

Case study



Occupational therapists in social care

Q&A: An experienced OT's perspective at practice level

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About Kaiya

Having qualified two years ago, Kaiya is an early career OT working in adult social care with younger adults who have complex disabilities.

How have you found the transition from pre-registration learner to HCPC registered OT?

My role is autonomous, but I get a lot of support from my colleagues in the OT team. Our work in social care is so varied; so many different conditions, situations, a real variety of different people with different needs and outcomes they want to achieve.

When I first started, I was eased in. We had an OT supported year in practice, which ran alongside the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year of Employment) social work programme. Childrens and adult OTs and social workers were supported alongside each other. It was beneficial as it helped me set my OT knowledge and skills into the context of social care. There was an element of peer support, a self-assessment framework to identify social care OT competencies, and we had some guest speakers who did CPD sessions. It was helpful, and it's good to understand the social work side of it too, because we work very closely together.

I started this job in the middle of a pandemic, and we were all working from home. I think to be thrown in the deep end at that point would've

been too stressful. It was good that I was very much eased in and supported throughout. I went out with colleagues on joint visits, was able to discuss case work with my mentor and supervisor. We used the 'I do, we do, you do' method.

I would say in the past ten months my cases have gained a bit more complexity as my confidence has grown. I'm asking my supervisor to allocate me case work to match my learning, which will give me more specialised experience. There is opportunity to talk through cases before I go out, with my supervisor or colleagues and I can feed back when I return. Being challenged in a healthy way whilst being supported in working with complex situations gives me career satisfaction; I do absolutely love my job.

What are the enablers to your career progression in social care?

My supervision is very good; it's never been missed and I've always been supervised by a senior OT. I would say I'm challenged in a very healthy way.

Flexitime is a big enabler, as is hybrid working; I can work from home or the office. I have children and being able to be present when they get in from school or take them to appointments when needed is brilliant, I can do my paperwork to fit in around this. I like being in charge of my own diary, planning my workload quite independently. That suits my kind of working style quite well.

The OT supported year in practice really helped; I liked the structure of it and the support it gave me in being able to keep track of my learning needs and progress.

What are the barriers to your career progression in social care?

This job is quite broad, complex and varied. I think it does take a long time to feel confident because we work with so many different people in different circumstances. There is a lot to learn around a broad range of interventions, conditions, legislation and processes. I still feel like I have so much to learn. I don't see that necessarily as a barrier, as I really enjoy learning and challenging myself, but some people might.

Where do you see your career in five years' time?

I just want to be a confident and competent OT. I'm really looking forward to having a student when I feel ready and sharing my learning with others. I'll also look to doing my progression portfolio and interview to step up to be an experienced OT.

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