Scottish Social Services Council

Care in Scotland it's life changing work

Lorraine Kirkwood, Head of Service, Monkey Puzzle Glasgow Central

'I'm helping to break down barriers and build confidence'

Lorraine coordinates the day to day operation of the service and supports and manages 20 staff. Read her story here.

What type of service do you work in?

Monkey Puzzle Glasgow Central opened in July 2014. The service caters for children aged six weeks to 16 years. The service is open 51 weeks of the year and looks after 119 children daily.

Have you always worked in social services?

After leaving school I worked for an airline for four years; I enjoyed travelling and meeting a wide variety of people. After my son was born it was difficult to return to long hours and irregular shift patterns so I decided to change direction with my career.

What made you choose the career you have now?

Childcare was a big factor for my career change. I wanted to have a work and home life balance. Being a first time mum I wanted to ensure I was able to support and watch my son grow up.

Everyone I know said I had a fantastic way with children and that I should look at becoming a teacher or practitioner.

Can you tell us more about your job?

As Head of Service I coordinate the day to day operation of the service and support and manage 20 staff. I make sure communications are strong throughout the service and work closely with the staff and parents to take their views and opinions into consideration to enhance and develop the growing service.

I work with our quality improvement officer to make sure staff have access to training and the children within our care receive high quality play opportunities and are cared for to a high standard.

I am responsible for the health and safety of the service and for budgets and fees. I make sure we meet Care Inspectorate standards and that policies and procedures are adhered to daily.

I also work closely with other agencies to share practice and develop community links.

What qualifications do you need for this job?

I need to have a BA in Childhood Practice.

Who else is in your team?

We have a deputy manager, four senior practitioners, 13 practitioners, three training practitioners, a cook and our cleaning team of two.

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

At the moment I am working closely with speech and language professionals, educational psychologists, social work, local community police team and our community health team.

What part of your job motivates you and why?	I enjoying seeing the staff and children grow and develop. Also knowing that the parents are relaxed and trust us to look after their child. I believe that the children in my care are treated and respected the same way I would want my own children cared for.
What are the best bits about your job?	Seeing the children light up with excitement when they have new play experiences and events. Helping to provide learning experiences which open their minds to new ideas and help them become confident individuals. Graduation is always a highlight knowing I have helped prepare the children as their learning journey takes a new turn.
What are the challenges, good and not so good that you face in your job?	The level of change which has occurred over the past five years within the early years sector has been challenging; trying to make sure I keep up with policy and government changes. Accessing good quality training for my staff to further enhance their knowledge and make sure the provision is following the most current good practice. Opening Monkey Puzzle Glasgow Central as a new service and growing the business has been very positive but also a challenging experience.
In what way is your career in social services rewarding?	I find my job very rewarding, I am helping to shape and develop the generations to come. I'm helping to break down barriers and build confidence which will allow the children to believe in themselves and their community.
Can you explain the skills and qualities you think are needed to do the role you're doing?	The skills and qualities I believe you require to do my job are good communication skills, warmth and compassion, good leadership qualities, strong time management and good people skills every day.

Has your job opened up new learning and development for you?	I continue to enhance my skill set through attending university to gain an additional postgraduate diploma in childhood practice. This has helped me become more reflective in my management approach and has enhanced my professional knowledge of our changing sector.
How do you see your career progressing?	I would like to open and own my own service over the next 10 years or work as a Care Inspector.
What would you say to someone thinking about a career in social services?	If you believe you have the nature and ability to help and support people, then it is a rewarding journey to be part of.

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