was able to get really valuable experience of working in hospital and community settings, with young people and old, including placements in forensics and working with people with functional dementia.

Nurses and particularly mental health nurses are really in demand so I was contacted about job opportunities all the way through my degree and was offered a choice of four jobs when I graduated! Being a nurse means that unlike quite a lot of other professions, you have a guaranteed job for life, which means I?m never going to have to worry about getting a job and providing for my daughter.

I?m so glad I chose to work for Nottinghamshire Healthcare, as they offer so much support and help for newly qualified nurses. I think some people worry about the responsibility they?ll have once they?re doing the job for real but Nottingham, like other Trusts runs an amazing preceptorship programme which helps bridge the gap between being a student nurse and a qualified nurse. They make sure you?re really supported, with regular group meetings and one to ones where you can discuss anything you need to and they make sure you have access to further training, such as safeguarding training.

?

I also love that I have a guaranteed job for life, which I enjoy ? a lot of my friends are jealous!

What I do

I get to work with a variety of people and importantly, no two days are the same, I go to work each day never knowing what to expect, which keeps things really interesting.

I work with a range of patients on the ward, some of whom are very vulnerable and I work as part of a multi-disciplinary team, who are really supportive of each other. I think some people have a view that mental health nursing must be really tough and whilst there are challenging times there are also lots of lovely things that we get to do with patients as well, on a 1 to 1 basis, like taking them out for a walk or shopping in town. This helps give them some normality and experience of life outside the ward and I really enjoy this aspect of the job.

The best bits

I love my job so it?s difficult to know where to start ? I love the variety and how rewarding it is to see the difference we make to the lives of our patients. I also love that I have a guaranteed job for life, which I enjoy ? a lot of my friends are jealous!

What's next and top tips for others

Nottingham is a fantastic place to work, not only is there lots of ongoing training to take part in but other opportunities as well, so I?ll definitely be here for the foreseeable future. I?ll be becoming a mentor in the next six months and hope to complete a Master's in the next three years.

I think it?s really important for students to understand how much support and help there is out there for

student and newly qualified nurses, how varied the job is and the opportunities that are out there for developing your career in the direction you want to and continuing to learn new skills.

Interested in nursing?

We'll send you free, expert advice on starting a nursing career.

Let's go [1]

Source URL: https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/mental-health-nurse/real-life-story-cherie-lawrence?utm_source=spark-nhs-nursing&utm_medium=microsite&utm_campaign=real-life-story&utm_content=real-life-story

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nursing-registration>