



Anna Kelly

**Advanced Practitioner
Speech and Language
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Service**

Can you give us a brief outline of your work history?

I have worked as a paediatric speech and language therapist for over 10 years based in community clinics, early years settings, mainstream and special schools. Last year, I took up a newly developed speech and language therapy post within a specialist multi-disciplinary team for looked after children within the Southern Trust. This post is currently focused on supporting the language and communication needs of young people (13-17 years) living in residential homes.

What made you decide this career path?

I was always drawn to the thought of a career in health and social care. I did some research into the role of a speech and language therapist, and I was immediately struck by how interesting and rewarding a career it could be. I arranged some work experience in a special school shadowing a speech and language therapist and from that point, I realised that this was the career for me.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

Following my A-Levels, I completed a BSc Honours in Speech and Language Therapy at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

On a personal level, I feel that qualities such as compassion, empathy, confidence, and good interpersonal skills are essential to the role. Professionally, being well organised, a proactive member of a team, and showing good judgement in a variety of situations are all essential skills. It is also important to grasp opportunities to enhance your professional development in order to provide a quality service to clients.

What does a typical day involve?

As this is a brand-new post, there is a huge variety and lots of new learning and experiences. I start the working day by checking my emails, looking at my diary for the day ahead, and making a to-do list. I spend the majority of my time at present in each of the children's homes within the trust. This allows me to spend some time getting to know the young people and staff and to further develop my role. I work directly with some of the young people as well as indirectly by providing support to staff within the homes and the wider professional network.

What do you like best about your job?

I enjoy developing working relationships with clients and colleagues. I feel that it is a privilege to be in a position to enhance a person's ability to communicate and to hopefully contribute to a better quality of life for them.

What advice would you give anyone thinking of doing your job?

As a student, embrace all of your clinical placements and stay open-minded in your thinking about your career options within the diverse world of speech and language therapy. Use your first few years as a newly qualified practitioner to gain clinical experience with a range of client groups before deciding where your heart lies!