



## Maureen Roberts

Learning Disability  
Consultant Nurse  
(Trainee)

### What does your job entail?

As a Learning Disability Consultant Nurse, my role encompasses strategic and clinical nursing leadership in expert clinical practice, professional leadership and consultancy, education and development, and research expertise. I work across in-patient and community learning disability services, collaborating with various stakeholders internally and externally to drive strategic initiatives and service improvements for individuals with learning disabilities. I am passionate about elevating the profile and impact of Learning Disability Nurses to make a real difference in the lives of our service users and their families on a daily basis.

### How did you get into this line of work?

From a young age, I had a strong desire to work in a caring role and follow in the footsteps of my grandmother, who was a nurse and an incredible woman. During my high school years, I held several part-time care-related jobs, ranging from childcare to home help. After completing my O-levels, I pursued a Preliminary Certificate in Social Care at the local further education college with the intention of pursuing a career in Mental Health Nursing. It was during my placement in a special needs school, working with children with learning disabilities, that my interest and passion for a career in Learning Disability Nursing ignited.

### Outline your career to date

Since qualifying as a Registered Learning Disability Nurse in 1993, with a Diploma in Higher Education in Nursing awarded by Queen's University, I have worked across various hospital and community adult learning disability services in SHSCT. I progressed from a Staff Nurse to a Ward Sister and Nursing Manager. In 2007, I established and managed a short breaks unit for adults with learning disabilities. In 2017, I transitioned into the role of Practice Education Facilitator, supporting the development of effective learning environments for pre- and post-registration nursing students in learning disability and community mental health placements. In 2020, I assumed the position of Professional Lead Nurse in Disability Services, providing nursing leadership across community disability services and promoting high-quality, person-centred nursing care.

### Tell us about your qualifications and training

In 1990, I was among the first fifty student nurses in Northern Ireland to embark on the pre-registration nursing program known as 'Project 2000,' choosing the Learning Disability pathway. I obtained first-level Registered Nurse qualification in Learning Disability with a Diploma in Higher Education in Nursing from Queen's University in 1993. While working full-time, I independently pursued a BSc (Hons) in Health Studies from 1993 to 1995, achieving a 2:1 classification. In 2005, I completed a certificate in First Line Management awarded by the Institute of Leadership and Management. Throughout my career, I have consistently engaged in personal and professional development by attending various study days, short programs, and conferences. Currently, I am pursuing a part-time MSc in Advanced Professional Practice at Queen's University as part of my consultant nurse role.

### What is the best advice you've ever received?

The best advice I have ever received is to pursue what you love, not what you are told to love.

### What do you like to do in your spare time?

I acknowledge the importance of self-care amidst a busy work life, and in my free time, I enjoy walking our dogs on Murlough Beach in Newcastle.

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

The advice I would give my 16-year-old self is to always follow your heart and strive for excellence in everything you do.