



**Jamie
Johnston**

Social Worker

Introduce yourself. Where do you work? What is your job role?

I am Jamie Johnston, I am a 42-year-old male. I am a social worker within a multi-disciplinary team of the Mental Capacity Office.

What does your job entail?

I work to uphold people's human rights to life, liberty, choice, and private life. I do this through fulfilling legislation under the Mental Capacity Act 2016. I work with people who have a cognitive impairment and are unable to leave a place of care and safety, as well as being under continuous supervision. It is my role to assess if these people lack the capacity to agree or disagree to those care arrangements amounting to a deprivation of their liberty. If they do lack capacity, I work with families, care, social and medical staff to identify that it is in their best interests for them to be deprived of their liberty for their care. I also work with those people to identify what care is needed to ensure that these persons are safe because they are unable to make those decisions for themselves.

How did you get into this line of work?

I always knew I would need a job and knew that I wanted a job that would help and benefit people in improving their lives, rather than just making money and being unhappy. I started off as a primary school teacher but found I wasn't able to help those children most in need. I then worked for Barnardo's as a family support worker, helping families in need. My boss was a social worker, and I came to realise the work I was doing was social work, working alongside parents and children to make changes for the better to their lives. She advised me to apply to social work. I later moved into working with children with mental and behavioural needs, and then adults only and now the mental capacity team.

Outline your career to date

As I mentioned, I started in Barnardo's within family support. Then I worked for Barnardo's with families in crisis who were going to go to social services to try and work to prevent this, in an Early Intervention Team. Then I worked for Children and Young People's Mental Health Services providing mental health therapies and care. I then changed to work with adults and worked in the community care teams, supporting care for adults with disabilities and impairments due to injury, health, or age. This led to the mental capacity team I am now at.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I did an initial biology degree which led to the PGCE for teaching. As I held a PGCE, I was able to do the shorter two-year intensive course at Queens University Belfast for my Bachelor of Social Work. I then had an assessed year of employment year, to ensure that I meet the standards in the role of a social worker, as all social workers undergo. I have since had extensive training in mental health therapies, adult investigating officer safeguarding and have worked towards a postgraduate certificate in social work.

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

Communication skills are key, showing and demonstrating empathic understanding not just about the person's situation, but their environment and circumstances. Being able to build positive relationships with people, to work towards common shared goals with people. Being interested in people. Being able to advocate and be assertive when needed, not aggressive or angry. Professional values are key: empathy, respect, being person-centred, non-judgmental, working alongside people as their own experts.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

To be aware of my own emotional intelligence. Acknowledge how something has made me feel, why it made me feel that way, what I did that was positive and what I would do again or wouldn't.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I have no tonsils as I tried to sword swallow when I was four with a bamboo stick.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I used to do a lot of things. Now, I just walk the dog, play the PlayStation, go out for meals, read, and try to keep up with advances and events.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

Many people from my parents to my biology teacher Neville McKee, and other social workers I have met.

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

Nobody's view of you matters except your own, just be someone you like. Nothing is set in stone, life will not go as exactly as you had hoped or planned, enjoy the moment and work for the future.