

Care in Scotland it's life changing work

James Russell, Social Care Officer

"I feel that I have made a positive difference when I finish a day at work"

James believes that helping a person in a time of need is one of the most rewarding things you can ever do.

What type of service do you work in?


The Rapid Response provides crisis care to prevent primarily older people being admitted to a care home or hospital by providing care at home with immediate effect when ill health or a crisis occurs.

In nearly every case that I have been involved with elderly people would rather stay at home than have to go into hospital. Not only does this benefit the client but also reduces the cost of NHS/care home admissions. Figures estimate it costs an average of around £350-£500 per day for a hospital stay.

Have you always worked in social services?

No, previously I worked in photography/digital design.





What made you choose the career you have now?

Working in a worthwhile, rewarding profession that is contributing to the community that I live in. Finishing a day at work and feeling that I have made a positive difference.

Can you tell us more about your job?

As a social care officer within the Rapid Response team I:


- carry out personal care tasks, such as toileting and continence care
- assist with meals
- prompt or administer medication
- highlight any changes in the client's condition to relevant professionals/ services.

If support is required from a district nurse, social worker, occupational therapist (OT) or physiotherapist, this can also be arranged.

We also work with OT equipment, the community alarm service, support social workers and district nurses, GPs, and carers, palliative care, stoma care, carry out ad-hoc visits and cover the whole of Perth and Kinross 24hrs a day 365 days a year.

What are you working on at the moment?

A new project called 'Housing with additional support needs'. This project is a service which enables clients who at times feel like they may need more support but wish to retain their independence and stay at home. This could be for everyday tasks such as preparing a meal or personal/care/dressing. The project works by the service user pressing an alarm which indicates that support is required, we then respond to that call to provide the support/care that the client needs. The good thing with this service is that the client can summon help whenever they need it rather than waiting for a social care officer to arrive at a scheduled time.





Who else is in your team?

13 social care officers, a district nurse, senior practitioners, management and administrative staff.

What qualifications do you need for this job?

Various training is required before carrying out this job but generally all of this is provided by your employer, however a genuine caring nature and life experience is more important.

Do you work with other professionals in other sectors?

Yes we continuously liaise with doctors, district nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, other care teams. Holistically working and keeping all parties informed leads to a more efficient practise.

What part of your job motivates you and why?

Helping a person in a time of need is one of the most rewarding things you can ever do. Empathy is the key. The ability to earn to provide for my family in a job that I actually enjoy.

What are the best bits about your job?


Great team with different backgrounds and skills, fantastic management support, good career prospects and access to further education.


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

Good: Communicating with a service user who is deaf/partially sighted or has another communication issue and finding a way that you can communicate is a challenge I enjoy.
Not so good: Seeing a person in pain or sad and being unable to help particularly in palliative cases.

In what way is your career in social services rewarding?

Seeing a client improve to the point where they are fit and healthy and independent again.





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

Empathy is the key for this role. Being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes, not necessarily understanding but appreciating another person's circumstances, local area knowledge, good sense of roads, intuition, life experience, common sense, caring nature, non-judgemental approach, thick skinned, team player but with the ability to work on your own, organisational skills, time management, IT skills, ability to concentrate for long periods of time eg driving. Remaining calm in a crisis situation.

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

Yes, working within Rapid Response we have direct communication with senior practitioners, key workers, coordinators, other health care teams and occupational therapists. By working so closely with the wider social care team it has enabled me to see and learn the whole process and understand the rewards and difficulties that all teams face. Studying for the SVQ level three has opened up new career paths.

How do you see your career progressing?

Studying toward gaining a degree in social work.

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

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