

Care in Scotland it's life changing work

Jennifer Marshall,
Nursery Manager

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Jennifer originally trained in social care and volunteered in a youth centre before starting her career in child care. Read more about her role as Nursery Manager at Enchanted Forest Nursery.

What type of service do you work in?

Enchanted Forest Nursery is a private nursery in partnership with local authorities. We work with children aged six weeks to five years and their families. We ensure we meet children's individual needs through observation and assessment. We take a holistic approach to child development, ensuring that we support our children in all aspects of their lives. We plan, support and facilitate learning experiences using the Pre-Birth to Three Curriculum and The Curriculum for Excellence guidelines to achieve better outcomes for children.





Have you always worked in social services?

I originally trained in social care, which led me to volunteer in a youth centre. I went on to work in retail for a while before returning to college to complete my HNC in Early Years Education and Childcare.

What made you choose the career you have now?

I have always had a special connection with children and enjoy their company. I find child development and how they see the world fascinating. I am passionate about children and wanted to do a job that allowed me to engage, interact and support their learning and development at an early stage.

Can you tell us more about your job?

As the manager of the service it is my responsibility to oversee the nursery and ensure we are meeting the needs of our children and families. As part of my role I build positive relationships with children, parents and other agencies. I support our early years educators to ensure we deliver a quality service. I manage our early learning experiences and outcomes by training and mentoring staff making sure we use current and innovative practice.

I work closely with the staff team to create a welcoming, nurturing and stimulating environment where little people feel precious.


Who else is in your team?

We have a staff team of 21. As part of our management team we have a deputy manager. Each of our three departments has a lead early years educator. On our team we have a total of nine early years educators and eight early years support workers who are all working towards their qualifications.

Do you work with other professionals in other sectors?

I work with other agencies regularly, for example health, education and outreach teams.





What part of your job motivates you and why?

To be successful in this sector you must be highly motivated, I have always been motivated by the impact I can have as a practitioner on a child's development. Supporting children to reach new stages in their development, being actively involved and watching the children grow and develop their own personalities and interests.

What are the best bits about your job?

The best part of my role is interacting with children and spending time getting to know them as individuals. Giving children a voice and supporting them to grow in confidence and express themselves.

I always get a sense of satisfaction when I am in a playroom that is nurturing and stimulating and all the children in my care are engaged and challenged. No two days are ever the same and you never know what the day ahead will hold but it is normally something special when you are working with children under five.


What are the challenges that you face in your job?


There are lots of challenges when working with children under five, one of the most challenging concepts is getting the balance between allowing them to be independent, explore and experiment and the impulse to keep them safe. We encourage children to self-regulate and risk assess where possible.

In what way is your career in social services rewarding?

Supporting a child to try something new, persevere and reach a goal, make a friend, express themselves, knowing you are part of that and sharing the moment, seeing their face light up is the absolute best reward.

Helping children who need extra support to access the curriculum and supporting them to reach their potential, ensuring that all children in my care have access to the same opportunities.





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

To work in early years, I think enthusiasm and passion are really important as these will be the driving force that will help you gain the underpinning knowledge that is needed. To be a quality practitioner you will need to be approachable, patient, responsive, caring, compassionate, committed, nurturing and dedicated.

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

I have just recently completed my BA Childhood Practice.

For my SSSC registration I must complete 90 hours continuous professional development (CPD) every three years, however I have accessed much more than this to stay on top of current and innovative practice.

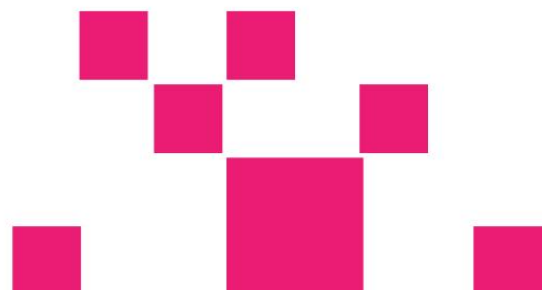
It is essential to keep up to date with new policies and initiatives when managing a nursery.


Every day I learn something new, continuous professional development is a necessity when working in the early year's sector. This sector is very important and as society is beginning to appreciate the importance of early intervention and the impact early years has on long term development, expectations are changing. As society changes their view of 'the child' so does our practice.

How do you see your career progressing?

I love working in early years; I know I will always stay attached to this sector, but maybe the future holds a different role.

The BA Childhood Practice allows me to build on my existing knowledge and skills to access different social service careers.





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

You have to be prepared to work hard and face challenges but you will never be bored. Working in social services is a really rewarding career and one of the most important jobs I can think of. You can positively impact children's lives making them better if you are enthusiastic and committed.

Is a career in care the career for you?

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