



Ruth McKee

Social Worker

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

While at school, I had jobs in a hairdresser's, barbers, and cafes. I then took on a job as a domiciliary care worker while at university. I have been a qualified social worker since 2010, having worked in a Family Intervention Team on qualifying before moving to Integrated Care Team (ICT) in 2012. I have worked in various ICT Teams across the Trust and, after a period in management in domiciliary care from 2017, I returned to ICT to frontline social work in 2019.

What made you decide this career path?

My job as a domiciliary care worker made me realise how much I enjoyed working with older people to provide them with day-to-day support to enable them to live at home. This influenced my decision to enter social work.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

When I was applying for university, I wanted to be a teacher and was completing an early childhood studies degree. On realising I wanted to study social work, completion of this degree allowed me to enter to study social work through the relevant graduate route. This was a two-year course I completed through the University of Ulster at Magee.

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

Social work is a vocation and anyone entering should have a genuine interest in people, learning about their lives and wanting to help them. It is difficult to differentiate between personal and professional qualities required for this role, as they may tend to intersect. Qualities I feel that are required include having compassion and empathy, being able to demonstrate strong communication skills in a range of ways, having an ability to think outside the box, being able to remain calm under pressure and deal with competing priorities, not being afraid to challenge and being able to reflect on and learn from previous experiences.

What does a typical day involve?

My hours are Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm. I usually start my day by updating my to-do list, checking, and responding to emails, making and returning phone calls, and typing notes and assessments onto the system. I may then have visits organised for new or existing referrals, and these can take place in a person's home, a care home, or a day-care setting.

What do you like best about your job?

I like the variety of work it provides and that every day is different. Pieces of work range from assessments for services, carer's assessments, setting up direct payments, safeguarding investigations, completing capacity assessments, and following up as appropriate under the Mental Capacity Act. Although you are starting with an assessment process for anything you are doing, each individual and their family is different, and this results in different options being explored. I like working in the community and building relationships with service users and a range of professionals, some of which may last a number of years.

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

To go for it and give it a try to see if it is for you. I have worked in ICT for over eight years and really enjoy it, and because of the variety it provides, I can't imagine wanting to work elsewhere.