



Nicola Leigh- Registered Nursing Associate

I was a Clinical Support Worker for 17 years prior to commencing my training as an Apprentice Nursing Associate. I loved the role, I was very passionate about patient care and had always wanted to progress further in nursing to make more of a difference to people's lives, but lacked self-confidence and also due to financial restraints I could not afford to go to university to do my training, so I never pursued it further.

However, a manager told me about the Nursing Associate Apprenticeship and encouraged me to apply as it was a great opportunity to learn whilst maintaining my income and gain confidence while studying and I am so glad I listened! Although I am qualified now, I am continuously learning and I have learnt how quickly information and situations can change

and how important it is to keep up to date with current guidance.

I feel it has also heightened my level of empathy and compassion, the impact the pandemic has and is having on people is very personal and unique and therefore the need for adapting ways of working, so patients and relative's needs are met.

My employer supported me massively throughout the course, from worries about studies to reflecting when things did not go quite to plan and learning from the mistakes in a supportive manner. Also there is a lot of mental health support available and signposted throughout the trust should it be needed too.

I have had many years' experience of working on wards as a Clinical Support Worker but the variety of different wards, departments and placements I visited as an Apprentice Nursing Associate helped me gain confidence and develop a good person centred care approach. By the end of my training I had a well-rounded and balanced knowledge in many areas that helped to enrich my practice as an Apprentice Nursing Associate on the ward.

I am due to commence my top up Apprenticeship course in February and am very much looking forward to starting this opportunity, although I am sure there will be a few challenges along the way no doubt!

I would recommend for Apprentice Nursing Associates that have just started the course to hang on in there, enjoy the experience and ask as many questions as possible whilst on placements. It is tough at times but it was one of the best things I have ever done so if you feel stressed ask for help, there are always people that will help you, don't give up and believe in yourself!

For anyone considering a career as a Nursing Associate, I would recommend that you go for it! Being a Nursing Associate is such a privileged position to be in, it enriches your own life as making such a positive difference to patients, relatives and your colleague's lives makes your heart happy!