

Q&A with Billy, a Service Manager at Wigan Council



What's your role at Wigan Council?

I'm a service manager working within adult provider services so I lead on some of our direct service provision for people with disabilities be it learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autism, complex needs, etc. The services include our day opportunities, when people come in during the day to provide a bit of a break for the families but also to provide a stimulating programme of activity to support development for people with disabilities.

"I also lead on a service called Shared Lives, which is a national service where members of the public give their time to support individuals with disabilities. It can include someone with disabilities moving into the person's home, so a little bit like fostering. They get a payment, but it's not a salary. They really do share their life, they become part of the family. We have respite services too, where people who live at home with their families can come and stay in our respite services for a weekend, a week or even more. It's a break for the individual and a break for the family as well."

How did you get into social care at Wigan Council?

"I've worked for Wigan Council for 20 plus years, always within social care. I started with the Council when I was about to turn 17 as what you'd class as an apprentice now. After school I did all kinds of jobs, but I ended up working at a day centre and I

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just absolutely fell in love with working with people, making a difference and then just progressed through different positions to where I am today.

“When I started, I never thought of having the career that I have, but with the support of everyone around me I've got where I am. In fact, one of my colleagues is the person who originally took me on years ago!”



What do you like about working in adult social care at Wigan Council?

“It’s busy and it’s varied, but I think the biggest thing about working with people is that not every day is the same. People don’t fit into boxes, so each day is different. One day I could be doing a trampoline session with a person with disabilities, and next day I could be walking in the Lake District, and the next I could be helping them to do some personal shopping, or doing some cooking. Developing those skills – and helping others too – really has changed my life.

What’s so great about working in Wigan?

“Everyone at Wigan has time for you, too. Only the other day I saw our deputy leader and our Chief Exec and they’ve always got time to listen and are very, very supportive. You can see that they have the passion for what we do. It isn’t just a job, they really want to make a difference. And that passion pushes us to want to do better.”

“Wigan is a great place to be and a great place to live. It’s got great connections in terms of rail, road – it’s really handy for Liverpool and Manchester. It’s a really, really

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friendly place. Everywhere you go, people will say hello. And there's loads of different things happening in the community, there's something for everyone. I have a dog, so I really enjoy walking and running and there are loads of hidden green places that feel miles away from home, but you're only 10 minutes away. There's a great community feel too. On our street we have street parties and we're always in and out of each other's homes. A few weeks ago I was making a chilli and realised I hadn't the kidney beans – I went on our street's Facebook group and the next minute I had three tins on my doorstep!"

What's your advice to someone interested in a career in adult social care?

"I suppose, it's trying to get the message across that it's probably not what they think. You actually get more out of it than your wage, it's more than just a job. You create bonds and relationships with the people you support. I've had some of the best experiences in my life in my work. I've worked Christmas Day for a number of years and it's just great to be able to create that environment for other people to have a fantastic experience on Christmas Day.

"The biggest thing that we look for in our staff is for them to bring themselves to work, we're not trying to mould people. We want people to bring their skills, their hobbies, interests. We've got people who are musicians and they can create different sessions, bringing in guitars and things like that. It's not just about doing task after task, it's about sharing some of yourself and creating a difference experience using your own skills."