

The experience of some previous and current students

Michelle Perston Current student

I'm in semester 7 of a three year programme and came into Learning Disability Nursing as a means of furthering my career. Prior to this, I had fifteen years of working with children and adults with various degrees of learning disability. I found working with the service users really rewarding but was looking for something more. Studying has allowed me to put the theory I learn into practice ensuring that I am providing the best quality of care for the clients I work with/care for both now and in the future. I can also pass on the knowledge and skills to others colleagues. I have had placements however not just with people with a learning disability but in acute hospitals which gave me an understanding of the aetiology and treatment of some of the physical problems that people with a LD may experience. In LD I've had two placements at Craighalbert, the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments in Cumbernauld, which has been great. I've also worked in a secure service in Fife with adults with a learning disability with problems of offending which I found really interesting. I don't know where I want to work when I qualify yet!



Thomas Kelly Ex Student Registered 1998 Now 'Project Manager'

I began my nursing career in 1995 with the intention to progress to the Adult Nursing Branch. During my first year, I had various experiences in clinical and social care settings, however my placement in Learning Disabilities changed my future in a way I never thought possible. I changed to the LD branch and qualified in 1998. As a RNLD I have been able to practise in a number of different roles, roles that have allowed me to care and support people with learning disabilities in all aspects of their lives, I have been fortunate to work within hospitals, social work departments and voluntary sector providers, working with children and adults.

With my LD Nursing Qualification the career options I have had have been wide and varied. At present I am currently Project Manager for an organisation called PSS, in which a major part of my job has been to resettle people from long stay hospital to our service which is called Adult Family Placement. Over the past 3 years we have achieved our aim in providing a service which allows people with learning disabilities to live fulfilling lives with the support and care to become valued members of their local community. LD Nursing has allowed me to play a vital part in ensuring that people with learning disabilities can live their lives 'The Same as You'.

Robert Duff Ex student Registered 2002 Now 'Health Care Co-ordinator'

I am a qualified Learning Disability Nurse presently employed by Lanarkshire Primary NHS trust as a Health Care Co-ordinator. Health Care Co-ordinators work in partnership with the individual to reach their full potential. The role embraces health promotion, health education and health surveillance. A major role is to liaise with, educate and inform other professionals and lay carers about the needs of people with learning disabilities. The job however, also involves assessing and identifying needs and planning care and co-ordinating access to services. In order to fulfil the role we need to establish close working relationships with relevant agencies/organisations. I find it very challenging, rewarding and self-fulfilling compared with my previous full time employment in industry. Before my nurse training I did some voluntary/part-time work with adults with autism. This whetted my appetite for further knowledge and understanding of client groups who are viewed as different. This was achieved through my nurse training (2002) and is still being attained through my continuing professional development as a nurse practitioner.



Keith Marshall Ex student Registered 1990 Now Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist

The development of the Cognitive Behaviour Nurse Therapist (CBT) post arose through my interest in pursuing CBT as an effective assessment and treatment approach for people with mild learning disabilities with additional mental health problems. The literature supported the efficacy of CBT for this population, highlighting considerations for a modified approach, which would help people overcome possible deficits in language understanding, memory, and information processing. My service has been operational for over two and a half years, and is attached to the William Fraser Centre's day service, part of Lothian Primary Care NHS trust, but I also have a remit for the whole of Lothian. I feel it important to generate an interest amongst students not just in nursing but in the opportunities for to pursue a postgraduate qualification in areas such as CBT after completing their nursing degree, if the profession is to continue expanding its horizons.



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING

Learning Disability Nursing

Department of Nursing & Midwifery



Interested? | For further information contact:

Patrick Bradley
Programme Leader
Learning Disability Nursing
Department of Nursing & Midwifery
University of Stirling
Stirling
FK9 4LA

Telephone: 01786 466354 or
e-mail: p.j.bradley@stir.ac.uk

Doreen Callaghan
Teaching Fellow
Department of Nursing & Midwifery
University of Stirling (Highland Campus)
Raigmore Hospital
Inverness
IV2 3UJ

Telephone: 01463 704484 or
e-mail: dac1@stir.ac.uk

Admissions Office
University of Stirling
Stirling
FK9 4LA

Telephone: 01463 467044
e-mail: admissions@stir.ac.uk

This publication can be found on our website or made available in other accessible formats on request. Please contact Student Recruitment & Admissions for further details.

DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY
The purpose of this brochure is general guidance and information. The University's courses are, however, subject to a continuous process of review. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of material in this brochure at the time of going to press, the University will not be liable for any errors, omissions, or changes to the programme.

Printed March 2004

Take advantage of
Stirling's unrivalled
flexibility and choice of
degree programmes



People with learning disabilities live amongst us and have the same rights and expectations of life as anyone else in our community.

