



John MacAirt

Nurse Development
Lead

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

I have been working as a Mental Health Nurse since 2005. The majority of my experience was in a Psychiatric Intensive Care ward, where I started as a Staff Nurse and later became a Deputy Charge Nurse. I also spent two years working as a Mental Health Nurse in an acute inpatient setting in Australia. In 2016, I transitioned to the Professional Nursing Team as a Nursing Development Lead, collaborating with team leads and ward managers to ensure high-quality care delivery by nursing staff.

What made you decide this career path?

Previously, I completed a Business Studies degree and worked in hotel marketing for a year. However, I have always enjoyed helping and assisting others. When I saw a recruitment drive for Mental Health Nursing in 2002, I decided to apply and pursue a career in this field.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

I underwent my studies and training at QUB (Queen's University Belfast), which was a 3-year full-time program. The program involved a combination of classroom learning and practical placements in hospital and community settings.

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

To be a successful Mental Health Nurse, good communication skills are crucial. It is important to assess a person's needs and advocate for patients, working collaboratively with other healthcare professionals to ensure they receive the best possible care and support in their recovery journey.

What does a typical day involve?

When working in a ward setting, a typical day includes attending a handover meeting with other nurses, planning the day's activities, ensuring patients attend meals and appointments with other healthcare professionals, conducting 1-1 therapeutic sessions, and facilitating participation in other therapy sessions. Nurses also update patient documentation, such as care plans and risk assessments, and discuss patient care with consultants and caregivers. Promoting healthy living, including a balanced diet, exercise, and relaxation techniques, is also part of the role. In my current role, I collaborate with various team leads, ward managers, and service leads to ensure nursing staff can deliver high standards of care. This involves tasks such as recruiting staff, ensuring adequate training is in place for safe role performance, and maintaining a safe environment for patients.

What do you like best about your job?

I find great satisfaction in witnessing patients improve on their recovery journey. The dynamic nature of the job, where no two days are the same, allows me to utilize various skills and qualities in supporting individuals to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

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

Nursing can be challenging, demanding, and sometimes stressful, as you care for individuals who are experiencing significant mental health difficulties. However, it is also incredibly rewarding to witness people improve their mental health and embark on their recovery journey. To succeed in this role, it is important to be non-judgmental, possess strong communication and listening skills, and be capable of making decisions while working effectively as part of a healthcare team.