



CASE STUDY



Katie Luffrum- Apprentice Nursing Associate

What were you doing for employment prior to the Nursing Associate Apprenticeship?

Before starting the NA apprenticeship, I was working full time as an Early Years Practitioner at a charity run pre-school in my local area. I worked with children between the ages of 2-5 years old and helped prepare them for school. I also had a part time job at a children's soft play and party centre where I gained valuable customer service and waitressing skills.

Which ward/department is your current base area?

I am currently based on Ward 15 at Luton and Dunstable Hospital, specialising in elderly complex care. Most patients come to us after having suffered minor problems from falls, or more serious conditions such as sepsis. We also specialise in dementia care and our ward takes pride in providing specialist care for our patients with dementia and other cognitive disabilities.

Why did you want to become a Nursing Associate?

I have always wanted to pursue a career in nursing, I spent a lot of time caring for my grandparents before they moved into a care home and knew I wanted to care for more than just children because I enjoyed it so much. I decided to branch out and look at jobs within my local hospital and saw the NA apprenticeship, I wasn't sure what it was, so I read up on the role and thought it fit my lifestyle perfectly, so I decided to apply. I knew from working with children that I enjoyed making a positive impact on their lives and thought about how there are so many ways to help people, and I wanted to be a part of it and make a difference.

How have you found the course during the Covid-19 Pandemic?

It has not been easy, starting my career in nursing during a global pandemic was not expected at all. It was a shock arriving on my ward for the first time to see Covid patients in our side rooms and all the PPE we had to wear at all times. Luckily, my ward looked after me so well when I was starting out and gave me confidence in myself to work hard despite all the Covid and extra rules. After being on my ward for almost a year now, I can say Covid feels normal to me, and we all learn to work through whatever problems we face as a team. Academically, we have been lucky and have always been taught face to face, so I haven't struggled there.



What skills have you developed since you have joined the NA apprenticeship programme?

I have gained so many skills since starting the NA apprenticeship! I am competent in all sorts of dressings for wounds like leg ulcers or pressure damage, I am also able to deliver subcutaneous and intramuscular injections confidently and have learned so much about the different conditions patients can have when they arrive on the ward. I am able to fill out admission and discharge paperwork as well as write up nursing notes and help with handover at times. I have gradually been getting used to medication rounds and have completed numerous under supervision of a nurse and can feel my confidence building with each round I do. As well as all of this, my communication skills have massively improved since starting the NA apprenticeship as we work as part of a team, and communication is so important for us to deliver a high standard of care to our patients.

Do you enjoy the academic aspect of the course and why?

Personally, I love the academic side of the course. I have always had a passion for learning, and since starting my nursing career I feel as though there is just so many opportunities to learn and we should take advantage of those. Attending university one day a week feels like a breath of fresh air, to be off the ward and to be taught vital skills to aid our career is so important and I enjoy the time we have to do this. It is definitely not easy, and I have to put a lot of time and effort into my work but remaining organised at all times seems to help me keep on top of deadlines and stress.

Why do you think the Nursing Associate role will make a difference to the NHS?

I think the Nursing associate role will definitely make a difference to the NHS. Nursing Associates are the perfect balance between a HCA and a nurse, we can do both aspects and combine them into one. Due to the Nursing Associate being an apprenticeship route, it encourages more people to apply without the worry of student debt afterwards, this may help the NHS staff shortage of nurses too.

What would you say to people considering a career as a Nursing Associate?

I think the Nursing Associate is a fantastic way to start a nursing career, however it is not easy. It can be hard to find a work life balance, and you must remember that we are full time employees and students all in one, we work long days on our wards, attend placements, go to university, and somehow find the time to write up assignments in-between. Once you have found a routine, it is amazing. I love being a Nursing Associate and would recommend this route of nursing to anyone that is willing to put the time and effort it takes.

What are your future career plans?

Once I finish my course and become a Registered Nursing Associate, I am hoping to get onto the top up course fairly quickly and complete the top up to Registered Nurse. I like to keep progressing and learning so it only makes sense to me to climb the ladder and see where it gets me. Once I am a Registered Nurse with some years' experience, I would love to find my passion and specialise in something. (e.g., Dementia Nurse or Tissue Viability Nurse).