West Midlands Prisons

Young Offenders Institute
HMYOI Brinsford
New Road, Featherstone, Wolverhampton, WV10 7PY
01902 533450

HMYOI Swinfen Hall
Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS14 9QS
01543 484000

HMYOI Werrington
Stoke On Trent, ST9 0DX
01782 663300

HMYOI Stoke Heath
Market Drayton, Shropshire, TF9 2L
01630 636000

Women’s
HMP Drake Hall
Eccleshall, Stafford, ST21 6LD
01785 774100

Adult Male
HMP Birmingham
Winson Green Road, Birmingham, B18 4AS
0121 3652000

HMP Dovegate
Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, ST14 9XR
01283 827400

HMP Hewell
Hewell Lane, Redditch, Worcestershire, B97 6QS
01527 785000

HMP Featherstone
New Road, Featherstone, Wolverhampton, WV10 7PU
01902 703000

HMP Featherstone 2
New Prison
Due to Open 2012

HMP Long Lartin
South Littleton, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 8TZ
01386 295100

HMP Stafford
Goal Road, Stafford, ST16 3AW
01785 773000

HMP Shrewsbury
The Dana
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY1 2HR
01743 273000

Careers in Prison Healthcare
a view from inside

Design: www.wilddogdesign.co.uk
Photographs: www.henkimages.com & NHS Photo Library
Printed on Recycled paper

National Treatment Agency
for Substance Misuse

West Midlands Government Office
2nd floor
5 St Philips Place
Colmore Row
Birmingham
B3 2PW
Tel 0121 352 5541
Fax 0121 352 5578

www.nta.nhs.uk
Careers in Prison Healthcare

Prisoners have some of the greatest health needs of the population, yet are often the least likely to be in contact with healthcare services. Choosing a career in Prison Health offers the opportunity to work within a range of young offender, women and men’s prisons. Entry to prison work can be from a wide range of nursing backgrounds and staff are part of a multi disciplinary team, working holistically with the patient to make a real difference to their lives.

Opportunities exist within a prison for qualified and support staff roles, in primary care, mental health and substance misuse services. With the opening of a new prison in 2012, opportunities in this area are growing, and this leaflet aims to give you a view about what working in prison health is really like.

Wendy Sweeney
Clinical Nurse Manager

Can you describe your career path?
I qualified as a Registered Mental Health Nurse, but then left the NHS for a while and did some work with children with autism. In those days, prison health care was solely the responsibility of the Prison Service and they needed someone for some short-term cover. I thought “I’ll try that”. Initially I arrived to cover for three weeks, but 12 months later the Governor bought my contract, and I’ve been here ever since. Nearly 16 years now!

In my career I have always had an interest in working with children and young people within mental health, and as soon as I arrived, literally within the first week, I thought “Yes, this is for me, this is somewhere where I can do some good and I can make a difference.”

What do you like most about nursing before you arrived?
My fear was that it was going to be dangerous and scary. That there was going to be some people locked away behind doors, and they all wanted to hurt me. I think my family had the same concerns when I came, and that was blown out of the water on day one. It simply isn’t dangerous. I’ve worked here now 16 years, and I’ve never been assaulted, I’ve never even come close to being assaulted or being physically threatened at all. There’s been a few comments thrown, as a young person would (laughter), but I’ve never at any point felt physically threatened.

I certainly feel it’s one of the safest places you can nurse. We have the support of trained Prison Officers on hand. If there is a person that is displaying violent behaviour, we don’t have to deal with it.

What was the greatest myth about prison nursing before you arrived?
My fear was that it was going to be dangerous and scary. That there was going to be some people locked away behind doors, and they all wanted to hurt me. I think my family had the same concerns when I came, and that was blown out of the water on day one. It simply isn’t dangerous. I’ve worked here now 16 years, and I’ve never been assaulted, I’ve never even come close to being assaulted or being physically threatened at all. There’s been a few comments thrown, as a young person would (laughter), but I’ve never at any point felt physically threatened.

Also we are looking for people that are not judgmental in any way. We want staff that understand that every human being has the right to good healthcare, to respect, to privacy and to dignity. And that they won’t let any preconceived ideas bias the care that they give.

Is it a worthwhile career move?
Increasingly nursing, within the prison is becoming more recognised which is a good thing, and it’s certainly becoming better known.

Five or six years ago, a lot of people didn’t realise that there were nurses working in prisons, whereas now we’re an integral part of the PCT. We sit on all the PCT boards and their committees; we’re represented very well in the PCT now. No longer do you hear, “Ooh, do they nurse in prison?” Now people know about the job and see that from a career perspective it can bring you personally great value.

Nursing in prisons covers a wide and diverse remit of nursing. We do everything from emergency care, mental health care, primary care and nurse led clinics. We’ve had staff that come in and up skill on nurse led clinics for example. It is a very positive career stepping-stone, as well as being hugely rewarding.

As soon as I arrived, literally within the first week, I thought “Yes, this is for me, this is somewhere where I can do some good and I can make a difference.”

