

Florence Nightingale Foundation - Leadership Development programme

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HEE committed to funding this year's Florence Nightingale Foundation Leadership Development Programme, offering mental health nurses a unique career development opportunity.

Since 1929, the Florence Nightingale Foundation has been committed to advancing the study of nursing and midwifery practice, promoting excellence, and preparing nurses and midwives to follow in the footsteps of its namesake.

It offers: 40 mental health nurses (2 cohorts of 20) and 20 nursing associates (working in a mental health setting) bespoke leadership development to become Florence Nightingale Nurses and develop as future leaders of healthcare.

How did your career change come about?

When I was made redundant as an electronics engineer, I sought the opportunity to change career and enter the caring profession. I did not want to reach the end of my career with a 'What if?' feeling.

I had previously been caring on a voluntary basis, through church, and as a befriender to a lady with mental health difficulties (through my membership of the Association for Pastoral Care in Mental Health). I worked as a support worker for adults with learning disabilities for seven years, before moving on to Springfield Hospital as a healthcare assistant. This is where I hoped that

my own experience of mental health difficulties, namely anorexia nervosa, might bear fruit should I go on to work on an adult eating disorders' ward.

It has. I am currently working on an Adult Eating Disorders Ward and have been since I started working at Springfield in September 2014.

What is a typical day like for you?

The day starts with a nursing handover from the previous shift. After this, as the shift coordinator I allocate duties to staff based on the requirements of the day.

The Multi-Disciplinary Team handover takes place at 9:15am and is a good time to meet with the wider team to get clarification around specific care plans and to highlight any patient needs that have arisen in the past 24 hours. Mealtimes are the essence of our therapeutic environment. As shift coordinator, I make sure that I put myself in the dining room for at least one of the main meals. Late morning or early afternoon, there are patient reviews or Care Programme Approach meetings to attend. I find these meetings offer added insight into a patient's presentation and find the lead consultants input very interesting.

During the day I meet my key patients and give them the space to express their needs. I endeavour to find solutions to any concerns they raise by liaising with my colleagues. I then report back to the patients to assure them their needs and concerns have been valued. Towards the end of the day, I update the handover sheet, so that it is relevant to the next shift, but also the important items that need to be part of the ongoing handover.

I enjoy good keywork sessions, where, together with the patient, we can spend some time talking about their goals and dreams for treatment and look at ways that we can fit them into a care plan so that they have positive things to aim for. I also enjoy MDT reflective practice meetings where we support and encourage each other as a team with some of the challenges we experience on a day-to-day basis. The main challenges revolve around helping patients to understand the depth and severity of their illness. We support and care for a wonderful group of adults who are highly intelligent and very driven, their drive for perfection can be draining at times and can also create anxiety amongst the nursing team at the forefront of care.

Looking back, how have you benefitted from the programme?

I have gained a better understanding of myself. The RADA study days helped me to change my approach and I find myself thinking about what I want to achieve in my communications with staff and patients beforehand

The Hart Ridge sessions around Covey's 7 habits and the work around coaching and conflict will also help me as I coordinate shifts and strive to get the best out of the team, I am leading each day

The Quality Improvement session helped develop my project, it also helped me to understand that projects don't have to be big in order to improve the quality of the experience for those in our care.

What are you most proud of?

I am very proud of myself for achieving registration as a nursing associate. I feel that the course really took me out of my comfort zone, but I didn't give up. I stuck with it and I have developed so much more as an individual through all the experiences and placement opportunities that I was privileged to experience.

What advice would you give to some considering applying for the programme?

Be prepared to participate fully in the programme. The skills you learn will help you develop your leadership style, but they will also help you to understand how your communication skills can impact and influence others positively. You will also gain valuable transferable skills that will guide you in a variety of life experiences.