



Rebecca
Robinson

Behaviour
Therapist,
RISE NI

Can you give us a brief outline of your work history?

When I first graduated from university, I volunteered and then worked for a short time as a classroom assistant, working mainly with children with special educational needs such as autism and other social-emotional behavioural difficulties. This gave me an opportunity to progress through the Health Trust, firstly as a Therapy Assistant with children in RISE NI (Belfast Trust) to working as an Autism Intervention Therapist within Children's Autism Services (Belfast Trust). This then led me back to RISE NI, only this time in the Southern Trust, as a Behaviour Therapist.

What made you decide this career path?

When asked by my career's teacher in school about what I wanted to do, I always remember saying I wanted to work on early interventions for children with autism, I just didn't know exactly how to get there at the time. With my dad having battled a severe stammer from an early age and having lost my mum as a child, I think this really influenced my choices, having personally seen the need for early intervention support for children.

How did you train for this role/educational route?

I initially thought about studying Speech and Language Therapy, but to keep my options open, I was advised to go down the Psychology route at university. For me, my career progression has definitely involved a lot of stepping-stones and not giving up! I have honestly learned new skills in each job I have had, and within my role in RISE NI, I have been given so much opportunity for professional development and obtaining new skills and qualifications.

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

Within my role, it is essential to be able to work efficiently, managing a busy diary of clinical work versus administration and planning. A lot of the time, you are dealing with many stressed parents, teachers, and children, and therefore you must be empathetic to their needs and be able to provide containment while also containing yourself! A playful and curious approach with children is key within your direct work with children, as well as having the confidence to design evidence-based interventions to build the capacity of the children's teachers and parents to help them help themselves.

What does a typical day involve?

No two days are the same, however, most days involve being in nurseries or primary schools in the morning to complete assessments, interventions, or training. Afternoons are usually reserved for delivering training to teachers or parents, administration, intervention planning, or meetings within the multidisciplinary team. My role is focused on supporting the social-emotional and behavioural needs of the children and working in a transdisciplinary way with the other allied health professionals in the team to reduce the impact on the child's learning in school.

What do you like best about your job?

I love being in the school setting and directly with the children, who bring so much joy! It really is rewarding to be able to put supports in place and make a difference to a child to remove barriers to their learning in school and lessen the impact on them.

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

That it is not always easy, and sometimes you might not feel like you are making a difference, but always remember that being truly caring is noticed- every interaction is an intervention!