



**Lindsay
Smyth**

**Mental Health
Assessment Centre
Team Leader**

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

My name is Lindsay Smyth and I am a Team Leader for the Mental Health Assessment Centre covering North & West Belfast.

What does your job entail?

I am responsible for managing a multidisciplinary team that includes social workers, community psychiatric nurses, and consultant psychiatrists. Our primary role is to carry out mental health assessments on individuals who have been referred by their GP with concerns about their mental health. We provide a range of assessments, including same-day emergency assessments, urgent assessments, and routine assessments. Following the assessments, our goal is to provide the right services and appropriate supports to meet the needs of the service users.

How did you get into this line of work?

Growing up in an area that was imbedded with mental illness and addiction brought me to want to do more to help those in need. I have always enjoyed working with vulnerable people within my community and developed a keen interest and passion for mental health. After working with an agency for a while, I was offered a position within a mental health team and my interest grew from there.

Outline your career to date

Before completing my access course, I held various retail jobs while volunteering in my spare time. Since graduating in 2014, I have worked in several social work roles, including assisting people in gaining employment, providing support to homeless individuals, working in children's residential care, and primary mental health services. Currently, I work at a Mental Health Assessment Centre.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I completed my Access Diploma to meet the requirements for the degree in Social Work at Queen's University. Since qualifying, I have completed three modules in Initial Professional Development, earning me a Consolidation Award, and two modules in Adult Safeguarding. I have also completed training in Managing Effective Practice and gained my Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Social Work. I am currently completing my Practice Teaching Award with students placed in our Trust.

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

Professionally, experience with mental illness is a must, as well as the ability to manage complex cases, staff members, and risk. Great organisational skills, including the ability to utilise IT programmes to collate data and statistics, are also important. Good communication skills are essential in order to relay risk and effectively assess and analyse information. Additionally, the ability to manage risk is crucial.

Personally, traits such as compassion, empathy, patience, approachability, and assertiveness are important, as is a willingness to engage in continued learning.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

The best advice I ever received was a quote by George Eliot: "It's never too late to be what you might have been." This always motivates me to push myself harder and not be afraid of the unknown.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I am a qualified cheerleading coach, and I have been coaching in my spare time for approximately 12 years. I have also organised large cheer and dance events in Northern Ireland.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy reading, spending time with friends and family, and taking care of my dogs. I also love going on holidays with my husband.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My Nanny May, who passed away in 2009 from lung cancer, was my biggest inspiration. She always believed in me and motivated me to go back to education at the age of 25. It was a significant moment for me when I received my acceptance to QUB social work on what would have been her 75th birthday.

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

Just because you didn't do well in school, it doesn't mean you can't pursue your dreams. There is always time to go back into education and choose a different career path.