



Terese Boylan

Specialist Speech and Language Therapist

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

Hi, my name is Terese. I am a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist for the Northern Ireland Cleft Lip and Palate Service, based at RBHSC.

What does your job entail?

In my role, I assess, differentially diagnose, and provide specialist interventions for children and adults with cleft lip and palate, craniofacial disorders, and non-cleft velopharyngeal insufficiency. We operate using a 'hub and spoke' model, where specialist assessment is conducted by the Cleft team, and therapy is delivered in each locality where feasible. We closely collaborate with our Cleft Link Therapists in the community and frequently offer recommendations for therapy targets. I currently lead the delivery of the Early Intervention Pathway, which encompasses conducting the Early Intervention Babble Advice Clinic, hosting parent webinars, and providing assessment and therapy for children aged six months to three years. As a regional service, we also actively participate in research, audit, and innovation within this specialty.

How did you get into this line of work?

Initially, I considered a career in teaching, possibly influenced by my older sister who was studying teaching at university at the time. However, it was during my work experience with a SEN (Special Educational Needs) teacher that I discovered Speech and Language Therapy as a career path. I attended an open day talk on Speech Therapy where the course was described as a 'one-way ticket to the career'. Fortunately, I haven't needed a return ticket yet!

Outline your career to date?

I have been working as a Speech and Language Therapist full-time since 2017. In my previous posts, I worked in community services, which included working in health centres treating patients with a range of communication needs, including speech sound and early language difficulties, as well as stammering. I also worked in the Mainstream School Support Team, which involved making regular school visits across the borough to assess and observe children's communication skills. Recommendations were made to schools and parents/carers based on assessment findings. I was involved with developing targeted communication intervention packages, including narrative therapy, early stammering advice, and vocabulary skills. In my previous role, I was involved in developing the Specialist Stammering Service within the Children's Community SLT Service. Since January 2022, I have been working as a Specialist Cleft SLT, and I am pleased to say I really love my job.

Tell us about your qualifications and training?

I studied English Language, Home Economics, and Economics at A Level. I graduated from Manchester Metropolitan University in 2016 with a BSc in Speech Pathology and Therapy for my undergraduate degree. Throughout my career, I have actively engaged in various training courses pertinent to my role, including courses at the Michael Palin Centre for Stammering and specialised Cleft Palate training.

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

I believe a 'caring' personality is essential for this role. To succeed as a Speech Therapist, organisational skills and excellent interpersonal abilities are imperative. Every personality quiz I've taken in the past has indicated a propensity towards a caring profession, so I suppose I'm indeed in the right field!

What is the best advice you have ever received?

My dad always says 'Don't sweat the small stuff' – having perspective is so important.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy getting outdoors for hikes at the weekend and I love getting lost in a good page turning novel. More recently I've gotten into jigsaw puzzles, it's really quite addictive when it starts taking form.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself?

I went to a rural primary school where I was the only 'summer born' child that year. Being the only reception class child meant I was taught alongside Primary 1. I was moved up to Primary 2 the following September as I'd made good friends and was getting on well. If this didn't happen, I probably wouldn't be with my husband who was in my year in secondary school.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

I find my mum incredibly inspiring. The older I become, the more I marvel at how she able to raise seven children in such a nurturing and supportive way. Even as adults, my siblings and I know she is there when we need guidance and support.

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

I would tell my 16 year old self to not be afraid of failure. You can learn from your mistakes, nothing is as bad as it seems at the time. Also, surround yourself with positive and supportive people who uplift you. Radiators not drains!