

Employer Case Study

Health, Social Care & Early Years

Hollybank Trust

Ruth Thewliss is a Team Leader at Hollybank Trust in Mirfield, an independent and voluntary organisation, working with children and adults with complex physical disabilities, often coupled with severe learning difficulties.

Ruth joined Hollybank Trust 11 years ago. After working in the US as a qualified hairdresser she was looking for a career change and enrolled on the HNC in Social Care with Dewsbury College. During the two year course she became first a part-time and then a full-time adult Social Care Worker at Hollybank before successfully completing her award. Continuing with in-house training, including the compulsory social care requirements, Ruth took her first steps towards management and gained a Senior's post and then was appointed Team Leader. She completed NVQ Level 4 in Care as well as the A1 Assessor's award, both provided by her employer. For the last three years she has been seconded to study for a Learning Disability Nursing degree at the University of Huddersfield, keeping up her workplace skills by working part-time at Hollybank. Ruth explained:

"When I first applied for a Job at Hollybank Trust I wanted a change of career from hairdressing and my ambition was merely to work with people with disabilities. I was happy to work part-time as I felt lucky to have attained a job with the Trust. I had no previous experience of care work so I chose to enrol on the HNC Social Care course to support my development. The course gave me good insight and theory around different aspects of social care work that I had not previously considered, this enabled me to develop personally and professionally and I felt confident in applying for a more responsible role of Senior Social Care Worker and then Team Leader.

"My manager suggested that I look to develop my managerial skills and knowledge base so I applied for the NVQ Level 4 Management course, to support my role as Team Leader. After being given training and development opportunities which enabled me to progress to the role of Team Leader I made the decision that I wanted to explore the health needs of people with learning disabilities.

“So I chose to go to university to become a learning disability nurse. Nursing has given me the theory I wanted to be able to look at the needs of people with learning disabilities holistically as I can take into account social, health and residential needs.

“Since qualifying in September I have applied and been successful in attaining the Registered Manager’s post within adult services.

“I feel that I have had the Trust’s support throughout all my career developments both financially and emotionally, and in return I have shown commitment to the Trust through hard work and the completion of all the courses I have chosen to undertake.”

Hollybank Trust believes in making an investment in its staff. There’s an annual training needs analysis but looking at skills and personal development is built into regular supervision sessions between managers and staff. Hollybank also look to the future and match their business development plans with developing staff into managers for new services. People interested and with management potential can study for ILM Levels 2 and 3 or Level 4 Management in order to be ready to fill future vacancies.

Alison Howard, Head of Business Development, comments, *“Our investment in training and development pays off in the consistent high quality we offer to our service users, but it makes business sense too. We can extend our services in the knowledge that we have highly skilled people with the right values ready to step up. Our rates of staff turnover are less than half the regional average and for managers in particular there is a very low turnover and absence rate. Investing in our staff’s futures shows our commitment to them and they repay us with their high levels of skill and motivation.”*