

International Nurses Day Profile  
Claire Roelink – CDHB  
Also for CPIT

Nurse graduate Claire Roelink likes a challenge. She has progressed within the Specialist Mental Health Services (SMHS) at Canterbury DHB, working in forensics for a number of years, before developing and then leading new roles within the service. At only 29 years old, she is currently seconded into the new Clinical Team Coordinator role for the SMHS.

Eight years ago, after Claire completed her nursing degree at Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT), she joined the graduate programme in the SMHS, working for a short period in ID service, followed by four years as staff nurse in Te Whare Manaaki, the medium secure forensic unit.

“Forensics was a good fit for me,” she says.

“It is a dynamic and sometimes challenging environment, because the service is dedicated to assessing and treating people that have acted violently in the context of mental disorder, or who may be at risk of doing so. It also caters for prisoners that require inpatient treatment.

“There are also extra challenges involved in the rehabilitation process when there are concurrent criminal proceedings underway which impacts the wellness journey of the patient.

“These challenges make it an interesting place to work, but it was the staff and the incredibly positive experience that hooked me in.”

Claire says she felt supported and included, and was given every opportunity to learn. Indeed she has. Over the last three years, she has also completed a number of post graduate papers and completed a Master of Health Sciences, Endorsed in Nursing (Clinical) (2012).

At the same time, Claire became part of developing a business case for creating a Clinical Nurse Specialist role in the Forensic Service. She was offered the post in Te Whare Manaaki in 2011.

“This role was all about providing leadership and promoting the nursing perspective and working in partnership with the multi-disciplinary team. Mentoring, role modelling, and providing input into service development were also core parts of the role.”

Earlier in January of this year Claire was seconded to the role of Clinical Team Coordinator, a developing role. Working across the whole service, she has clinical oversight of, and coordinates the after-hours multi-disciplinary team.

Claire has adopted the philosophy learnt off her peers – to encourage professional development. Aside from the day to day work and busy home life with a 4-year old and an 11-month old, Claire has also become a Professional Development and Recognition Programme (PDRP) Assessor and Clinical Supervisor, and was a casual clinical Lecturer for CPIT, working with students on their clinical placements.

“I’m really passionate about helping people with their own further education, and being able to foster effective learning environments,” says Claire.

“I’ve worked in the SMHS for a few years now so I get to see when past students/new graduates return to the SMHS and develop their nursing skills and some take on advanced nursing roles, providing leadership within the service. It’s great to see them develop.”

UK-born Claire, who moved to New Zealand in her teens, says she enjoys the challenges, the variety and the learning, all within a very supportive, collegial environment.

“It also helps that I have a very supportive husband!”

“I constantly promote nursing as a great and rewarding profession,” she adds.

“It can take you anywhere, is constantly evolving and you are always expanding your knowledge base and skills. Mental Health Nursing is diverse and provides you with so many opportunities to make a difference.”

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On May 12 it is International Nurses Day. Take a moment to think about the significant contribution Claire and others like her make to our and our loved ones’ lives, and to thank them.

If you are interested in joining the profession, up skilling or finding resources contact the South Island Alliance Regional Training Hub [here](#).