

**“My team share my passion. I am surrounded by a family who share the same goal.”**

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**Employer or university**

South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust



### **How I got into the role**

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My school organised a placement at a special needs school which I was a little unsure about as I didn't think it was 'my thing' but I fell in love with supporting people with a learning disability.

After school, I became a support worker while studying for a health and social care degree. I then became a trainee nursing associate which further inspired me to help people with learning disabilities.

I then did a top up learning disability nursing degree and following an amazing placement with the Kirklees learning disabilities team, I applied for a job and found myself being lined up to be a part of the team before I had even qualified.

I wish I had had the knowledge that learning disability nursing was a career option while at school.

## **What I do**

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This is always a difficult question to answer as every day is different!

We receive referrals for a variety of health needs ranging from behavioural and mental health support, community safety and dementia assessments.

A referral may not always be what it seems. After completing an initial assessment, there could be lots of unmet health and social care that need to be considered. It means I need to explore how we can help that individual get equal access to opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Supporting the patient themselves is only part of my job. As a team, we are responsible for a patient's family and support network who need guidance and recommendations on how someone's care is implemented effectively and efficiently.

Community learning disability nurses support those who don't have a voice, allowing them to advocate for themselves. It means having to think 'outside the box' and creatively every day across the multidisciplinary team.

## **The best bits and challenges**

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I thrive on meeting patients and finding ways to support them. I feel a real sense of fulfilment when working with other teams involved in a patient's care, and by working in partnership to reach the best possible outcome for a patient.

Learning from my patients is something that inspires me every day. Working with patients to overcome their challenges and being able to celebrate their achievements feels like a real accomplishment

My team share my passion. I am surrounded by a family who share the same goal.

There are challenges in health and social care but we support each other as passionately as we support our patients. I feel very lucky to be surrounded by a team with such an array of experience, knowledge and compassion.

When I first started working in health, I was exposed to highly emotive situations on a day-to-day basis. I didn't account for the toll that this would have on my mental health. As a nurse, you can become so immersed in someone's story that it can be extremely emotional and challenging for everyone.

Now I have a few more years of experience, I can reflect that I wasn't coping as well as I thought. I now put greater emphasis on supervisions and open discussions about experiences that may be interpreted as 'everyday nursing duties.'

## **Career plans and top tips for others**

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I am still 'finding my feet' as a learning disability nurse. It's ever changing and no one patient is the same.

For now, I am happy with my current role and plan to continue my career in the community learning disability team. Every day teaches me valuable knowledge and understanding about nursing and working with those with a learning disability.

Learning disability nursing is a role I never thought I'd fall in love with.

It's a role like no other. You get to combine what you learn in training with being creative, innovative and bold thinking, allowing you to explore the best possible outcomes for those with a learning disability.

## **Life outside work**

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I needed to find a way to release some energy and focus something that wasn't nursing oriented!

I have never played any sport in my life, but I happened to come across a local women's rugby team in Huddersfield. The club has allowed me to take my nursing

hat off and learn a completely new skill as well as running off some steam and making new friends along the way.

Finding this team has helped me regaining my identity away from nursing and work out a better work life balance.

I also dabble in running, from 5k to (some) 10k and signing up to the odd charity run here and there to make my training have a focus.

But a lot of the time, I just like to appreciate time spent 'off duty' and escaping in a book, podcast, movie...and guilty spending too long scrolling reel after reel and spamming my family and friends with dog videos!

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