

Case study



Occupational therapists in social care

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

Laura Owers

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About Laura

Laura is an OT who started working in social care when she was newly qualified. Laura worked in frontline operational roles for about seven years before taking a practice lead role in a learning and development team. She's now a senior officer in the team and supports the learning and development needs of the OT workforce.

What are your experiences of working as an OT in social care?

Working with people in the community really allows us to align our OT values, we can incorporate these in our interventions to support people's day-to-day lives which means we can be more person-centred.

I was doing a post qualifying safeguarding specific module, my first kind of introduction back into academia, when the learning and development vacancy came up. I'd been involved in a couple of strategic projects around the OT role and I had conversations with managers to show I was interested in progressing. A lot of what I was doing in my operational role was around supporting the development of others and I had been supporting students in the team, together with the induction of new staff.

It was a natural fit to do this role. I lead on the OT learning offer, including delivery of functional assessment training, one off workshop and individual CPD sessions. I lead on our newly qualified OT program, support new starters, and

lead the OT apprenticeship. I'm often asked to be involved in recruitment or any area of practice improvement work.

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

I have a long-term health condition and stayed in social care because of the opportunity to work flexibly and to manage my needs.

A clear and accessible post-qualifying program has helped, as well as having the confidence to reach out and have conversations about interests and how they align career aspirations. I originally took an officer level role, but the senior officer, also an OT and a great role model, retired so I quickly, seamlessly progressed in the learning and development team.

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

I haven't faced any organisational barriers in my career. On a personal level, my health condition means I prioritise my own needs and consider my capacity and the potential impact when considering progression opportunities.

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

I'm keen to progress and I see the principal OT role as a good fit for my knowledge and skills.