

# Internationally Qualified Social Workers Experiences

**Name:** Maria

**Organisation:** Extern

**Country:** Spain

## **Additional Learning and Development:**

6 months placement in a social work role.

**“Soon after I started my placement I realised the importance of professional knowledge, values and skills required for me to develop as a competent social worker within the Northern Ireland context”**

## **What are your thoughts about the journey to meeting the Northern Ireland Social Care Council social work standards?**

At first, I thought I had enough experience to work in Northern Ireland as a Social Worker without any further additional requirements. However, soon after I started my placement and through supervision, I realised the many differences within the legislation, resources, policies and procedures and I recognised that I needed to develop my knowledge and skills in order to become a competent social Worker in Northern Ireland. I was fortunate that I already worked as a support worker for Extern and they helped me complete the placement in my own work setting - but within a social work role.

## **What do you enjoy about social work in Northern Ireland?**

I like that social work in Northern Ireland is an ongoing learning process; I am given various opportunities to attend training organised by Extern. Whereas in Spain, training opportunities are limited within your organisation, therefore you are required to look externally for training outside of your organisation in order to maintain your professional development; this involves time and can be expensive. I also like that social work in Northern Ireland is very much value based. I have felt very well welcomed and supported by the various professionals I have encountered throughout my placement. In my opinion, the Northern Ireland culture upholds many of the social work values that I feel are important, including openness, respect, dignity and self-determination.

## **What challenges have you experienced in settling into your social work role?**

I found the Northern Ireland political and historical context slightly confusing at the beginning. Through supervision and also in the team meetings, I was able to understand people's different backgrounds and the complexity of the context. Another challenge was to familiarise myself with different legislation, policy and procedures, Public Health services and their competences, benefit system and different resources available in Northern Ireland for service users. The cultural language and new social work terminology was difficult to learn, especially as this was so different compared to my native country.