Many of them require some help to meet their own needs and expectations and to achieve the rights they are entitled to; nurses often play an important part in that process. The nurse can be a source of support and help in a wide range of ways to individuals with learning disabilities, to their families and their community.

The nurse for people with learning disabilities is concerned with the health of the person in its widest context.

People with Learning Disabilities and Health Needs

- at least forty per cent of adults with learning disabilities have additional mental health needs;
- seventy per cent will have an additional physical health need;
- mobility problems are present in about fifteen per cent of people with learning disabilities;
- thirty per cent of people with learning disabilities may have significant visual impairment, while a further ten per cent are blind or partially sighted;
- hearing impairment varies from between 28-40% and it is estimated that seven per cent are profoundly deaf;
- fifty per cent have a significant problems with communication;
- seventy per cent of people with severe learning disabilities have serious digestive problems
- about twenty five per cent of all people with learning disabilities have epilepsy; the risk increases with the level of impairment, as does the severity of the epilepsy.

These health needs tend to be more common and more complex in certain groups of people with a learning disability, and may require skilled assessment, care planning and intervention beyond that available from a generic adult nurse or ordinary services.

What is it that Learning Disability Nurses Do?

Learning Disability Nurses:

- have the same core nursing skills as other branches of nursing, such as effective communication and assessing health needs;
- opt to work and specialise in the area;
- focus on the health and care needs of children and adults with learning disabilities;
- acquire specific knowledge and theory on the needs of children and adults across the whole learning disability spectrum;
- have the knowledge and experience to assess and identify needs and plan care for those with the most complex health needs;
- have knowledge of the specific health needs of people with learning disabilities;
- have the knowledge and skills to work with individuals or with groups across the learning disability spectrum to improve health and wellbeing;
- actively engage people with learning disabilities, their families and care workers in promoting health and planning and delivering health care;
- co-ordinate care pathways for people with learning disabilities through the health and social care systems;
- advise, educate and support others about the health and nursing needs of children and adults with learning disabilities;
- act as advocates for people with learning disabilities, and encourage their own self-advocacy;
- meet the requirements for *Fitness to Practice* and are professionally accountable and responsible for their nursing practice;
- have flexible, transferable and portable skills that can be used in a range of settings.

Learning Disability Nurses focus on promoting health in its widest sense. They may work in a variety of roles-

- in community teams, promoting awareness of the needs with people with a learning disability amongst other members of the health care team, and providing services to an identified caseload of clients with exceptional health care needs.
- delivering psychological therapies such as cognitive behavioural psychotherapy to clients who may have associated mental health problems, or physical therapies to those with special health needs;
- providing services to people with learning disabilities including supporting independent living family placements.
- as care managers for local authorities developing and managing individual care packages of care
- in specialist residential and in-patient services for people with profound and multiple impairment, people with mental health needs and people with offending behaviour

The nurse working with people who have learning disabilities is expected to promote the inclusion of all people in as normal a life style as possible. This means that the nurse may spend much of the working day assisting people to use ordinary health services or to gain social or other services that people with learning disability need and which they find difficult to use. Because we are involved in health in its widest context, nurses may spend time helping people to pursue healthy lifestyles. This may mean helping someone to shop and cook good food, supporting a person while they use local sports facilities or learn how to use public transport so that they can visit their relatives and friends.

Lots of professions offer the opportunity to make a difference to peoples' lives. Learning Disability Nursing offers a chance to make a real difference to the lives of individuals and their families. Learning Disability Nursing is not for everyone, you have to want to work closely with people and you have to want passionately to make a difference.

The Programme

We offer programmes on both our Stirling and Inverness campuses. Also, students can undertake the first year of the programme at our Western Isles campus in Stornoway and complete years 2 and 3 of the programme in Inverness. From the Inverness campus we offer practice experience in a variety of learning disabilities services in the Highland and Western Isles areas and in parts of West Grampian. Students based in Stirling have practice experience in a range of services in the Forth Valley and Stirling area and across Central Scotland. There are also some opportunities for placements outside the United Kingdom.

The University of Stirling currently has places on the three year Diploma in Higher Education (Nursing) (Learning Disability) Programme. Successful completion of the programme leads to a recordable professional qualification with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. During the third year of this programme students who wish to may upgrade the programme to a B.Sc. in Nursing. Students combine University based study with extended placements and are eligible for a non-means-tested bursary.

There are excellent job prospects in Learning Disability Nursing with vacancies across Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom in a wide range of services and settings. Most nurses who work with people with learning disabilities don't work in hospitals; many do not work for the NHS. Nurses are employed in residential care, day services, home based care and community services, special support services and in an advisory capacity for non-specialist health care. Many of the newest and most innovative services have been built on the knowledge skills and experience of Learning Disability Nurses.

