

Meet Hazel



Occupational Therapist

Hi, my name is Hazel. I am an Occupational Therapist (OT) and I work in the Older Person's Unit at the Royal United Hospitals Bath. Find out more about me and what I do below.

What do you do?

I assist patients who have difficulties completing day-to-day tasks or participating in the activities that are important to them because of an illness or disability. I work with patients to identify the barriers which prevent them from doing what they want to do and I support them in a number of different ways. For example, I might adapt what they do, provide them with equipment or ensure that care support is in place for them so that they can live as independently as possible when they are discharged.

Describe a typical day

In the morning, I participate in a whiteboard meeting to find out any developments about the patients on the ward and to identify what I need to do. During my shift, I provide ongoing rehabilitation to patients so that they can regain mobility. For example, I might support patients to regain confidence walking or going up and down stairs. I might also assess their ability to manage their personal care by reviewing their ability to wash and dress. I am also involved with discharge planning. This means that I make sure where a patient is going to after leaving hospital is suitable for their needs and that they have the right care, support and equipment in place. For example, I might need to make onward referrals if they require further rehabilitation elsewhere (such as in a care home.)

What hours do you work?

My day starts at 8.30am and it usually finishes at 4pm. I normally work week days but I am also part of a weekend rota. On average, I work a Saturday or Sunday every five weeks.

How did you become an OT?

I studied English Literature, Biology and Psychology at A-Level and I was uncertain what I would do after college. One day, when visiting the library, a friend asked me to look up the universities delivering physiotherapy degrees for her. When looking this up, I noticed Occupational Therapy on the opposite page. I began to read up about this career and had a real lightbulb moment. Occupational Therapy sounded really interesting and I felt that I could do this job. Following this, I completed some work experience in a couple of community hospitals and decided to study Occupational Therapy at university.

What did you do after graduating?

After I graduated, I took up a rotational post in a hospital in Cardiff for 18 months. I then returned back to the local area and undertook various positions, including being a locum in a number of hospitals, working in a community team for 11 years, as well as in the private sector before taking up a position at the RUH in 2019.

What are the next steps in your career?

I did a research internship earlier on this year and would like to do a part-time clinical research masters in the future, whilst continuing to work in the hospital. After completing the masters, I would like to be a university lecturer alongside working as an OT in a hospital.

Which of the subjects that you studied at school or college do you use in your day-to-day role?

I definitely use psychology and a bit of biology and anatomy. I also use maths, for example when calculating whether a hoist, bed and commode will fit within a certain space.



What is the favourite part of your job?

I have been working as an OT for 20 years and the longer I have been doing this job, the more I have liked it! I have an interest in people and I really like listening to their life stories. I often find that I absorb the wisdom that they share.

What are the qualities that somebody should have to be an OT?

As an OT, you must be open-minded because you have to identify what is important to a patient and their idea of what matters to them could be very different to your views. Having the ability to make small talk is important. It helps patients feel at ease. These conversations help OTs to build up a picture about their patients and establish what sort of lifestyle they lead. You also need to be creative to find unique solutions to problems. In addition, there is a practical element to the role, for example, I use tools to adjust wheelchairs for patients.

What advice or tips would you give somebody interested in becoming an OT?

Occupational Therapy is an evolving profession. The number of settings an OT can work in is increasing and so it can be helpful to do some research into the role. (See below for links to helpful websites.) It can be useful doing work experience, however it is very difficult to access currently due to the pandemic. Having said this, even having a conversation with an OT will help you to gain an insight into the role.