

Day in the life of an Occupational Therapist



Name: Marie Baistow

Position: Occupational Therapist

Location: Birch Hill Hospital, Rochdale

Time in post: 16 years

What does your role involve?

My role involves a whole person approach to mental and physical health with the aim of helping people achieve their full potential. I currently work on the Beech Ward in Rochdale 3 days a week; it is an older person's mental health ward that cares for patients who have organic and/or functional illnesses. For the remainder of the week I work in the Care Home Liaison Team in Oldham.

I have worked with Rochdale Older peoples services for 16 years. I have worked in the day centre, home treatment team and intermediate care team, however, the bulk of my experience has been on the inpatient ward. My main role on the ward in is to identify a person wants and needs, recognise skills and strengths that can help and areas for development. A key approach to the way I work is to develop a great therapeutic trusting relationship with my patients. This enables a foundation for all occupational therapy interventions. Communication with the wider team and family/carers as a two way process is also crucial.

Why did you choose this role?

I decided to have a career change 23 years ago, at the time I worked as a hairdresser and beauty therapist. I decided to retrain as a teacher completing my City & Guilds 7307 and started teaching beauty therapy. I quickly realised that the teaching environment was not for me.

I researched a number of career options including: physiotherapy, dentistry and forensic science however when I discovered Occupational Therapy I knew instantly it was the right choice. When I started studying Occupational Therapy I found four other hairdressers within my cohort! It combined the perfect balance of health, wellbeing and caring for people. It offered a very clear scaffolding of theories, philosophies, models and a culture that easily described how a person could maintain or manage health.

The profession identified key aspects of how a person can experience good health and manage illness to achieve a sense of purpose; identity and belonging, to feel valued and satisfied with life.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

I feel honoured to be able to visit someone at home and see how effectively they function in their own environment compared to the ward. I feel a sense of pride when a patient who has been very isolated in the ward becomes more involved after extensive interventions to reverse the problem. I always smile when a patient has improved; an example is when interventions have been put in place to address patients who have been depressed for a long period of time. To see patients start combing their hair and taking care when dressing, is such a rewarding feeling. Another great part of my job is arriving at work and seeing patients using the art room or the relaxation room without prompting.