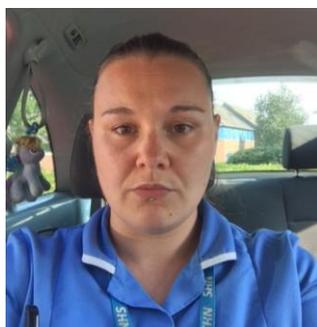


Florence Nightingale Foundation - Leadership Development programme

Samantha Manickum-Bird, Staff Nurse, Lancashire



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?

I have wanted to qualify as a mental health nurse for years, but I was unable to begin this journey until my 30s. My passion for mental health comes from my nan's struggles with a severe and enduring mental health condition. My grandad cared for my nan and at the time there was not the same support and understanding as people receive today. I have also witnessed the stigma attached to having a mental health condition. This has driven me to become a supportive and understanding mental health nurse, who does whatever I can to improve patient wellbeing and ensure carers and family members also get the care and support they need.

I got into mental health nursing after having my second child. Initially I spent some time volunteering on maternity wards, as a breastfeeding supporter, and I applied to complete an access course at college, then took a job as a NHS 111 call advisor. This gave me some fantastic experiences in terms of physical health and mental health pathways and patient-centred care and communication. When I passed my access course and started my BSc (Hons) Mental Health Nursing Course, I took a job as a healthcare assistant at a local hospital

working on the A&E department and also the care of the elderly wards. I took this job to support my family financially, but it also gave me a good understanding of patient-centred care, working under pressure and working with people with physical health conditions or complaints – I feel this experience has enhanced my practice and it has also made me more dependable in an emergency.

I qualified with a first-class degree and I am so very proud of this. I enjoyed all aspects of my training; I love learning and I feel I have found my calling in life.

What's a typical day like in your normal day job?

I enjoy a challenge and as such I have opted to work in a challenging, busy environment. I currently work on a high dependency forensic, medium secure unit. My ward is fast-paced and some of my patients have continued struggles with addictions, as well as their complex and enduring mental health conditions. A lot of my day is spent engaging with patients during 1:1 sessions and also encouraging them to complete a range of activities – such as (but not limited to) weight lifting, cooking, music sessions. Every day is varied and interesting. Some of the more challenging aspects of my day-to-day job have come out of the Covid-19 restrictions and patients being unable to see their family and friends as often as they would like. However, as a service we have been quite innovative and have managed to risk-access for patients to be able to Facetime family members.

The best part of my job is seeing a change in a patient from being very unwell to becoming settled, stable and moving down to lower security – it is so rewarding.

Some of the myths about my job is that we are a very restrictive environment and that it is a dangerous place to work. It is true that there are restrictions, but we ensure any restrictions are assessed on a patient-by-patient basis and reviewed. It is a safe place to work and this is due to our security practices and excellent positive and safe training.

Looking back, how have you benefitted from the programme?

I know how to ensure that I convey the right messages to others – using emphasis, body language and the correct words.

I am able to give and receive feedback and I also understand my own strengths and weaknesses, and the strengths and leaning/working preferences of others. I have used this knowledge to help to transform me into a more well-rounded and transformational leader.

What are you most proud of?

I am most proud of qualifying and getting a job in forensic services as it is something that I have been wanting to achieve for a long time. In the future I see myself managing a team and inspiring others to make positive and sustainable changes to patient care. I would also love to specialise in personality disorder and write an article and have it published in a mental health journal.