

Case study



# Occupational therapists in social care

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

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### About Kerwin

Kerwin is an experienced OT working in a children's disability team in social care. He has previously worked in a fast-paced community health rehabilitation team and in adult social care in another local authority. Kerwin is also a practice educator.

### What are your experiences as an OT in social care?

Occupational therapy comes very easily for me because I have a practical mind and I try to help people. I have a humanistic approach and to me, the age I've reached, I want to be known as somebody who makes a positive difference to people.

In my organisation there is a focus on social care in the broadest sense. I work in a multidisciplinary team with mainly social workers, but I also link externally with health colleagues and education professionals.

In this paediatric social care team, we deal with everything. I work with major adaptations and specialist equipment and support junior staff and students with the small aids and equipment provision. This gives me good transferable skills because the work with children is across such a broad spectrum.

Having students in my role as practice educator has taught me to manage emotions. Some students may arrive with a mental health plan and my job is to get the best out of them. With a strengths-based approach, I try and make them comfortable and supported so they can go into our profession and feel valued; it's about empowering people.

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

I've got a lot of skills, a 'can do' approach and over the years I've gained confidence in myself. I enjoy OT and I enjoy social care and this is an enabler for my career progression.

It's also good to have a student; it helps build the skills you need to supervise others and manage people well.

I often attend training courses aimed at OTs working with adults or social workers working with children and apply the principles to my work. I sometimes attend external training and events like the OT Show and Naidex and we also have quarterly development days just for our team, supported by the OT practice supervisor and team manager.

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

I work in a small specialist team and there is little specialist training for children's OT.

There isn't a learning and development framework for supporting newly qualified OTs in my organisation, or a career progression framework, but this is being developed.

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

I'd really like to progress in my career; I know, I have the skills and have received valuable feedback. I have a young family and am the main earner which motivates me. I'd like to climb the ladder; maybe be an advanced senior practitioner or push myself to be a team manager.