



Sophie Doran

Social Worker

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

I began working in the SHSCT when I was in my second year of my social work degree at Queen's University Belfast (QUB). I had been working part-time in a shop alongside my studies and was keen to gain more experience in social care before qualifying. I started my role as a social work assistant in June 2021 and continued until I returned to study in September 2021. During my time as a team assistant, I took on a banking role in children's residential and was able to continue with it despite returning to study in my final year. After completing my final year studies in June 2022, I re-joined the Newry Looked After Children (LAC) team as a team assistant until I obtained my social work qualification. I qualified as a social worker in August 2022 and have been here ever since.

What made you decide this career path?

I had always wanted to work with people, and I was certain about it. When I was 16, I received a cancer diagnosis and was assigned a social worker. I didn't know much about social work before that, but she inspired me to pursue this path.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

I entered my social work program right after completing my A-levels. I prepared extensively for my interview and worked hard in my A-levels because I was determined to pursue social work. I studied double award Health and Social Care and Sociology, which I loved, and both prepared me well for my degree. I got into QUB for the three-year route, and during this time, I had two placements, one in adults and one in children's services.

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

Being sensitive to the emotions of others helps you perform your best at work. Empathic abilities contribute to good social skills. Having empathy for children and families ensures that working relationships remain strong. A genuine desire to help others due to a caring nature attracts many people to the world of social work. Being able to make a difference in someone's life is incredibly rewarding. Communication skills are key, both with families and team members. Timekeeping and organisational skills are necessary as the days can be busy, and it's important to stay on top of deadlines, LAC reviews, hearings, etc. One of the most important qualities is resilience, as a social worker, you're likely to encounter difficult cases at various points in your career. This can test even the strongest personality, which is why resilience is so important.

What does a typical day involve?

Every single day is different, and that's what I enjoy about the job. Some days, I may be conducting statutory visits, while other days involve supervising family time, or attending court for final hearings.

What do you like best about your job?

I love building relationships with everyone I work with—carers, parents, and most importantly, the children! I also cherish my team; teamwork makes the dream work, and I am fortunate to have a team that has also become close friends.

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

I would say go for it! There are definitely difficult days, but the best part is how rewarding the work is. The process may seem lengthy to reach this point, but it's absolutely worth it.