

Rachel Hendrie, Community Mental Health Occupational Therapist, discusses transition, learning and development as a newly qualified Occupational Therapist.



Transition from student to registered professional?

In the beginning, I remember feeling lots of mixed emotions including nervousness and excitement about being successful in my interview to then gaining employment in the profession I had dreamt of working in during my studies. My family and boyfriend were so proud of what I had achieved and I was so happy with how much they believed in me to commence my first job as a newly qualified Occupational Therapist (OT).

I felt very passionate and motivated to start this new journey from student to professional and was ambitious to learn and develop as I settled into my role. My final placement as a student had really prepared me for transitioning into a qualified OT. I feel fortunate to have had this experience on my final placement as I felt ready and confident to develop into my official role.

In the service I began working for, Occupational Therapy was not as well-known as the other professions in the service. This did bring challenges with educating the wider Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) around what Occupational Therapy is and what care we can provide to service users. As a team we made lots of efforts to create positive relationships with the wider MDT to be able to provide our colleagues with the relevant information about Occupational Therapy.

Impact, learning and support

Being on placement during the pandemic encouraged the importance of hygiene and safety for patients and professionals, but it also meant increased pressure to prioritise patients and staff pressures due to sick leave/isolating. However, as a result, I felt more a part of the team rather than being treated like a student. I was given opportunities to work with patients and to carry out interventions/assessments with the guidance of my practice educator. This experience enabled me to put my theory into practice and advanced my career from student to Newly Qualified Practitioner (NQP).

When I started my first post, one of my colleagues had been in the job a few months longer than me and had recently qualified too. I was lucky enough to have this colleague for support when navigating and learning my role as a NQP. I have attended lots of training sessions which have helped me understand varied components and conditions that are relevant to my practice. Additionally, the Flying Start programme has been the main tool to guide my learning and development as a newly qualified practitioner.



In my first year as an NQP I decided to apply for a new position and was successful. Although, I had built positive relationships with my previous MDT colleagues I knew I had to take a risk to progress with my career. This process was my biggest learning opportunity within my first year, I felt guilty about leaving my previous role and was worried my development would be affected by starting new all over again. Since starting my new role I have developed even further with my learning and development experiences. I feel well supported in my role by my new MDT colleagues, the OT team and my OT Team Lead. I feel the knowledge and experiences from my new and previous roles have been beneficial to becoming the skilled OT I am today, even though every day is a continuous learning curve.

Flying Start NHS programme

The [NHSGGC: Flying Start Portal](#) is a super useful resource and helped me document my learning for my flying start portfolio. I highly recommend utilising the variety of resources available on the Flying Start Portal. After attending the Flying Start protected learning days, I definitely had more awareness and knowledge of the requirements for the Flying Start programme. I continually reflected on the 4 pillars of practice and the two learning outcomes each pillar had, to ensure I was on the right track for my portfolio. For any NQP's I recommend the Flying Start protected learning days to help structure and guide your learning to achieve each of the outcomes.

Within my first year as a NQP I applied for a new job in a different service and was successful. I started my new job with a few months until my Flying Start programme was due to end. It was decided that I would receive a new Flying Start facilitator in my new workplace and they would review my portfolio. This change was something I had worried about before commencing my new job, however I had a full discussion with my new Flying Start facilitator who reassured me about the programme and my portfolio.

I have now been qualified for just over a year as an Occupational Therapist and I am now working in the community adult mental health team. I am still using the 4 pillars of practice when reflecting on my learning at supervision sessions and for my CPD. I am looking forward to having more responsibility as I continue to develop into my role, as well as, facing new challenges and learning opportunities. I have volunteered to become a Flying Start Facilitator with two newly qualified Occupational Therapists in my workplace. Completing the Flying Start programme has given me the confidence and knowledge to comfortably evolve into this role.