



Catherine Polley

Occupational
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Learning Disability
Team

Introduce yourself. Where do you work? What is your job role?

Hello, my name is Catherine, and I am an Occupational Therapist working in the Community Adult Learning Disability Team. I am currently based in the East Belfast Learning Disability Team at Mount Oriel.

What does your job entail?

What I love about my job is that each day/week is totally different, the role is so varied. One day I could be completing group work activities focusing on independent living skills and the next I could be completing postural assessments, housing adaptations or sensory advice. I feel it is a real privilege to work so closely with our group of clients and their families, you really get to know and build a rapport with them which adds to our holistic approach as Occupational Therapists.

How did you get into this line of work?

I always knew I wanted to work in healthcare, however I wasn't really sure which path in healthcare I wanted to take. If I am totally honest, I did not know what Occupational Therapy was until my great grandmother had a stroke and was referred to an OT. I loved how the OT made such a difference in her presentation and self-esteem, for example, when she was able to sit up again following the stroke. The OT also worked on her upper limb weakness to establish more functional use of her arm and hand in everyday tasks, which we all take for granted!

Outline your career to date

When I qualified in 2014 it was quite difficult to get a job at home as there were little vacancies available. I went to England and worked as an OT in an acute hospital setting and gained some experience to apply for a job at home. I then worked as an agency OT in the Ulster Hospital and commenced my first permanent OT role in the Belfast Trust rotations in 2015. I would strongly recommend a rotational post, if possible, after qualifying as I feel it gives you an opportunity to try out various specialist areas and find out what you really love and what your niche area is.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I completed A-Levels in secondary school and applied for University via UCAS. I was delighted to be accepted and attend the University of Ulster, Jordanstown. It was a 3-year course, and I received my degree in BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy in 2014.

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

I feel that someone who is open-minded, friendly, a problem solver and has a genuine interest in helping others are valuable qualities for an OT.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

No amount of regret can change the past, and no amount of worry or stress can change the future. It's important to try and live in the present moment and be grateful for every day.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My grandmother has really inspired me, we share similar interests. At the young age of 79 years, she is still very independent (going on holidays, completing water aerobics!). We enjoy frequent catchups and shopping/lunch trips. She is the definition of the phrase "your age is just a number."