

Penny Collinge, Unit manager



My career story

What was your first job?

Dental nurse/receptionist

How did you get to your current role?

My mum and my big sis was both working as care workers at the local DCC care home. I used to go along to events and help out and just thought what a lovely job so I applied and started as a care worker at the age of 19. I have always given 100% and tried to make a difference. I think this was recognised by my line managers who gave me the confidence to apply for promotion throughout my career. DCC have provided on-going training and development opportunities for me to progress and I ended up in my current role of registered unit manager.

Did you move across different career paths?

I spent quite a while managing in learning disability services, both in specialist units and day services which I also thoroughly enjoyed. I found it quite easy to move across the services as I have built up so many transferable skills over the years, I call these my toolkit and it just gets bigger every day!

Did you face any challenges to get to where you are now?

To be responsible for a team of staff, a large building and the care and wellbeing of all the vulnerable people who live in it takes you on quite a challenging learning journey. It's important to keep updated with law and legislation and your knowledge is constantly tested by health and safety, Care Quality Commission, hygiene inspections, fire regulations, quality and compliance team, GPs, family, staff and so on. To get where I am now, I had to prove to my employer that I was knowledgeable in all these areas, but it doesn't stop once you are in post, it needs to continue and I think it's important to face challenges if you want to improve.

What do you do now?

I am the unit manager to a fantastic team of hard working and committed staff who provide care and support to older people. It's very busy at the moment as we plan to move to a new building in 2020 which I am also going to be responsible for. The duties are wide and varied and include medications management, health and safety, staff pay, rotas, care planning, attending a variety of meetings, safeguarding, staff training and development, attendance management, risk assessments, fund raising, supporting hands-on, responding to emergencies, budgets, emergency admissions, end

of life care, representing DCC positively and promoting our services, attending career events to talk about care work, appearing on TV, and multi-agency working... this is just a few of the day-to-day tasks but there's lots more!

What is it about your job that inspires you?

Being able to provide a service to the most vulnerable people coming in to our home that can be positively life changing, making a difference to someone's day, giving excellent end of life care, seeing inexperienced care workers grow in confidence and abilities and becoming good role models for others, seeing all the good work that care staff do, knowing we are helping families and giving them peace of mind, listening to the life stories of others and wanting to give something back... I can go on!

What is positive to you about working for DCC?

The pay and working conditions are good, the training is excellent and having access to good support services for all its employees which include free physio, access to counselling services and occupational health services, free uniforms, other schemes available if you have young children.

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