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Coming from a family of nurses, I followed in their footsteps and began my Registered General Nurse training at NHS Lanarkshire School of Nursing in 1984. I was a staff nurse in a medical receiving ward for over a year which I loved, but felt that within such an acute setting I was not getting the optimum opportunity to utilise the skills I believed I excelled in, such as being creative, engaging in therapeutic interaction and ensuring truly person centred care for individuals.

Having experienced valuable and rewarding relationships with adults and children with learning disabilities throughout my life I was initially surprised but also very excited to learn that there was actually a conversion course which enabled Registered Nurses to train for 18 months, while still employed by their NHS board. This course led to Learning Disability Nurse Registration or as they were called at the time, Registered Mental Handicapped Nurses. I completed this course and as a registered LD nurse I worked in various long stay wards in Kirklands Hospital before moving to a community post in 1996. I spent the next 16 years in various localities within NHS Lanarkshire initially as a staff nurse but then as a Senior Charge Nurse/Team Leader. During this time I also spent 4 years on secondment to South Lanarkshire Council as Transitions Coordinator for young people with additional support needs and I gained the Specialist Practitioner Qualification and a BSc in Community LD Nursing at Glasgow Caledonian University.

The most significant turning point in my career was shortly after the publication of Strengthening the Commitment (StC) in 2012. NHS Lanarkshire created a seconded post within the Practice Improvement and Development Team to support the implementation of the recommendations from StC. During this period I helped implement a new LD nursing framework into the service.

I am now a Senior Nurse for the MH and LD service and see this position as a great opportunity to raise the profile of LD Nurses within NHS Lanarkshire and to ensure better outcomes for this client group.