

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

My name is Niamh McKee, and I am currently employed by the NHSCT in a rotational post as a Band 5 physiotherapist. At present, I am working as an acute physiotherapist at Antrim Area Hospital.

What does your job entail?

As an acute physiotherapist, I am involved in assessing a person’s movement, mobility, and respiratory function, including managing respiratory conditions in acutely unwell patients. Within the hospital, I work with a range of medical conditions commonly found in the elderly population, including but not limited to Parkinson’s disease, frailty, osteoporosis, COPD, bronchiectasis, asthma, pulmonary edema, pleural effusions, dementia, cancer, and neuromuscular conditions. As part of the multidisciplinary team, I frequently communicate with other health professionals and work alongside carers to facilitate safe and efficient discharges for our patients.

How did you get into this line of work?

Growing up, I had a keen interest in sports, and I have had my fair share of injuries and physiotherapy appointments. I was fascinated by how the human body works and the ability to diagnose and treat various injuries. Currently, I work as an acute physiotherapist at Antrim Area Hospital. As a Band 5, I am in a rotational post where I spend six-month periods in various specialties. I am still unsure which path I will take with physiotherapy. I never thought when leaving school that I would find suctioning phlegm out of a patient’s chest thrilling.

Outline your career to date

My career as a physiotherapist started abruptly. As the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, I began working under the COVID-19 temporary register to help with the increased pressures that hospitals were facing. A couple of months later, I obtained my permanent post as a rotational Band 5. Over the last 22 months, I have gained experience within the acute setting in a number of specialties, including acute medicine, cardiology, gynaecology, and probably the most daunting yet rewarding - the COVID/respiratory ward. Recently, I worked in the recovery team within the community of Antrim, where my role was to rehabilitate patients recently discharged from the hospital within their own homes or in a rehabilitation bed in a care setting. I am also involved with a number of sports teams, providing pre-match and pitch-side physiotherapy.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I graduated from Ulster University in 2020. I have attended a Sports Specific First Aid and Taping/Kinesiology course. I have also attended an ALERT course on how to manage a critically ill patient. Each day is a learning day in the world of physiotherapy. I get the opportunity to attend in-service training led by my peers to further our understanding in certain topics.

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

Successful physiotherapists must have a high level of patience and empathy for their patients. Time management, problem-solving skills, and communication are vital for physiotherapists working in all areas. A sense of humour also goes a long way!

What is the best advice you have ever received?

‘Sometimes the advice you give other people is the advice you need to follow.’

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Like my mother, I don’t know how to sit still. In my spare time, I like to keep myself fit and healthy (practice what you preach). I enjoy going to the gym and pushing my body and mind within its own limits. I also play Camogie three times per week. I enjoy the competitive aspect of the team sport and the friends and connections I have made through the sport. I also love to travel and go on holidays. I hope one day to travel as a physiotherapist and spend some time living and experiencing what other cultures have to offer.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I have a phobia of waterpark steps.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

I have been greatly inspired in life by my mum, not only by her career choice but also by her passion and continual eagerness to learn throughout her career. Despite having two working parents, we never missed any opportunities in our childhood. My mum was always my cheerleader, whether it was on the sideline of the pitch or on the last hurdle of completing my dissertation in the final year of university.

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

Don’t burn your bridges, you’ll never know when you need to cross them again.



Niamh McKee Jackie McKee

Acute Physiotherapist Specialist Paediatric Physiotherapist

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

My name is Jackie McKee, I currently work as a Specialist Paediatric Physiotherapist in NHSCT in the Mid Ulster Hospital in Magherafelt.

What does your job entail?

My job involves working with children from the ages of newborn to 19 years of age with various conditions such as Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, Downs syndrome, developmental delay, co-ordination difficulties and plagiocephaly. I work with children with neuromuscular conditions for example Duchenne’s Muscular Dystrophy and Spinal Muscular Atrophy. I also review the respiratory knowledge and skills of band 3 carers that carry out physiotherapy breathing techniques with various complex children in their home in our trust. I am involved in monitoring hip subluxation and dislocation of children with cerebral palsy within northern trust area as part of the Cerebral Palsy Integrated Pathway team.

How did you get into this line of work?

I had never considered specializing in paediatrics during my undergraduate studies. I had really enjoyed working in musculoskeletal outpatient settings and providing pitch-side physiotherapy. I even found collecting sputum - the greener the better - to be thrilling when working in respiratory medicine. However, following the birth of my first daughter, I realized that I was fascinated by the complexity of children and how their little minds worked things out. I also discovered that I had a talent for communicating with children.

Outline your career to date

My first job as a new graduate was at Robinson Memorial Hospital in Ballymoney. After that, I obtained a permanent position at Mid Ulster Hospital in Magherafelt, where I worked in both outpatient and inpatient settings, as well as taking on additional on-call duties. I also provided physiotherapy input in ante-natal classes. Later, I progressed to become a Specialist Paediatric Physiotherapist at Kilronan School and in the community in the Magherafelt area. In recent years, my role has expanded to include being part of the neuromuscular physiotherapy team and the Hip Surveillance team.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I graduated from Ulster University in July 1996, after completing a four-year undergraduate course. I am a member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and Association of Paediatric Chartered Physiotherapists (APCP). During the pandemic, courses have been delivered via Zoom, making it more accessible for me to attend courses and stay up to date with the latest developments, including those held overseas. Recently, I attended the Advancing Healthcare Awards Awards in London, where our Hip Surveillance Clinic Project had been shortlisted for an award. I was fortunate to have the support of the trust to attend this ceremony.

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

Personally it is a valued quality to be compassionate and always have a sense of humour. It’s important to be a team player and be adaptable to change and to be thoughtful and caring. Professionally it is a value to be hard working, positive and willing to make a difference, to communicate effectively and to be able to think outside the box

What is the best advice you have ever received?

“Anyone who thinks that they are too small to make a difference has never tried to fall asleep with a mosquito in the room.” Christine Todd Whitman

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy being busy. I enjoy running for fun with my friends, and I have also started cycling with my husband, which is my new favourite pastime. I also enjoy spectating at my daughter’s camogie matches.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

At the age of 40 I took part in a charity white collar boxing competition.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My mummy has been the greatest inspiration in my life. She leads a simple life with no expectations, which means she is never disappointed. She is an incredibly caring person, and I was fortunate enough to have her care for my two daughters while I pursued my career as a physiotherapist. My daughters loved spending time at their granny’s house, and I was able to work knowing they were happy and content.

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

Happiness is not about getting all you want; it is about enjoying all you have. Take time for yourself. One small positive thought in the morning can change your whole day.