



**Matthew
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**Investigating Officer,
Learning Disability
Adult Safeguarding
Team**

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

My name is Matthew, and I am 38 years old, I am married with two children. Currently, I work with the Learning Disability Adult Safeguarding Team as an Investigating Officer. I have worked as a social worker for 13 years and have recently joined the Adult Safeguarding Team as an expression of interest.

What does your job entail?

My current role entails screening adult safeguarding referrals that are referred to the team from places hospitals, supported living, residential/nursing homes, and community social work teams. My job involves working closely with the Multi-Disciplinary team, to gather and assess information, attend safeguarding strategy meetings and to liaise with families; and at times members of the public. One of the main responsibilities of the Adult safeguarding team is to ensure adults who have a learning disability have the right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

How did you get into this line of work?

Initially, when I was at school, I wanted to apply for nursing. Admittedly, I spend more time in the 6th form pool room and didn't get the grades to get in. On leaving school, I went to college to study a BTEC Diploma in Health Studies with the aim of going to study adult nursing. A requirement of the course was to complete a six-week placement, which I choose to complete in an Adult Day Centre. This placement gave me an opportunity to work with people from different backgrounds who had a range of different social and health needs. It also provided me with opportunities help and support people in a practical way. Due to my enjoyment of this placement, my tutor at the time suggested that social work might be a career worth giving more consideration to.

Outline your career to date?

Once I qualified from my social work degree, I worked with Sure Start as a family support worker for just under two years. I then worked as a day care worker within a hospital setting before starting my first community social work role within an older people's mental health team (65+). Following this, I worked in a community mental health team (under 65) and then within a physical health and disability team for three years, before moving to Sensory Support where I have worked for the past six years. I am currently working in adult safeguarding as an expression of interest; this has given me the opportunity to gain some further experience within Adult Safeguarding/Adult Protection field of work.

Tell us about your qualifications and training?

I have a BTEC National Diploma in Health Studies, BTEC Higher National Diploma in Care Practice, and a BSc in Social Work. Since joining the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, I have had the opportunity to undertake various training opportunities. For example, British Sign Language Level 2, Investigating Officer Training, Keeping You Safe Training, and many others specific to my role.

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

Communication skills are vital. As a social worker, you have to communicate appropriately with service users and their families in sometimes difficult circumstances. I think that in social work, it is also important to have a positive mindset not only when working with service users but colleagues and other professionals too. It is also important to be able to empathise with clients while remaining professional, approachable, and understanding of their needs, wishes, and perspective. I have found that it is important in social work to be able to think outside of the box and to be creative when trying to solve problems, working with and alongside the service user, ensuring that they are at the centre of what we do.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

To not be afraid or feel bad about taking care of yourself. When we board an airplane, the safety briefing always instructs us to put on our own life jacket before putting on someone else's. In order to be in a position to help others, we need to look after our colleagues and ourselves.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

My spare time is usually spent taking a seven and nine year old to clubs and birthday parties! In between this, I enjoy going to the gym and watching my local football team.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself?

I trained as a baby aquatics instructor.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

Many people growing up, my mum who was a community nurse had a big impact on steering me towards the caring profession. Youth leaders and colleagues that I have worked with in the past have also inspired me.

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

Not to stress about the small things. To take each day as it comes and to appreciate the simple things. Don't worry, even if grades don't go as planned, things will work out.