

# Enhanced Practice Case Study:

## Beth Hawksworth

### Overview

Beth is a specialist dietitian working with children and young adults in a mental health setting. This is her first specialist role after having completed a general rotational role post registration. Beth is keen to share her journey as she recognises that embarking on a career in mental health can be daunting for dietitians early in their career but has found her experience to be supportive and rewarding.

### Developing from entry level into enhanced

Originally from Wales, Beth completed her undergraduate degree in Dietetics at Plymouth University in 2022, before returning home for her first registered role. Beth accepted a rotational role in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, which offered preceptorship for newly registered dietitians, and included an optional rotation into a mental health setting. Given the limited exposure to this at university, Beth wasn't sure whether this was an area that she wanted to work in, but a rotation was an excellent opportunity to experience this. Beth recognised that although the setting was different, the dietetic skills and knowledge she had attained were transferable. In particular, good communication skills and the ability to establish a rapport with people is essential to ensure they benefit from interventions. Many of the people who access these services will also have long term conditions, such as type 1 diabetes or coeliac disease, so knowledge of a broad range of dietetic interventions is required.

This experience gave Beth the confidence to apply for and accept a 12-month secondment as a specialist dietitian within the Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS). As Beth is newly working



within the enhanced level, she has proactively sought out training opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills that will support her transition into a specialist role within a mental health environment. This has included making use of her regular appraisal sessions to develop an appropriate personal development plan.

The role has offered opportunities to develop enhanced motivational interviewing and counselling skills which Beth feels may not have been so easy to access in roles outside the mental health environment. Beth has enjoyed the ability to develop relationships with people who access the service. Due to the long-term nature of their conditions, Beth has been able to follow their individual journeys and observe their rehabilitation, which she has found rewarding. Beth is aware that working with children, young people and families to treat mental health conditions can impact on her own wellbeing. As such, she ensures she regularly accesses group and one to one supervision to manage the potential impact of this.

### Role Impact

Beth mainly delivers interactive face to face outpatient sessions with young people and their families who are living with anxiety, depression, ADHD, autism or eating disorders. The dietetic role is well established within

the wider multi-professional team that includes a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, family therapist, medics and mental health nurses. Beth enjoys working in an environment where her role is an integral part of a team. She can influence and significantly contribute to holistic interventions for service users, playing a key role in bridging the connection between mental health and nutrition – an area that is often overlooked or underestimated in its importance.

Beth finds it deeply fulfilling to see the difference her role makes in helping young people navigate critical and vulnerable stages of life, which contributes to their long-term health, self-confidence, and quality of life.

### Career Aspirations

As Beth is new in her specialist role and early in her career, she recognises that there is a lot to learn. She

feels that she has found an area of dietetics that she wants to further expand her knowledge and skills and advocates this as a career opportunity for other dietetic colleagues. Beth is aware that moving into mental health settings can be daunting at first, especially as there may be limited opportunities to experience this within practice-based learning or as a first registered role. As such, Beth does get involved in supporting dietetic learners from Cardiff University. She is keen to develop this further by becoming more involved in supporting learners or new registrants to gain experience in a mental health setting.

Beth would like to pursue further qualifications in nutrition and behaviour to develop an in-depth knowledge of the relationships between our body, mind and nutrition. She also aims to continue to develop further expertise in specific areas such as eating disorders.

### How does Beth work across the 4 pillars of practice?

Beth embeds the principles of all 4 pillars within her practice and feels she is strongest within the 'professional practice' pillar. She is developing her 'facilitated learning' pillar by providing education to other healthcare professionals on the dietetic role, as well as supporting dietetic learners. She has recently commenced a quality improvement project, which is helping to develop her 'research and evidence' and 'leadership' skills. This project includes developing a pre-recorded resource to ensure easily accessible, evidence-based information exploring the link between food and mood. As part of the quality improvement process, Beth will aim to measure the impact of this resource, potentially by developing a questionnaire or survey that measures change in knowledge around this topic.

