

BECOMING A REGISTERED NURSE - MEET THE APPRENTICE AND THEIR MENTOR



Meet Lori Shelbourn, a Level 6 Registered Nurse Degree apprentice working at Dorset Healthcare University Foundation Trust.

We spoke with Lori about her journey to become a Registered Nurse Degree apprentice and with her mentor, Sam Rose about the benefits of having apprentices within their organisation.

Why did you want to do the Nurse Degree Apprenticeship?

My journey towards the Nurse Degree Apprenticeship has been a bit unorthodox! It started when I was looking for some part-time work while I worked towards my PhD in Literature and, keen to work with the NHS, applied to work for Dorset Healthcare University Foundation Trust. After one short-term position, I found myself working in an administrative role in Bournemouth East Community Mental Health Team. I was immediately overwhelmed with interest and admiration for the team that I encountered: so many brilliant, ethically-centred people with such wide-ranging expertise all in one place.

My research in literature (I studied postcolonial literature specifically) had often gravitated towards social issues – questions of inequality and marginality, for example – as well as questions about psychology, mental health and relationships, but in coming into the Community Mental Health Team I found all of my interests coming together in one place, and I was left completely fascinated by this field of work.

With the incredible support of my manager, and of the team, I moved from an administrative role into the role of a Support, Time, Recovery worker – the first time I had felt that I was working in a role that used all of my skills, engaged the whole of my being, and also gave me a true sense of fulfilment in knowing that I was doing something meaningful. Through this role, I had the opportunity to learn a lot more about mental health and recovery approaches from all of the experts around me, but it also deepened my appreciation of this kind of work, which involves me in a journey of continuously stretching and expanding the capacity of my compassion, in order to be able to connect with and travel alongside the people that I work with.

After some time in this role, and having considered other possibilities like psychological training, I realised that I wanted to be a nurse. For me, mental health nursing is a unique, complex, multi-faceted vocation, that brings together a pragmatic, “grass roots” mode of working, that enables us, as nurses, to get alongside the people that we work with in their unique situations, whatever those may be, with elements of psychological therapies and approaches, elements of socially-oriented work, elements of psychiatric insight and medicinal therapies, and elements of recovery-oriented interventions. It is a fundamentally hopeful, ethical and creative profession, insofar as it is primarily centred upon and guided by the uniqueness of the people that we work with. I honestly can't think of a more fascinating or fulfilling profession, and that is why I wanted to do the Nurse Degree Apprenticeship.

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How have you benefitted from the Nurse Degree Apprenticeship?

As someone who had already completed two degrees (BA, MA), the Nurse Degree Apprenticeship offered me a financially and academically viable way of training to become a nurse, and without it I would almost certainly not have been able to pursue this training which has meant so much to me. It has allowed me to learn in an embedded way, studying ideas, concepts and approaches in a way that is constantly enriched by my day-to-day practice and the practice that I see around me. It has enabled me to gain a lot of my learning from the incredible experts around me – all of the nurses, social workers, STRs and occupational therapists in our team; and I see this learning as absolutely invaluable. I have had the opportunity to work in a multitude of different settings under different mentors, which has allowed me to develop a wide range of skills and insights that I will take forward in my work. The Apprenticeship mode of learning has, for me, been much richer, subtler and more engaging than an approach that is primarily textbook or classroom based, and provides an excellent foundation for practice in the future.

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What have been your biggest challenges / successes?

Mostly my biggest challenges have also been my biggest successes! The most recent of these was establishing my team's first online therapy group (the DBT-based Life Skills Group) using GoToMeeting. I secured a license for this, produced a workbook and, with a colleague, worked on producing weekly sessions. The webinar was a success, and since this pilot the team has begun running other online groups and will likely continue using this format going forward. Prior to this I worked as an OU student representative, alongside the three other representatives, to organise and run a student wellbeing conference. I also did a presentation on mindfulness as part of this conference.

The conference was well-attended, and had a good range of speakers including those from NICE, Livewell Dorset, Occupational Health and the Recovery Education Centre. Whilst in placement at the Intermediate Care Service for Dementia, I was asked by my mentor to do a learning session on writing RiO Risk Assessment after my mentor observed the way that I now habitually do this, and felt that this would bring an improvement to ICSD. My approach to writing Risk Assessments was itself the outcome of an Open University assignment that I wrote about Risk Assessments, as part of which I was enabled to research all of the policy around this but also discuss with expert colleagues their way of undertaking this task. Following the presentation, ICSD decided to permanently adopt this way of doing Risk Assessments.

Whilst I have been working on the apprenticeship I have also completed my training in Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, which I now deliver with our local IAPT service. This understanding of mindfulness constantly informs and improves my work as a student mental health nurse. Finally, my first big challenge came in working in an inpatient setting which was so different to the community setting that I am used to. It involved a huge adjustment for me, but as I made that adjustment successfully over the course of a 3-month placement, I also gained a large number of skills that have improved my practice and understanding of mental health.

Mentor interview with Sam Rose

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Why did your organisation decide to use the apprenticeship route for nurse?

We decided to support Lori to enrol on the apprenticeship as we felt that this was a great opportunity to expand on her vocation. Lori has flourished in the team from a temporary admin role to now aspiring to be a nurse. We felt that the apprenticeship route would allow her to continue to work in a multi-disciplinary team that would support her learning further. We felt that Lori was the ideal candidate that would be able to manage on the job training in a place that she already works.

2

How has your ward/service/organisation benefitted from the apprenticeship?

We have benefitted hugely as this has allowed us to keep a valued member of staff within our team throughout her training. It has also allowed the team to watch and support Lori to grow in her career. It means that our service has not had to lose out on Lori's array of knowledge but to gain from her forever growing knowledge thanks to the apprenticeship programme.

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What have been your biggest challenges/successes in mentoring Lori?

Lori is a huge success and will continue to be in all that she achieves. Lori is a very special person and puts 100 percent into all that she does. She is a huge asset to our team. Covid-19 restrictions have been a huge challenge but Lori took this as an opportunity to expand our service. We were offering a DBT pathway which was face to face until March. Lori adapted our current pathway into an online version that would aid people's recoveries and allow them to continue with their treatment. She piloted her plans and this has been so successful that it has now been rolled out and will continue thanks to its huge success. Alongside Lori being on the apprenticeship she continues to put a lot of time into learning new things within the team.