



Ella Mulgrew

Band 5
Occupational
Therapist

Area of Work?

I am currently on the Band 5 rotation within the Armagh and Dungannon locality. As part of this post I rotate through the designated rotational posts on an eight month basis. The benefit of the rotation post is it enables me the opportunity to experience a range of OT practices and develop a range of effective clinical skills across a variety of practice settings. This provides the opportunity to gain experience in a broad variety of clinical and practice areas and develop confidence, skills, and knowledge prior to specialisation.

Can you give us a brief work history?

I have been working as an OT from May 2020. In March 2020 I commenced my final professional practice placement in Lurgan Hospital stroke rehabilitation ward as part of my degree, during this time the pandemic hit. There was an agreement introduced that final year students were entitled to finish placement as soon as the amount of clinical placement hours required to qualify had been reached. Following completion of the placement I had a short period of time to finish up outstanding university assignments and I was then eligible to gain employment as an OT through the 'Covid-19 Workforce Appeal'.

I commenced work with the same team I had been with during my final placement. Being familiar with the work environment and the staff eased my anxiety at what was a scary time for everyone, however, particularly scary for a new Band 5 commencing work. I remained working in non-acute hospitals until May 2021, when I commenced the rotational post, with my first rotation being with the Adult Learning Disability Team. My next rotation will be to the Community Rehabilitation Mental Health Team.

What made you decide to be an OT?

I have always known that I wanted to pursue a career that involved helping others and making a difference. This was elevated when I lost my father in 2013 following a short illness. During this time I saw first-hand how OTs support individuals that have lost independence, this further increased my desire to pursue an OT career.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

I completed my A-Levels in St Joseph's Grammar, Donaghmore, unfortunately I did not get the grades required for the OT degree. Despite this, I did not give up, I knew that my heart was set on becoming an OT. I researched other routes that would enable entry onto the degree programme and then enrolled onto a HND Level 5 Health and Social Care Course in South West College Dungannon. I finished the two year course with an overall distinction and secured a place on the OT degree in the University of Ulster.

What does a typical day involve?

In the Adult Learning Disability Team the hours of work are Monday-Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm. A typical day would involve visiting clients in a range of settings including the client's home, day centres, residential homes, nursing homes and respite facilities. The role of the OT in the Adult Learning Disability Team includes functional assessment and intervention, community living skills assessment and intervention, road safety and travel assessment and intervention, assessment and provision of equipment, housing adaptations, seating and posture intervention and wheelchair assessment.

What do you like best about your job?

I love being able to help people achieve what is meaningful to them. OT is such a rewarding career.

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

If you don't get the grades needed to gain a place on the OT degree initially and you feel that OT is the career path for you, research other routes, work hard and persevere!