Lauren Caruana

Registered Nursing Associate in CAMHS community Eating Disorders.

In 2013 I began working in my first Healthcare Assistant role after graduating from my BSC Psychology and counselling degree where I developed an interest for the field of Mental Health. In 2016 I then joined the CAMHS community eating disorders team as a support worker. After a year in that role the opportunity to train in a new role as a Nursing Associate emerged and I began my training in 2017. I qualified as a Registered Nursing Associate in 2019, following which I then applied for the Florence Nightingale leadership programme for Nursing Associates. At present I am now completing the Apprenticeship BSC Mental Health Nursing top up to become a fully qualified Mental Health Nurse.

Early on into my training I invested time in helping my team to understand the Nursing Associate role and how it could be used within the team. This was important to not only increase their knowledge of the role, but also in how to support me in my training. As my training progressed I gained experience within different fields of nursing from placement. I learnt different skills and observed different ways of practicing, which I was keen to share with my team for service improvement. Throughout my training I met regularly with my clinical supervisor, mentor and manager to discuss the Nursing Associate role and create ideas of how the role could be implemented within our team. My manager also invited me to talk about the nursing Associate role on our team away day, helping the wider team understand my new role and how it could be used within our service. As I progressed in my training my team was supportive of helping me to carve out a place for the Nursing Associate role in the team, and I started to work more jointly with the wider team, taking part in the reflective team in family therapy and become more involved in cases.

After qualifying I focused on how I could participate in mentoring future Trainee Nursing Associates on placement with the team, introducing a student welcome pack and discussing with my manager how we as a team can support Nursing Associates. I was also been keen to consolidate my learning and skills developed from my training to improve our service. Something I was passionate about was integrating more physical health monitoring for our service users. Given the Nursing Associate training facilitated learning from all fields of nursing it provided me with the opportunity to discuss setting up an ECG clinic to improve our assessments and reduce service users being sent to their GP for an ECG. Following discussions with my manager we were able to implement an ECG clinic which I lead in my role as a nursing associate. Furthermore, with the Nursing Associate role being registered I am able to take more responsibility and accountability within the team and support my colleagues in the wider team.

Helpful Resources and links:

<https://florence-nightingale-foundation.org.uk/mental-health-nursing-associates-leadership-programme/>

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/employershandbook/nursingassociates/employer_guide_to_nursing_associates.pdf>

Nursing Associates twitter account: @WeNursingAssocs