As you gain experience you become aware that there are very different people in prison. People who are not acceptable and that there is going to be dangerous and scary. That there was going to be someone for some short-term cover. I thought “I’ll try that”. Initially I arrived to cover for three weeks, but 12 months later the Governor bought my contract, and I’ve been here ever since. Nearly 16 years now!

In my career I have always had an interest in working with children and young people within mental health, and as soon as I arrived, literally within the first week, I thought “Yes, this is for me, this is somewhere where I can do some good and I can make a difference.”

What do you think it takes to be a prison nurse?
We get people who are often at their lowest ebb. It is a very positive career stepping-stone, as well as being hugely rewarding.

A thank you goes a long way, with young people. He was a young man that managed to turn his life round. We can’t change everybody, but occasionally we succeed and you think, “Yes, actually I did make a difference.”

Vacancies
For details of current healthcare vacancies, visit the NHS jobs website or contact the Head of Healthcare at your local prison.
www.jobs.nhs.uk

Careers in Prison Healthcare

Prisoners have some of the greatest health needs of the population, yet are often the least likely to be in contact with healthcare services. Choosing a career in Prison Health offers the opportunity to work within a range of young offender, women and men’s prisons. Entry to prison work can be from a wide range of nursing backgrounds and staff are part of a multi disciplinary team, working holistically with the patient to make a real difference to their lives.

Opportunities exist within a prison for qualified and support staff roles, in primary care, mental health and substance misuse services. With the opening of a new prison in 2012, opportunities in this area are growing, and this leaflet aims to give you a view about what working in prison health is really like.

Wendy Sweeney
Clinical Nurse Manager

Can you describe your career path?
I qualified as a Registered Mental Health Nurse, but then left the NHS for a while and did some work with children with autism. In those days, prison health care was solely the responsibility of the Prison Service and they needed someone for some short-term cover. I thought “I’ll try that”. Initially I arrived to cover for three weeks, but 12 months later the Governor bought my contract, and I’ve been here ever since. Nearly 16 years now!

In my career I have always had an interest in working with children and young people within mental health, and as soon as I arrived, literally within the first week, I thought “Yes, this is for me, this is somewhere where I can do some good and I can make a difference.”

What do you like most about nursing before you arrived?
My fear was that it was going to be dangerous and scary. That there was going to be some people locked away behind doors, and they all wanted to hurt me. I think my family had the same concerns when I came, and that was blown out of the water on day one. It simply isn’t dangerous. I’ve worked here now 16 years, and I’ve never been assaulted, I’ve never even come close to being assaulted or being physically threatened at all. There’s been a few comments thrown, as a young person would (laughter), but I’ve never at any point felt physically threatened.

I certainly feel it’s one of the safest places you can nurse. We have the support of trained Prison Officers on hand. If there is a person that is displaying violent behaviour, we don’t have to deal with it.

What was the greatest myth about prison nursing before you arrived?
My fear was that it was going to be dangerous and scary. That there was going to be some people locked away behind doors, and they all wanted to hurt me. I think my family had the same concerns when I came, and that was blown out of the water on day one. It simply isn’t dangerous. I’ve worked here now 16 years, and I’ve never been assaulted, I’ve never even come close to being assaulted or being physically threatened at all. There’s been a few comments thrown, as a young person would (laughter), but I’ve never at any point felt physically threatened.

Also we are looking for people that are not judgmental in any way. We want staff that understand that every human being has the right to good healthcare, to respect, to privacy and to dignity. And that they won’t let any preconceived ideas bias the care that they give.

Is it a worthwhile career move?
Increasingly nursing, within the prison is becoming more recognised which is a good thing, and it’s certainly becoming better known.

Five or six years ago, a lot of people didn’t realise that there were nurses working in prisons, whereas now we’re an integral part of the PCT. We sit on all the PCT boards and their committees; we’re represented very well in the PCT now. No longer do you hear, “Ooh, do they nurse in prison?” Now people know about the job and see that from a career perspective it can bring you personally great value.

Nursing in prisons covers a wide and diverse remit of nursing. We do everything from emergency care, mental health care, primary care and nurse led clinics. We’ve had staff that come in and up skill on nurse led clinics for example. It is a very positive career stepping-stone, as well as being hugely rewarding.

As soon as I arrived, literally within the first week, I thought “Yes, this is for me, this is somewhere where I can do some good and I can make a difference.”

What do you think it takes to be a prison nurse?
We get people who are often at their lowest ebb. It is a very positive career stepping-stone, as well as being hugely rewarding.

A thank you goes a long way, with young people. He was a young man that managed to turn his life round. We can’t change everybody, but occasionally we succeed and you think, “Yes, actually I did make a difference.”

Vacancies
For details of current healthcare vacancies, visit the NHS jobs website or contact the Head of Healthcare at your local prison.
www.jobs.nhs.uk
The button and they're there to protect you; we've got radios that the Officers will always have that you don't have that you've had in the prison service so I was aware of the potential.

