

I Wanna Be a Nursery Nurse

It's a wee bit noisy in the nursery – that sort of goes with the territory - and several kids need your attention, at what's only the start of one very demanding shift. Is this the job of your dreams?

An outgoing personality and a genuine affinity with children are the obvious prerequisites for anyone contemplating a career as nursery nurse – but a commitment to the qualifications needed for the job is just as essential.

It isn't a major obstacle for any intelligent would-be nursery nurse with the enthusiasm to master the detail, but it does involve two separate SVQ courses under the Childrens Care: Learning and Development banner, each taking six to 12 months (the average total time spent is around 18 months).

Many get started by proving they are competent babysitters or childminders on their own time – potential employers will certainly take that sort of experience into account.

Thistle Training, in Perth, is a sister firm to Wonderland, part of Little Einstein's Kindergarten Ltd, a large local nursery where the ethos centres heavily on education laced with a great deal of fun.

Thistle's trainers say people go into nursery nursing mainly because of the job satisfaction element – you are dealing closely with children during the most formative period of their lives, and that can be as stimulating as it is challenging.

In this sort of company there is certainly scope for promotion – 'though not all nursery nurses want to pursue that route. Pay scales vary according to age and experience, from training wage to – potentially – management level.

The amount of energy needed means the job can appeal to younger people, but that's no hard and fast rule: anyone who has the right personal traits can hope to derive real satisfaction from the job.

Meanwhile the regular perception that all nursery nurses are women isn't entirely accurate: men are still the exception, but there's absolutely no bar to the "right" men working just as effectively as women.

Perhaps the most important single attribute, apart from enthusiasm, is an implicit recognition that nursery nursing is about a great deal more than just "childminding" – even at its most imaginative – and that in every real sense it's an educational process which should give children a vibrant, stimulating and sociable preparation for life at school. Being part of that process is what makes nursery nursing a vocation more than a job.

Tanya Small, associate director, Thistle Training Services, Perth.

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