



Ciara Thornton

Musculoskeletal
Physiotherapist

What does your job entail?

I assess and manage a variety of musculoskeletal conditions, including acute injuries, fractures, back pain, neck pain, and long-term conditions such as arthritis. My role involves empowering patients to take charge of their condition and fostering confidence during their rehabilitation journey. Ultimately, my objective is to help patients resume their preferred activities and enhance their overall quality of life.

How did you get into this line of work?

My career's teacher in secondary school asked us to complete an online questionnaire regarding our career choices. After completing the questions, the computer generated the jobs that would suit us the most. My result was 99% Physiotherapist, and the rest is history.

Outline your career to date

From early in my career, I always knew I wanted to specialize in the field of Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy. I just took the long way round to get there. I have worked as a physiotherapist in New Zealand, Scotland, Dublin, and in both the South Eastern Trust and Southern Trust. I have rotated through different aspects of physiotherapy and have learned where my strengths are, and more importantly, where my weaknesses are.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I completed a BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy degree in 2006 from the University of Ulster. To further specialise, I studied in UCD, Dublin, and completed an MSc in Neuromusculoskeletal Physiotherapy in 2012. I then returned to the University of Ulster in 2021 and completed a PGCE in Healthcare in 2022.

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

Personal - Good communication skills, excellent interpersonal skills, empathy, and a caring nature.
Professional - Diligence, knowledge, eagerness to learn, a realistic approach, and problem-solving abilities.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

I read a story to my kids called "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse" by Charlie Mackesy and I believe everyone should read it. Here are some of my favorite pieces of advice from the book:

- "Nothing beats kindness... it sits quietly beyond all things."
- "The truth is, everyone is winging it."

What do you like to do in your spare time?

With three small children, spare time doesn't really exist for me at the moment. However, I enjoy engaging in outdoor activities whenever possible. I try to take the kids out for walks, bike rides, or scooter rides whenever we get the chance.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself?

Many years ago, I completed a tandem skydive. When I excitedly called my mum to tell her about it, she paused for a few seconds before advising me not to do it again.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

Professionally, Brian Mulligan had a profound impact on me. I had the privilege of meeting him while working in New Zealand. His enthusiasm for Physiotherapy was infectious, and his skills were undoubtedly world-class. His inspiring and charismatic presence left a lasting impression on me.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

The most important gift you can give someone is your time, every single one of us has the potential to change someone's life by just taking the time to listen to them. - Steven Aitchison