

Meet Andrea

New Projects Director, Avenues Group



What is a new project director in social care?

Andrea works as a new projects director with the Avenues Group. This is a relatively new role that has arisen due to the Transforming Care agenda. In other organisations, similar roles might be called service development director or business development director.

The role involves setting up special services for people with learning disabilities, autism or whose behaviour challenges services, and includes:



- liaising with commissioners to ensure individuals get the right social care and health services they need
- managing budgets and preparing costings for new services
- designing and commissioning new services including housing
- representing her organisation at national level to influence policy.

Andrea enjoys the variety in her work – a combination of working at strategic and national policy levels as well as working closely with operational teams who provide care and support.

How did she get here?

Andrea's first job was working with people with learning disabilities at her local riding school. At 17 she started in a support worker role where she enjoyed the social aspects of being in a team of people of a similar age, and the opportunity to work flexibly and overtime to earn extra money.

Andrea was keen to develop herself and has always kept an eye out for opportunities to do so. In her first role she took advantage of any training available and quickly progressed into a management role at the age of 21. At the age of 24 she became a registered manager with a care provider for young adults with behaviour that challenges services.

Andrea had become passionate about making sure people had the best possible care and when she saw an advert for a role as a participation coordinator she was interested in being able to use her skills and experience in a different way. In this role, she worked with lots of different social care providers to help them develop and manage the service they provide. Although she took a drop in pay, this role enabled her to develop her skills and explore a different type of working.

This experience led to roles in quality assurance where Andrea worked on implementing positive behaviour support across an organisation. During this time she gained a diploma from the Tizard Centre. By taking opportunities to apply her skills and experience in different types of roles, Andrea has been able to progress in her social care career.

Andrea recognises that, alongside always wanting things to be better for people who need services, training and qualifications have been important in her career journey. She reduced her working hours to gain a degree in Managing Community and Voluntary Organisations.

Where can it take her?

Although now an experienced senior manager, Andrea hopes to do a formal leadership qualification so she can progress further in a leadership role.

She firmly believes that if anyone wants to progress, they should take up available training opportunities and gain qualifications to develop their skills and knowledge. She says “this particularly helps if you’re changing jobs and your new employer doesn’t know much about you.”

She also thinks it’s important to be honest with yourself about what makes you tick so you can pursue the right opportunities.

What would she say to others interested in a career in care?

Andrea says it is really important to work for an organisation that shares the same values as you. She says “I think it’s essential to work for an organisation that sees the world in a similar way as I do. That way I know I can trust my judgement when making decisions at work.”

The Avenues Group likes to support people to progress and is proud when support workers develop to become managers.

If progression is something you want from a job, look out for an organisation that supports people to do this

