



Kerrie Houlahan

Band 7
Occupational Therapist

Physical Disability Team

Can you give us a brief work history?

Qualifying in 2008, my current post is in an integrated care team for clients with long term physical disabilities. These clients' needs are very complex and continually changing and therefore require continuous OT input to adapt to their changing needs.

I am involved in the early stages of diagnosis in an advisory capacity, as well as to initiate intervention depending on a client's diagnosis and possible prognosis and rapid deterioration. The post involves major complex housing adaptations, complex wheelchair and seating provision, electronic assistive technology, cognitive assessment, as well as rehabilitation and maintenance of clients in the community.

I work closely with the other members of the multidisciplinary team, as well as advising on a range of other functional areas such as driving, working, accessing community resources, additional funding for other services. This is a challenging but extremely rewarding job and, as an OT, our skills are paramount to enabling clients to remain in their own homes.

What made you decide to be an OT?

As a teenager i was always interested in helping others and like the idea of working with my hands. I entered OT with the intention of becoming a hand therapist.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

Four year degree in Ulster University, Jordanstown.

What does a typical day involve?

A typical day includes:

- Report writing skills
- Communication skills
- Time management and caseload management skills
- Manual handling risk assessment skills
- Clinical reasoning skills regarding housing adaptations
- Clinical reasoning skills for seating and wheelchair provision
- Product knowledge on a range of specialist equipment available in community
- Electronic assistive technology and telecare knowledge

What do you like best about your job?

The fact that i have a client base and so work with a client and their social network through the progression of their physical disability from 18 to 65 years.

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

You must like people and be able to use your initiative.