

Tracy Taylor- Trainee Assistant Practitioner – Case Study

My name is Tracy Taylor and I am currently studying to be an Assistant Practitioner.

I started working for Combined Healthcare in 1993 as a HCSW/Activity Worker in an elderly day hospital. I spent 15 years there before becoming the housekeeper on the Complex Needs mental health ward. I became a Trainee Assistant Practitioner in October 2015.

I am currently in my second year studying for a dual qualification – a foundation degree in Mental Health Sciences and Level 5 Assistant Practitioner higher apprenticeship which are core components of the assistant practitioner role. This involves attending Staffordshire University on a Monday to learn about mental health issues and the latest nursing theories as well as a bespoke option module in your second year in which I have chosen to study mental health assessments.

Alongside this we have a competencies book and portfolio to complete, which evidences the skills and learning that we are undertaking. These skills include things like taking bloods, performing ECGs, wound management, medications management and discharge processes. Each assistant practitioner has a mentor who meets with them to guide and support them through these stages of learning.

Each ward manager decides which part of the assistant practitioner role would be most beneficial to the ward and asks the practitioner to concentrate on those areas. On my ward I mainly work on the discharge process but also help as a hand's on member of the nursing team when required.

When a patient is made discharge ready, I complete all paperwork around this area. I will apply for a social worker to be allocated, complete all paperwork (including nursing SAPs and checklists) and will be actively involved in the arrangement of nursing home placements, including completing assessments with potential nursing homes, discharge funding agreements and any communications between outside agencies. This has made a huge difference to the ward as it allows the nursing staff to be able to be out on the ward, spending time with patients, instead of being office bound completing paperwork.

On a personal level the skills, training and learning that I have received has been very enjoyable. The clinical skills were all new to me so this was something I found broadened my horizons – learning the wide range of activities which are undertaken on a ward. Studying for the dual award has been a positive step because it is based around expanding my existing skills and understanding. It is beneficial to know that the skills and knowledge that you have has a basis in good nursing theories.

The next step for me is to become a qualified assistant practitioner which will be in August 2017 and then to decide what happens after this. I am interested in eventually becoming a fully qualified mental health nurse and hopefully these qualifications will go some way to assist me with that.