



Meet Nicola

Head of Care Services, Abbeyfield The Dales

Nicola first started working as a nursery nurse but after witnessing the care and compassion provided to a family member after a stroke, decided to come and work in social care. She started working as a domiciliary care worker in a small family owned business, and has since progressed through a number of managerial roles to become a head of care services.

What is a head of care services in social care?

Nicola works as head of care services with Abbeyfield The Dales. She's part of a development team, overseeing the building of a new care service to support people with dementia.



She says **“I’m really excited to be currently involved in the design and planning of a new facility to support 30 people with dementia in a specialist dementia suite, and 49 extra care apartments for those in need of extra care. I work closely with the architects and various trades people, and will soon be recruiting the wide range of staff needed: carers, admin and reception, maintenance, domestic and catering.”**

Her role also involves:

- managing a team of registered managers who run their own care services
- supporting the chief executive officer and working with the director of shared services and head of housing
- working with CQC and local authorities to ensure that all services are compliant and meet regulatory standards
- dealing with compliments and complaints in relation to the care and operational services
- developing a training strategy and training resources for the organisation.

Nicola really enjoys managing a team and is very motivated to develop team members in their roles.



How did she get here?

Nicola has had a variety of roles in social care.

She first started as a nursery nurse and a nanny but realised that her heart wasn't in it and decided to go back to college to improve her qualifications, with the view of going to university to study podiatry.

However when a family member had a stroke, Nicola was inspired by the great care they received and decided to try a career in social care.

Her first role was as a domiciliary care worker for a privately owned family business. She grasped every opportunity for training and from here she progressed to a senior care worker role. She soon realised this was a job she loved doing and got great job satisfaction from supporting her team to provide good care.

Nicola then became an area coordinator and worked with the local hospital to provide discharge services. She coordinated a team of carers who visited individuals in their own homes when they came out of hospital.

Nicola then became a care coordinator, from where she progressed to a junior manager role. Her next step was operations manager where she was responsible for a team of area coordinators and care workers. She trained to become an assessor so could support staff to complete qualifications.

Nicola then moved to a company which was being set up from scratch and assisted the owners to develop key business ideas and opportunities. She had lots of opportunities to develop including completing a CMI Level 5 Management and Leadership Award and a Level 7 Diploma in Management. Within this organisation she again progressed through a number of roles, including regional manager, until she got to where she is currently.

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

Nicola suggests making sure that you find an employer who will support and develop you. She says "you don't need qualifications to enter the sector. Good employers will support and nurture you. There are so many opportunities if you want to progress your career."

There's so much job satisfaction from seeing the difference that small actions can have on people's lives. Nicola would encourage people to think about giving care work a go. There's a myth that it's a dead end job and that you spend your time drinking tea with old ladies – it's so much more than that!

 **There are so many opportunities if you want to progress in your career** 