



Carolyn Mitchell

Consultant Forensic
Psychologist

What does your job entail?

I am a Consultant Forensic Psychologist working across community forensic mental health and intellectual disability services. My job entails undertaking specialised risk assessments, providing individual and group therapy to individuals at risk of offending, consulting on forensic cases, managing other forensic psychologists, provision of in-house and interagency training, and working collaboratively within multi-disciplinary specialist forensic teams.

How did you get into this line of work?

I always wanted to be a psychologist. From around the age of 14/15, I realized I wanted to help alleviate other people's suffering. I was also really fascinated by the complexities of the human mind and the pathways that led people to offend. In addition, I grew up in a family with a strong social conscience in which the value of helping others was and still is extremely important. I really enjoy working with highly complex cases and helping people understand the reasons why they engage in harmful behavior.

Outline your career to date

I have worked across private and public sector organizations. In the private sector, I worked within a Human Resources and Organisational Psychology team for KPMG Consulting, Belfast. This was invaluable experience and taught me the importance of good time management, a healthy work environment, and employee well-being. In the public sector, I worked for the Northern Ireland Prison Service as Head of Psychology in HMP Magilligan for approximately six years. I am now employed as Lead Consultant Forensic Psychologist in the SHSCT. I have learned so much about psychology through my work with very complex cases. Having a belief that people can change is very important in forensics. I am motivated to alleviate the suffering of others and contribute to public protection and prevention of further victims.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I am dually qualified as an Occupational Psychologist and Forensic Psychologist. I initially trained as an occupational psychologist (MSc) at Queen's University Belfast and achieved my Chartership through a period of work in the private sector. I changed career as I wanted to work with more complex and challenging clinical cases. An opportunity arose with the Northern Ireland Prison Service for training in forensic psychology. I obtained my Chartership through working in the Northern Ireland Prison Service for six years. I also have a Doctorate in Forensic Psychology, which I completed part-time with Roehampton University, London.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

"If you can explain a psychological concept to a 6-year-old and they understand it, then you do too!"

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I am a mum of two boys, so my spare time involves attending rugby matches, football, and helping with music and drama lessons! I like to keep active, so walking and exercise are part of my daily routine and are so good for the soul! I really like to give back to the community and help out with school events and charities.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

To have self-belief and follow your dreams. If you are motivated and work hard, you will get there!