



Naomi
Ferguson

Physiotherapy Assistant

What does your job entail?

I work as a Physiotherapy Assistant in NHSCT and am based in Whiteabbey Hospital Stroke and Fracture Rehabilitation Ward. I assist the Physiotherapist in the assessment and rehabilitation of patients who have experienced a stroke or fracture. I facilitate patients progress by delivering exercise programs on strength and balance, gait re-education and teaching the use of walking aids if required. I do this either by assisting the physiotherapist or independently deliver treatment plans designed by the Physiotherapist. I am the designated contact person for Chest Heart and Stroke NI charity, who visit our ward twice per month to provide support for stroke survivors. I signpost and refer patients and families to the services available from this charity upon discharge, delivering necessary information. I also have responsibilities for ordering physiotherapy equipment, replenishing and ordering stocks for various rehabilitation teams across the Whiteabbey Hospital site. Additionally, I am involved in sending out appointment letters for outpatient services.

How did you get into this line of work?

I previously worked for myself in the private health and fitness industry for 13 years as an exercise professional and sports massage therapist. I always enjoyed the rehabilitation element of my role and took a keen interest in anatomy and physiology. After the Covid pandemic, I left self-employment and was keen to take on an employed role where I could use my knowledge of anatomy and physiology and continue with rehabilitation services.

Outline your career to date

I started working for the SEHSCT in Ulster hospital in September 2021 as a Physiotherapist technical instructor, then moved to NHSCT in May 2022 as it was closer to home and more rehabilitation-focused than acute medical.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I am qualified to level 4 in anatomy and physiology in sports massage therapy/personal training. I also have Level 3 qualifications in teaching physical activity to children and Level 2 in British Sign Language.

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

I feel you need to be an empathetic person for this role and have a strong desire to help people reach their full potential after a life-changing event like a stroke. Having skills that encourage people when they may have little belief in themselves is crucial. Being a people person, in my opinion, is very helpful in this role, along with having a good sense of humour. Having strong and various ways of communicating – communication isn't always spoken language; it can also be through facial expressions and body language. Being able to work well as part of a team, being ready and able to support when needed, is essential. Knowing your individual strengths and weaknesses and how to use and develop each in the job role is also important.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

If you fall 100 times just get up 101, don't give up on yourself.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I'm a married 40-something-year-old mother of a 17-year-old, who is a plumber in the making. I have 2 cats and a cockapoo dog! In my free time, I love hill walking, weight lifting, going out for dinner, and spending time with my friends and family.

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

Don't be too hard on yourself. You've got the rest of your life to live so live it well! Laugh often, take risks and don't be afraid to fail!