

Care in Scotland it's life changing work

Penny Anderson, lead practitioner,
day care of children services

"People's lives can be
changed for the better from
your knowledge and caring."



Penny left school with some formal qualifications and never expected to be undertaking a doctorate.


**Tell us a bit about
the service you work
in.**

I work in and out of school care setting. I have been here for 20 years and seen many changes. From no qualifications and frameworks to our current state. Twenty years ago we had four children, we now look after 1,300 a week!

**Have you always
worked in social
services?**

I worked in travel and then left to be a mother.





What made you choose the career you have now?

My son was born with additional support needs. I thought this would be like a mother and toddler which I would support and then go back to work.

Can you tell us more about your job?

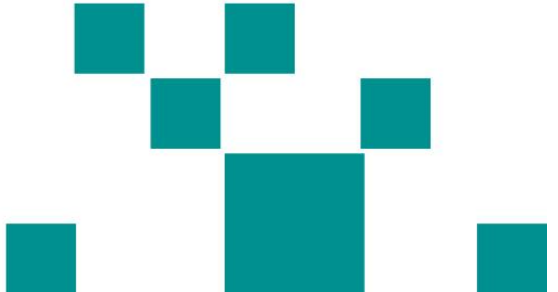
I have lead a project for 20 years as well as developing the company and other staff. My own project is registered for 104 children per day and last year was graded 'excellent' in six categories out of eight when we were inspected by the Care Inspectorate, the other two were graded as 'very good'. We care for around 52 children with additional support needs and this means advocating for families.


What are you working on at the moment?

I am mentoring staff to undertake the BA in Childhood Practice and have just opened a training department that is VQ accredited to ensure the quality of staff is at the level stakeholders expect and deserve. Staff have opportunities to keep training passed their qualification requirements if they wish to. This helps retain staff we would lose as out of school care is naturally part time. Each staff member also has a reflective journal to ensure reflection is part of the natural everyday activity. As a company we are raising funds for a much needed post-natal depression unit in our area after the loss of one of our staff.

What qualifications do you need for this job?

I completed the BA in Childhood Practice in 2012 as my lead practitioner qualification (at age 50). I now hold the Master in Education Childhood Practice which I completed this year and have just started the Doctorate in Education.





Can you explain who else is on your team?

My team is very diverse from the communities of practice I established as part of my working practice and student placement, these are in health and social work as well as working closely with education. I have a team of 17 senior staff, an office team of six, two other directors and a staff team of around 60.

Do you work with other professionals?

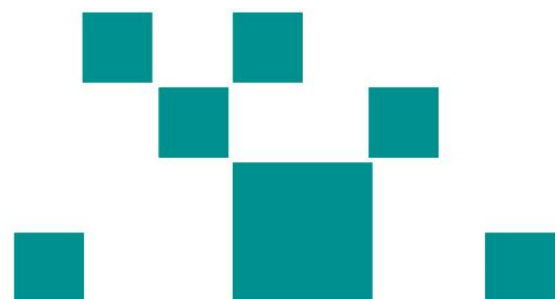
We extend school programmes such as eco schools and right respecting as this is something that children need to be able to do in all contexts. After my health placement we now take in student health visitors as we work so closely with parents and are often a referral agency. I am also a professional advisor on the Scottish Out of School Care Network to ensure knowledge is shared throughout the out of school community. I regularly take part in joint assessments and child protection hearings. From this, staff have been trained in nurture including Boxall profiling and play therapy techniques. Every year staff train all P6 and P7 in East Renfrewshire schools in Heart Start. This helps support school staff. We offer career opportunities for S4 students and placements for those undertaking the community service aspect of the Duke of Edinburgh Award.


What part of your job motivates you and why?

I enjoy seeing people achieve. From a learning stance many of our staff did not achieve qualifications from school and I enjoy seeing them receive their awards or going onto other careers in either social services or education.

What are the best bits about your job?

Offering people chances who may not normally get them. We have staff with additional support needs as well as supporting families back into work. When my son was younger and I had many medical and educational visits and it offered me flexibility. As a company we stay true to that for other staff too.





What are the challenges that you face in your job?

Standardisation has made it difficult to understand your identity. Play is not valued by society as a whole as it is something that is perceived as natural. We have recently changed our job descriptions to encompass the title Care and Playful Learning Practitioner instead of playcarer. The challenge is to change people's perceptions of the job away from domesticated care to understanding the professional care ethic.

In what way is your career in social services rewarding?

I enjoy passing my skills and knowledge to others. I feel rewarded when children that have experienced trauma or adversity become resilient and pull through the other side.

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

Compassion and passion. Being non-judgemental. Being assertive enough to speak up for others, team-working is very important, you will not have all the skills yourself and you need to borrow the strength of others. Be a reflective practitioner. This means starting from yourself, being accountable and being prepared to use your initiative to move forward.

Has your job opened up new learning and development for you and if so what kind of things?

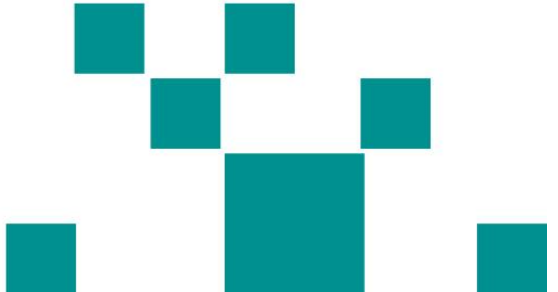
I left school with some formal qualifications and I would never have expected to be undertaking a doctorate. My career was always going to be more vocational but it has turned out to be a balance of the two.

How would you see your career progressing?

My career will stay the same but I am now looking to succession planning for the next generation of leaders. I hope to do research as there are few journals out there from this sector.

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

It's much more important than you think. People's lives can be changed for the better from your knowledge and caring.





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