

'I enjoy supporting people to reach their full potential'

Former joiner Brian Evans was driven to become a learning disability nurse after the death of his son

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What is your job?

I am a clinical nurse specialist for learning disabilities at University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust. In my role I support individuals, families, carers and hospital staff to ensure care and treatment is person-centred and designed to meet the specific needs of the patient. This includes identifying reasonable adjustments, ensuring the legislative principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 are followed and supporting the person and carers to develop a hospital passport. I also liaise with the multidisciplinary team and allied health professionals to identify care pathways and develop care plans to enhance service provision.

Why did you become a learning disability nurse?

My wife and I had a son with learning disabilities who died tragically at the age of ten. Although I wasn't aware there was such a thing as a learning disabilities nurse, my son's passing drove me to pursue a career where I could help and support people with learning disabilities.

What might you have done otherwise?

I'm a qualified joiner and gave up a successful building business to become a nursing student. I trained as a learning disability nurse at University of Cumbria in 2004 and did a degree in behaviour analysis and intervention at Edge Hill University in 2011.

Where have you worked previously?

After qualifying, I was a manager in a supported housing network for people with learning disabilities. I then worked in a community challenging behaviour team. I recently left a job as registered manager in a specialist nursing home for individuals with learning disabilities, complex needs, challenging behaviour and autism to take up my current role.

What do you enjoy most about it?

I enjoy supporting people to develop and reach their full potential. I am a strong advocate for people and am driven to ensure they feel autonomous and have a good quality of life.

What is the greatest challenge?

Educating the general population to have empathy and respect for individuals with learning disabilities and striving to ensure people I support have the same access to services as the general population.

What would you change if you could?

Prejudice and preconceived ideas about people's needs as opposed to their rights. There needs to be more education at all levels to ensure discriminatory practice is a thing of the past and people with learning disabilities have the rights to lead a full rewarding and valued life.

What qualities should a good learning disability nurse possess?

Passion, empathy, tenacity, open-mindedness, be a strong advocate and be committed to help people achieve their goals and aspirations. Be friendly, be a good communicator, have a sense of humour and love what you do.

What inspires you?

My family and the many people I have met over the years, people I have supported and worked with as well as families, carers and professionals.

Outside work what do you enjoy doing?

Spending time with family, playing golf, watching sport, reading and walking my dog.

What achievement are you proudest of?

Qualifying as a nurse and successfully completing my degrees and, most importantly, seeing a difference in people's lives that I've worked with.

What advice would you give a newly qualified learning disability nurse?

Keep learning, never give up, educate others, be a strong advocate, don't be afraid to ask questions, be driven and have a plan.