



Dervla Smyth

Speech and
Language Therapist

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

Hello my name is Dervla, I am a Speech and Language Therapist in the Special Schools Team in the Belfast Trust.

What does your job entail?

My job entails working with children with Learning Disabilities, Autism, and other speech, language, and communication needs. I support them in identifying their preferred form of communication, for example, using Makaton, picture exchange, and visuals to aid understanding. Additionally, I provide support to their communication partners, such as families and teachers, to facilitate communication.

How did you get into this line of work?

I attended work experience in a special needs school with the initial intention of becoming a special needs teacher. However, witnessing the significant impact the Speech and Language Therapist had on the children's lives inspired me to pursue a career in speech and language therapy.

Outline your career to date?

I graduated in June 2023 and secured my first post the following September as a Speech and Language Therapist in the Belfast Trust Special Schools team within the Moderate Learning Disabilities team, working with children with learning difficulties and Autism.

Tell us about your qualifications and training?

I studied Speech and Language Pathology for four years at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, earning a BSc (Hons) in Speech and Language Pathology. Since joining the team, I have also completed additional training in Makaton and the Derbyshire Language Scheme.

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

Some of the main qualities required as a Speech and Language Therapist include: patience, empathy, communication skills, time management, creativity, and flexibility.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

You can't take it with you, so live life to the fullest.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy playing Gaelic Football, going to the gym and seeing my friends and family in my spare time.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself?

I rowed competitively in Scotland.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My Granny, who was a teacher and always put others before herself, inspired me throughout my life.

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

Don't stress over the small things. Work hard and believe in yourself.