

Transferable Profession: Nursing

Before becoming a therapist, I worked as a registered mental health nurse in a variety of settings including acute psychiatry, substance misuse, and crisis intervention.

What qualifications do you have?

I studied A Level psychology before completing a 3 year diploma in mental health nursing. I did not do well at high-school for a variety of reasons, and left with only 2 O Levels. I spent a few years after high-school working in office work, then travelling to the USA and working in a variety of casual positions. This seemed to equip me with the confidence and motivation to return to education as a mature student, and I found I was more able to commit to study and achieve good results.

Why did you decide to change professions?

I found that although I enjoyed working as a mental health nurse in many ways, and found I further developed my communication skills, I was not satisfied with the short-term nature of the work which was mainly stabilisation and “patching up” in essence rather than enabling long term change, and I was always intrigued by “what happened next” when patients were referred for psychological therapy.

What journey did you take?

I was lucky in that the crisis team where I worked supported me in undertaking a post graduate diploma in CBT. I completed this over 3 years due to taking maternity leave for 1 year. During my training I used my CBT skills to complete brief interventions with clients receiving home-treatment.

What key knowledge and skills were transferable?

Definitely people skills, life experience and some struggles, all of which have enabled me to engage empathically with people and make therapeutic relationships to enable change.

My work in the crisis service has helped me have a greater appreciation of managing risk and helping people to see a way forward when they have lost hope.

What have been the benefits to changing professions?

Working in IAPT has enabled me to do the work I love, to develop in different specialist areas, and to evolve as a therapist and a person. It has helped immensely being in a team with a great deal of therapeutic and clinical knowledge and skills, and to be immersed in the therapy world rather than trying to “add it on” to many other roles in acute mental health settings.