



Katie Ashford

Speech and
Language Therapist

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

My name is Katie and I work with adults in the community as a Speech and Language Therapist.

What does your job entail?

My role is to support people with their communication and their eating, drinking, and swallowing needs. I work with a range of clients who present with different conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, and dementia.

How did you get into this line of work?

I have always loved working with and helping people, as I find it really rewarding. I thought about pursuing a few different careers in health whenever I was in school, but I was drawn to speech and language therapy as my brother had been seen by a speech and language therapist as a child and he really benefited from it. I worked for an agency for a while following graduation, and then completed the regional Band 5 interviews and was delighted to be offered a community post.

Outline your career to date

I graduated in 2019 and worked for an agency for a while; during this time, I worked as a speech and language therapist in the acute team in the Ulster Hospital, and I also worked in the community with adults with learning disabilities for a short time. I have been working with my current team since 2021. I am grateful to have had a variety of experiences in different areas throughout my career so far.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

For my A-levels, I studied History, English Literature, and Business Studies. I studied Speech and Language Therapy at Ulster University for three years, and recently, I completed my post-graduate training in the assessment and management of dysphagia (swallowing difficulties).

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

I think that in order to build rapport with clients and their families, you have to be friendly and empathetic, and you need to have good communication skills to work effectively as part of a team. Time management is also an important skill to have as a speech and language therapist as you have to balance your time with clients with your admin/training time.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

One of my clients once advised me to travel as much as possible, which I think is great advice! There is also not one piece of professional advice that springs to mind, but I have received brilliant guidance from my wonderful practice educators, supervisors, and colleagues throughout my career so far.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I once went on an aeroplane ride over the Grand Canyon.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, reading, and walking my dog Alfie.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My mum and dad; they always worked hard to support our family, and they both encouraged me and supported me every step of the way throughout all of my training.

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

Work hard, and try not to worry too much; it will all work out.