

## Social Work Ambassador Elizabeth Craig, NHSCT



Elizabeth currently works as a Senior Social Work Practitioner in Adult Safeguarding for services in permanent care. Her role is Trust wide in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) and she has been working in the role for 3 years

***“I believe that social work is now being seen as a more professional role and this is being assisted by the use of research and evidence based practice.”***

### **Have you always worked in social work?**

I came to work as a Trainee Social Worker in the NHSCT after 12 years in the Criminal Justice Sector. I wanted to work directly with service users to assist them to realise their own potential and to empower them to make changes. I enjoy working closely with service users and their families, listening to them and working with them to assist them to greater self-autonomy. The work is very varied and not boring. It has helped me challenge my own preconceptions as I have worked in family support, children’s disability and adult safeguarding. I have and continue to challenge my own values and beliefs which ensures on-going learning for me as a person.

### **Training to be a Social Worker**

I undertook the B.Sc (Hons) in Social Work (graduate route). Prior to applying I had worked with victims and perpetrators of crime, particularly sexual crime and child abuse. I also worked as a Samaritan and these experiences were invaluable to my social work training and development. It is important to understand issues in society when you are applying for social work and actual hands-on experience is invaluable particularly when considering your own values and reasons for wanting to pursue the career.

### **Professional development**

I have worked in family support and child protection, children’s disability and adult safeguarding. I undertook the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) after qualifying as a social worker and I feel this is important as it gives you an opportunity to learn at a steady pace and to use the enhanced supervision and mentoring provided to develop your knowledge, skills and values. I have completed the Specialist Award in Adult Safeguarding which has been very beneficial to me. Additionally I have been working on my PhD in Social Work which has enhanced my skills regarding evidence based learning. I would like to continue my role in Adult Safeguarding and develop it to heighten the profile.

### **What would you say to someone considering a career in social work?**

I would advise anyone who is considering a career in social work to actively seek out opportunities to volunteer with charities and voluntary organisations. It is important that potential social workers understand the issues a social worker and their service users face. It is also vital they reflect on their own beliefs and values and how they feel they could interact with others with totally different outlooks and beliefs than

them. You need to be patient, non-judgemental, empathetic, understanding and willing to listen.

### **In what way is the social work profession rewarding and what are the challenges?**

I enjoy my work. It is challenging particularly when holding providers of permanent care to account regarding their practices. It is rewarding, when I see the impact of learning from adult safeguarding cases across the sector and it can be frustrating as other statutory bodies often do not understand or realise the impact and seriousness of the abuse of older people and those with a Dementia. I was nominated and shortlisted for the Chairman's Awards in the NHSCCT and was a runner-up. It is very important to me that the issues at play in adult safeguarding receive much greater promotion and hopefully will lead to appropriate legislation to protect adults in need of protection.

I also enjoy liaising with service users and with colleagues to progress cases and ensure people are safeguarded. I enjoy challenging stereotypes and assisting others to question discriminatory attitudes and values.

### **What does it mean to work in a regulated profession and be registered with NISCC?**

To work in a regulated sector ensures my practice meets appropriate established standards and that I have the support of my governing body to assist me with training and to promote my practice, responsibility and accountability. This is extremely important when working with vulnerable service users.

### **Why did you choose to become a Social Work Ambassador and what do you hope to gain from this role?**

I chose to become a Social Work Ambassador as I feel social work is a vital profession which protects, safeguards and empowers those in society, who feel disempowered and isolated. I believe that the need to encourage people into the profession is imperative to ensure those most disadvantaged in society are not further marginalised. Our society is based on a success agenda and rewards those who meet today's standards of success, however success can be measured in so many ways, including social equality and empowerment. Social work promotes this agenda and that benefits society as a whole as people are empowered through social work interventions to realise their potential. I believe that social work is now being seen as a more professional role and this is being assisted by the use of research and evidence based practice.