

Care in Scotland it's life changing work

Jennifer Jones, Assistant Manager


"I want to provide the best possible service for the people I support and this spurs me on to ensure that others do their best too."

Jennifer works for Gowrie Care and has worked in care for 14 years. [Read her story here.](#)

What type of service do you work in?

I work in a service that supports four service users who all have a physical disability and are wheelchair users. Each person also has a learning disability ranging from mild to moderate. I support each person in all aspects of their day to day lives, from personal care to accessing the wider community. The service also provides outreach support to two service users; one is on the autistic spectrum and receives social support and support with maintaining their own home. The other outreach service user receives support with social activities and to develop independent living skills before moving out of their family home and into their own tenancy.





Have you always worked in social services?

I left school at 16 and worked in a boarding kennel for dogs and cats. I enjoyed the work but the owners relocated so I moved to retail. I gained two SVQs and was promoted to supervisor but I did not enjoy the work. I decided to apply for college as I had experience caring for family members which I enjoyed. After completing two years at college I was offered a full time job from my college placement. That was in 2002 and I've worked in care since then in a variety of different services although always with people who have a learning disability.

What made you choose the career you have now?

My father became unwell when I was 13. My mother, sister and I all became his carers and I also supported a friend with her child who had physical and learning disabilities. Although this was very challenging, especially with my father, I also found it immensely rewarding.

Can you tell us more about your job?

I am the assistant manager in the service and my time is split 50/50 between managerial duties and direct support to service users. I supervise 11 staff members and two HNC students.

I support all service users to live as independently as possible.

Can you give an example of something that you are working on at the moment?

I am working to improve the team's knowledge and skills. The service is very different to how it was a year ago so all staff need support to adapt their working practices to best support the service users.

What qualifications do you need for this job?

I will need to gain an SVQ level 4. I am currently in a fixed term post and will be able to start this if my post becomes permanent.





Who else is in your team?

There are three support workers who each have key working duties for one or two service users. We also have assistant support workers.

Everyone on the team delivers the same level of direct support to service users regardless of their designation.

Do you work with other professionals in other sectors eg health, teaching, justice?

Yes, several. Occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, GPs, specialist nurses and consultants and care managers.

What part of your job motivates you and why?

I want to provide the best possible service for the people I support and this spurs me on to ensure that others do their best too.

What are the best bits about your job?

Seeing service users and staff develop. Service users becoming more independent and doing more for themselves. And for staff - the sense of achievement they have when they develop their skills.

What are the challenges, good and not so good that you face in your job?

Keeping staff motivated, when one person feels unmotivated this can quickly spread to the rest of the team. Finding ways to keep staff morale up is very challenging.

Supporting service users to understand their own behaviours and how to manage their stresses and worries through a safe medium is also very challenging but even more rewarding as you can see the person visibly look more relaxed and happier with their life in general.





In what way is your career in social services rewarding?

Lots of ways. I support people to live as independently as possible. I have previously worked in a long stay hospital and the difference in the support that people receive now is incredible. I truly believe that the people I support are living the lives they want to and are making their own decisions.

Can you explain the skills and qualities you think are needed to do the role you're doing?

Being able to think on your feet and to be able to use your initiative. Having a sense of humour and not taking yourself too seriously is a must. Being well organised is a good skill to have in this line of work.

Has your job opened up new learning and development for you?

Yes. As an assistant manager now I learn something new on almost a daily basis. My employer also provides very relevant and interesting training too.

How do you see your career progressing?

I'd like to stay in my current role for a few years. I have a lot to learn but feel that the support I receive from my managers and colleagues will help me to get there. I want to continue to progress in the management route.

What would you say to someone thinking about a career in social services?

Try it. It can be so rewarding and it's different all the time.

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