

# Anna Wollman, Community Mental Health Nurse, SW Community MH Team

## First Steps into Research Gateway Award



### Tell us a bit about yourself and your career to date

I qualified as a nurse in 2019. My first role was as a Staff Nurse in one of the Acute Admissions wards at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. I have worked in my current role in the community since April 2021. I have a previous undergraduate degree in Social Anthropology. Between completing my first degree and starting my nurse training, I spent a year in China teaching English to middle-school students, worked in various customer service roles and completed an MSc in Medical Anthropology.

### What is the focus of your Gateway Award?

I will be working on the More RESPECT study at Edinburgh Napier University with Professor Liz Hughes. This study involves a randomised controlled trial of a sexual health intervention within community mental health settings, aiming to promote good sexual health amongst people with severe mental illness.

I'll be involved in this work from end of January to end July 2023.

### What motivated you to apply for this Gateway Award?

As I've been in my current role for nearly two years now, I had started to consider my next career steps and think about my longer-term career goals. In the back of my mind I have always thought that I might want to complete a PhD, but

am unsure how to go about this. I find that within nursing, research is often not encouraged as a potential career option. I saw the Clinical Academic Gateway Awards advertised and felt this would be a great opportunity to explore the clinical research pathway with guidance from an experienced academic. I also have a longstanding interest in sexual health and felt the project I applied to could have a practical impact on my current role.

### What are you hoping to get out of the award you have received?

Although I have done a lot of study prior to becoming a nurse, I have very little by way of practical research skills. I am therefore hoping to find out more about the research process and how this is done in a clinical setting. At the

moment the research project is in its early stages so I have the opportunity to experience the ethics approval process and the practicalities of setting-up a study. With the help of my mentor I have already begun meeting and networking with various people, including clinical academics who can share with me their journey and experiences leading to their current role. I will also be attending a Clinical Research Methodology course at the University of Edinburgh.

**What difference do you think having this funded support will make to your understanding of research?**

I think it will make a huge difference. I have only had a couple of study days so far but already feel that I have learned a lot. Having funded support also means that I have the benefit of protected time, away from my clinical role, to focus on my professional development. Given the pressures that all services are facing currently, this is invaluable. I also think that having a £500 grant to spend on attending courses or conferences is a great opportunity to widen my understanding of research even further. I was worried I might not find something to spend this on but I am finding that there are so many interesting research and networking opportunities out there once you start looking.

**What do you hope to do in the future and how do you think this Gateway Award will help you achieve this?**

Through doing the First Steps Award, I am hoping to get an idea of whether research and a PhD is something I want to pursue further, and gain some valuable experience for continuing with this if I wish. Even if I don't wish to pursue a PhD in the end, I feel that doing this Award will have opened my eyes to the world of nursing research. As a clinician, I feel this can only serve to enhance my nursing practice and career progression.

**For more information please contact:**  
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