



Sheryl Taylor

**Occupational
Therapist**

Introduce yourself. Where do you work? What is your jobrole?

My name is Sheryl Taylor, I am a qualified Paediatric Occupational Therapist and work in Special Schools in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Within Occupational Therapy in Special Schools my role includes working alongside the pupils, parents, and education staff to help the children take part in their daily activities and reach their full potential.

What does your job entail?

My job as a Children's OT includes helping children to meet their potential in their daily occupations including being productive in school, play/leisure, and self-care. An Occupational Therapist can help children take part in these occupations by providing the necessary equipment, for example, specialised seating, wheelchairs, ICT equipment, adapted cutlery, adapted fine motor tools, toileting equipment or slings, working on the child's ability to follow daily classroom routines, attention skills, taking turns, regulating their sensory systems, developing the coordination and strength to play games, developing wheelchair skills, transitioning out of special school, independence in getting dressed, using the bathroom and writing/recording their learning and many more. Occupational Therapy in Special Schools can take many forms including whole class groups, small groups, individual sessions, advice/training to parents or education staff and home visits.

How did you get into this line of work?

I have an older brother who has Quadriplegic Cerebral Palsy, so I heard about OTs from a young age and went to all of his wheelchair appointments. I always loved seeing the difference specialised equipment made and the difference it still makes to my family and me. When it came to making career choices and UCAS applications I then got a day to shadow an OT in hospital. I loved how many different settings and specialist areas an OT covers, and I decided that was what I wanted to do. Working with children has always been a passion of mine so lining that up with OT was perfect.

Outline your career to date

I started my career as a Locum OT with an agency and obtained a Locum post in Special Schools. I started out in a split post between Mitchell House School and Fleming Fulton School, where I spent a year, then moved on, rotating through other special schools such as Harberton, Glenveigh and Greenwood. I was Locum for close to three years and then the Band 6 opportunity for Mitchell House School came up which I have been in now for over 2.5 years.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I completed A-Levels in secondary school and applied for University via UCAS. I applied for Occupational Therapy in University of Ulster Jordanstown and was accepted. I then deferred by entry for a year to experience working abroad and, on my return, I attended the University of Ulster, Jordanstown for the three-year course.

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

Some good skills for a Children's Occupational Therapist are being fun loving and silly at times as the kids love to have fun and are more motivated when fun and silliness are involved! Good communication organised and problem-solving are also valuable skills to have and develop.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

You cannot control what other people do or say, you can only control what you do, what you say and the impact you have on others.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love to dance, act, travel and read in my spare time. I have been known to get on a stage to perform every now and again.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I have worked in Egypt and Spain.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

My mum has inspired me the most in my life. The resilience she shows daily being my brother's main carer as well running her own business is amazing. She never lets anything stop her and despite the social and environmental barriers and hurdles we face with having a sibling (her son) who is physically disabled and has a learning disability, she never let us miss out on anything and really showed us what inclusion should look like. We love travelling the world together and she always keeps everyone in high spirits!

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

Other's opinions have no weight, it is what you think that matters!