

Real-life story - Suzanne Whitwell

Suzanne's ambition to be a nurse began in childhood. She is now part of a district nursing team, providing care to patients in their own homes and cherishes the autonomy of community nursing.

Suzanne Whitwell

Tissue viability nurse

Employer or university

Milton Keynes Community Health Services

District nurse with bag

I'm learning more about the implications of the policy shift towards more community-based care.

Getting into the role

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I had wanted to be a nurse since I was a child and, during the various placements on my degree course, I realised that working in the community came closest to my idea of what nursing is about. In my last community placement as a student, I was given my own little caseload to work with under supervision. I really loved it.

Going further - next steps

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After qualifying, I worked in A&E for a short period. Then I got a job as a community nurse. After two years I moved here and am now being sponsored to study for a community specialist practitioner degree. I'm learning more about management and team leadership, and about the implications of the policy shift towards more community-based care. I will leave with a district nurse qualification and will be a team leader, which is quite special for someone of my age!

A typical day

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In the community, you have the opportunity to look at people holistically; you have to be aware of their whole home situation, not just their condition. It's my job to assess and support patients, then co-ordinate a care package to give them the help they need. In future, it's going to be more and more important that people are well looked after in their own homes.

What do you love about district nursing?

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The greater autonomy you have in the way you treat and manage patients, the fact that your patients feel less stressed and anxious than in hospital wards and the close teamwork with a wide range of other professionals, in health and social care. The regular hours are also a plus point - I might work one weekend in four or five but otherwise it's a normal working day.

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