Were you nervous about working in a prison? I've been here nearly for five years now, and I find it a very safe place to work. Help is not more than 30 seconds away if anything crops up, but I've never felt threatened in any way, shape or form.

What do you like most about the job? I'd say it can be quite challenging at times. We have people in here who have had a difficult upbringing and have not necessarily been able to talk to other people in the past about this. To be able to feel that they can come to us and confide things, which they've not been able to talk to other family members or their friends about is very rewarding. These issues might have been the cause of them getting into trouble in the first place. Potentially we can help them turn their lives around.

What does your job entail? Basically, we're here to help the doctors and nurses run the various clinics or in their roles. We also have an inpatient facility where we perform different activities with the lads who are down there.
Amanda Tunnicliffe
Integrated Drug Treatment System (IDTS)

What was your career path?
I'm now the senior IDTS nurse, but I've been a qualified nurse for 15 years working in orthopaedics. In my last job, I'd got to the top of where I could go and I fancied a change.

I was looking really to be a manager at a senior level. I've always been interested in substance misuse as a separate field, so I decided to have a look and see what was out there. Several jobs came up and Integrated Drug Treatment System was one of them. It was brand new to me, although I'd worked with alcohol and drugs within the hospital setting, because having worked in orthopaedic trauma, we did have quite a few cases there.

What was your first impression of the prison job?
I came for an interview 14 months ago and immediately I loved the prison setting.

My first impression was “It's like Forridge” as it was quite an old Victorian prison. It was a bit daunting on the first look round, the very first impression. But on getting to talk to people, I just realised that I was going to fit into it and this has given me the professional development I was looking for.

The work has its ups and downs but I love it.

What do you like most about the job?
IDTS is challenging – the client's very mindset needs work. When they come in, they're already problematic drug users and they want to continue. The hard work goes into actually changing the client's mind and focusing on recovery.

We need to make them realise that there is more out there than taking drugs. It's hard work, but when you see a client start to become very motivated and begin looking at the future, it is rewarding. There are clients that have actually changed their behaviour and mindset to realise that there is light at the end of the tunnel. If there's one person that you've got drug-free, then that one person is worth all the hard work.

What would you say to someone considering moving over to IDTS?
IDTS is rewarding and hard work but if you're willing to put that hard work in, the benefits outweigh anything else. Drug working now is completely different to how it used to be. There is the psycho-social aspect, as well as clinical nursing and you get to focus on both. It is so rewarding, at the end of the day actually make a difference to someone's life.

I think because drug use and alcohol problems are so rife out in the community, that if for some reason I decided to leave prison work, the experience, understanding and empathy I have learned here would be invaluable.

What was the greatest myth about prison nursing before you arrived?
You hear things in the news; but when you arrive you realise that security is in place. As long as you are aware of what could happen and what the procedures are within the prison, you're quite safe. I've never felt threatened.

Of course you do get the odd client that will play up, especially if it's a treatment issue that's not popular with him. People react in different ways, but as long as you've got a procedure in place and a policy that you follow, you are fine.

If there's one person that you know that you've got drug-free, then that one person is worth all the hard work.

And first impressions? That's a great team-working environment. That's evident in whichever prison you go to. It's a difficult and complex environment to work in; primarily because you're trying to deliver a service within a service. Which always raises complex questions – not least the old question, as to whether it is 'patient or 'prisoner'? So you have that dilemma to work through.

What does your job involve?
I work for the Prison In Reach Team which is a service that is based on a community model but placed within the prison setting. Our role is to care-coordinate the guys when they're in prison, if they've previously been under the care of community mental health teams, to ensure that that care continues. If they haven't, and they require continuing care, then we coordinate that care in the community.

We're a multi-disciplinary team; we've got social workers, occupational therapists, psychiatrists - effectively we mirror a community team. Our main focus is to facilitate a smooth transition back into the community.

Are there career opportunities?
Certainly. For a newly-qualified psychiatric nurse, they get the chance to specialise and look at different ailments. For instance, my speciality is adult ADHD. I've been able to pursue courses around adult ADHD, go on conferences, forums, national and local forums, and then transfer that learning back into the workplace.

I also lead on prison transfer, so I work closely with the local MAPPA team (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement), whose role is to ensure that the public is protected. So I work closely with the Ministry of Justice, and if somebody needs to go to hospital for treatment, my role is to ensure that this happens in a timely manner, within government guidelines. I also facilitate the movement to either a private or NHS facility, and we work closely with the MAPPA teams to ensure that there's no restrictions on patients going to certain areas. It is both incredibly rewarding and demanding.

There's no two ways about it, working in the prison is a demanding role. It is a complex environment, but when you make a breakthrough, or you make a difference, that difference is massive which is highly rewarding.

What would you say to someone considering moving over to prison nursing?
If you want to enhance your clinical and care-coordination skills, and to really experience multi-disciplinary working, then the prison environment is the place to do it. You're not just experiencing multi-disciplinary working in a clinical setting, you're experiencing it in the truest sense of the word, working with another service. You're working with probation, prison staff, psychology – a broad range of people that you would never get to work with elsewhere.