

"Nursing offered me that 'human touch' – so after 11 years, I switched careers."

Meet Sarah who left her role as a project manager to pursue a career in learning disability nursing.

Sarah Trute

Community behaviour specialist

Sarah worked as a project manager for 11 years before training as a nurse. She wanted a job that offered the human touch and loves her fascinating new career in learning disability nursing.



What was your path into nursing?

After finishing school with GCSEs, I got a job as a PA, then as a project manager working in the health and social care sectors. I worked with global drug companies, social services and the World Health Organisation. My career was strategic and interesting, but I never saw how my work directly affected people.

Nursing offered me that 'human touch' – so after 11 years, I switched careers. Going from a senior project manager to a newly qualified nurse involved a drop in pay, but it's definitely been worth it. I'm interested in autism and special needs, so I chose to study learning disability nursing at Kingston University.

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**What does your
role involve?**

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collapse**

Community behaviour specialists spend time assessing the whole person and to interpret what a client is communicating through their behaviour.

The work can be quite creative, like designing picture sequences to support skill learning, or making personalised reward charts. For example, I've helped one client who self-harms to learn a safer way to express her feelings, which has been very effective. She has not bruised herself for three months now and it's made a big difference.

My role is very people-oriented – I train and support residential staff teams, clients and parents, and work jointly with a lot of health and social care practitioners. I've also set up a trust-wide Challenging Behaviour Forum to share best practice.

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**Have you had
further
training?**

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collapse**

Community work was definitely for me, so I took further training to become a community behaviour specialist. The role lets you manage your own caseload and really get to know your clients. Even after five years, my job is still fascinating as every case is unique.

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**How does your
role differ from
other nursing
positions?**

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Learning disability nursing is quite different to other branches of nursing. The people you work with are differently abled – and may have social, mental, physical or sensory impairments – so the focus is not on ‘making people better’. It’s about enabling each person to reach their full potential, increase their independence and enjoy an improved quality of life.

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**What are some
of the
challenges?**

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collapse**

Working with staff teams and managing risk can be challenging at times, but it’s very rewarding to see a client benefit from their Positive Behaviour Support plan. It’s not all about reducing challenging behaviours – the plans you develop for your clients focuses on developing positive behaviours and building upon whatever motivates each individual.

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**What’s the best
part of your
job?**

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collapse**

What I love most is helping a client achieve something that’s really important to them. Whether that’s teaching a new skill, preventing self-harm, or enabling a client to access their local community, this job is amazing.

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