



Jacqui Cooney

Day Care
Support Worker

Can you give us a brief outline of your work history?

I began my career as a chef in hotels and restaurants in Co. Kerry and started working as a chef in a homeless hostel. It was here that I found a way of connecting with people with mental health and addiction problems.

What made you decide this career path?

I moved to Northern Ireland eight years ago and started working in the trust as a facility support worker. In this role, I learned about the needs of both people with learning/mental health disabilities and physical disabilities, and I knew that this was where I wanted to work.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

I applied for the trainee support worker role, and within six months, I had all my training in place to move up to the Day Care Support Worker role. I then went on to do my QCF Level 3 in Health and Social Care.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

Personal qualities required for this job include being caring, compassionate, patient, a good listener, empathetic, fun, motivated, honest and kind.

What does a typical day involve?

My day includes covering the bus in the mornings as a guide, helping to make sure all our service users are picked up at home and brought safely to the day centre. We plan our day out with activities that are suited to our group needs and interests. The group picks the activities from a choice board in the mornings, and we do activities as a group. I serve lunch to the service users and support them with meals. We carry out personal care for anyone needing support and finish the day off with their personal choice activities, then getting everyone on the bus to go home - happy and tired!

What do you like best about your job?

I love the happy faces of the service users when tasks are completed and when they are proud of their work that is displayed for everyone to see. I love it when they thank me for helping them make something to bring home and share with their families - it just fills my heart with happiness when I hear them laughing and having fun.

What advice would you give anyone thinking of doing your job?

This is a rewarding job, and if anyone would like to follow this career, they should do so. Maybe try some volunteering or work experience in day centres to make sure it's for you. You have to be someone with a caring heart.