

# Meet Sam



## Operating Department Practitioner

Hi, my name is Sam. I am an Operating Department Practitioner (ODP) and work in theatres at the Royal United Hospitals Bath. Find out more about me and what I do below.

### What do you do?

I support patients who undergo an operation. I help patients before their surgery and I support anaesthetists to safely administer the anaesthetic to the patient. I accompany the patient into the theatre and assist the surgeon during the operation. This includes being responsible for all instruments, equipment and swabs and giving them to the surgeon during the operation. I also check sutures and dressings to ensure that any wounds are closed safely. My role is very varied and no day is the same. For example, one day I could be assisting knee replacements and the next day I could be involved in a thyroid operation.

### What hours do you work?

I work in the main elective suite. This means that I am involved in planned operations. These take place Monday to Friday and I work four days a week from 8am to 6pm.

### How did you get into this role?

I have a passion for helping people and I knew that I wanted to be involved in healthcare. At college, I studied a BTEC in Health and Social Care. During my studies, I attended a careers fair and visited a university stand which was promoting courses to become an ODP. The role of an ODP really interested me and so I decided to study a degree in Operating Department Practice at university. The degree was challenging but I learnt a lot. The course was made up of a mixture of

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study and placement. During my placement, I found it very satisfying looking after patients.

After graduating, I worked at Wrightington Hospital near Wigan which specialises in Orthopaedics (and is famous for pioneering hip replacement surgery.) After working there, I moved down south and took up my current role at the RUH.

### **Did you know?**

ODPs can be involved with three stages of an operation: anaesthetic, surgery and recovery. Sam is involved with the anaesthetic and surgery phases. In other teams, ODPs can also support the patient's recovery immediately after the operation. The ODP will be present when the patient is coming round from their anaesthetic. They carry out observations to ensure that the patient is safe and comfortable and can give pain medication. In addition to theatres, ODPs can also work in Critical Care and the Emergency department.

### **What qualities should somebody have to become an ODP?**

I support patients when they are at their most vulnerable. They can feel anxious about their operation and I am there to make them feel comfortable and reassure them. Therefore, to be an ODP, you must be compassionate, approachable and be able to demonstrate empathy. You must also be a good team-player.

### **What advice or tips would you give somebody interested in becoming an ODP?**

This is a hands-on role and it is very rewarding to see patients feeling better after their operation. However, working in theatres can be tough and this job is not for everybody. It can be helpful to get some paid or voluntary experience. For example, some people work as a Healthcare Assistant in theatres before training to become an ODP. This means that they have experience of theatres and understand the demands of working in this environment.

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## What are your next steps in your career?

I am being trained to deal with complex cataract and eye surgery. Once I am trained, I hope to use these skills and progress into a specialist role.