



Laura Cullen

Social Worker

What does your job entail?

I work within a Family Intervention Team. We are a very busy team, and no two days are the same. I have worked within the Family Intervention Team in the SHSCT for over four years. I completed my initial Social Work placement within this team and returned to the team upon qualifying. My role involves working with families at various levels of need, including Family Support level, Child Protection, and Looked After Children (LAC). Family Intervention Teams work with families that have already been assessed by the Gateway team. This completed assessment outlines a proposed plan based on strengths, risks, needs and resilience factors. It is the role of the Family Intervention Team Social Worker to implement this plan with the family whilst continuing to complete ongoing assessment. Working within Family Intervention Team, I have achieved experience in working with various families where complex issues arise. These include domestic abuse, neglect, substance misuse, physical, sexual and emotional abuse etc. Within my role, I am bound by legislation, policies and procedures. I also consider theory within my work with families. It is my role to work in partnership with families and all professionals involved to complete a holistic assessment that promotes anti-oppressive practice. I have a statutory duty to hear the voice of the child and ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

How did you get into this line of work?

I have always wanted to work with children and families, and I aspired to become a Social Worker from a very young age. Before applying for the Social Work degree, I gained experience through voluntary projects which provided me with opportunities to work with a range of service user groups. I completed the BSc Social Work degree in which you have two practice learning opportunities (PLO)/placements. My first placement was in the Family Intervention Team and from completing this, I knew that I wanted to return to this team upon completion of the degree.

Outline your career to date

After graduating in July 2018, I received an offer for a Social Work post within the Family Intervention Team and I have since remained in this role. I thoroughly enjoy working within my current role and I cannot see myself in any other role. The role of a Family Intervention Team Social Worker can be very challenging at times, however, supporting families to bring about positive change and achieving positive outcomes is extremely rewarding.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I completed my A-levels and had applied for the Social Work degree in both Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast. Unfortunately, I did not get accepted onto the degree. I took a year out and subsequently began a degree in Sociology with Criminology at UU. I continued to apply for the Social Work degree whilst studying this degree and two years into this degree I was offered a place on the Social Work course in UU.

I have continued to prioritise my own professional development since qualifying as a Social Worker. I have taken advantage of many training opportunities to build on my own confidence and competency as a Social Worker. The Trust that I work for encourages continued professional development and through this I have recently achieved the NISCC Consolidation award/ Postgraduate Certificate, and I am hoping to achieve the NISCC Specialist award/ Postgraduate diploma later this year.

Whats the best advice you've ever recieved?

The best advice I have ever received is to believe in yourself even when things get tough. If you want something enough, you need to be willing to put the work in. I evidently took this advice by applying for the Social Work degree for four years in a row!!

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I have three young children that definitely keeps me very busy! I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, that is my version of self-care.

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

I would tell my 16-year-old self that things don't always work out the way you would like them to and that's okay and that doing your best is more than good enough. Don't take yourself too seriously and just be you! I would remind myself to be kind to others and also to myself.