

"I get great support from my trust, university and managers, which is proving successful so far."

Adam left school without any A-levels but loved his healthcare assistant role and is now a mental health nursing degree apprentice at West London NHS Trust.

Adam Cramp

Mental health nursing degree apprentice

Employer or university

West London NHS Trust

Adam Cramp - Mental health nursing degree apprentice

How I got into the apprenticeship

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I worked in retail for eight years before deciding I'd like a change of scenery. I worked in security at Broadmoor Hospital for ten months, doing shifts on the wards.

I realised then that I'd like to work with patients, so I got a job as a healthcare assistant in west London, which in turn led to my decision to train to become a registered nurse. The trust was taking on nursing apprentices at the time, so I talked to my manager about it and applied for the mental health nursing degree apprenticeship when it became available.

What I do

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I'm attending Buckingham New University on block release (one week in five, rather than one or two days every week – it's pretty full-on!) with 13 other nursing degree apprentices from the trust. We're a mixed group of mental health nurses, general nurses and a paediatric nurse.

The placements are incredibly varied and you could be doing almost anything! I have been placed in an acute assessment ward, which was incredibly busy. We had around 15 patients in the ward, so a bulk of the day was spent assisting with meals, clearing side rooms, and also taking part in the multi-disciplinary team meetings with the patients to discuss their current care and pathway.

My second placement was vastly different; I was working with a psychiatric liaison team in an A&E. I really did see another side of mental health care there and really got to see the pressures on services first hand. We would see people who attended A&E with mental health difficulties. We would assess them and then formulate a care plan with them and advice on future care, sometimes referring them onto other services and even sectioning people under the Mental Health Act.

The best bits and challenges

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It's nice ^[1] getting together with other apprentices. During group discussions, the general nurse apprentices tell us about their side of things, and we're able to provide a different perspective about mental health nursing. So, we're learning from each other.

The placements and training are the same as for the non-apprenticeship nursing degree courses and I'm not treated any differently. The only difference is that when I'm not on a placement or at university, I'm contracted to work 37 hours a week on the wards.

Life outside work

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I'm normally kept pretty busy outside of work. I will occasionally work a few extra shifts at the hospital. Aside from that, I enjoy pretty normal stuff; reading, going to the cinema, keeping up with my friends and spending time with family. My greatest pleasure comes from music and my vinyl record collection; I will always have something playing at home and often find myself getting lost in it!

Career plans and top tips for others

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I get great support from my trust, university and managers, which is proving successful so far. I know the other apprentices at the trust feel the same, that we have all the support we need and know who to go to for help if we need it.

Winning apprentice of the year in the HASO Health Heroes Awards last year was a proud moment. When I first saw the email to say I'd been nominated, I was shocked and was speechless when I read what people had written about me! And actually winning the award was a surprise because I'd convinced myself it would go to one of the other guys.

I'd encourage anyone interested in a career in nursing through this route to apply. I'm only nine months into the apprenticeship, but the bond I have with everyone – the others on the course and university lecturers – is incredible. We're very close and I know I will stay in touch with these people for the rest of my life.

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NICE>