

Lauren Boyle, Paediatric Occupational Therapist, discusses her transition, learning and development as a newly qualified Occupational Therapist.



Transition from student to registered professional?

I was feeling very nervous and overwhelmed, as well as excited with the thought of commencing my post as a qualified Occupational Therapist. I was scared that I would be unable to bridge the gap from student to newly qualified practitioner (NQP). However, the transition was better than I expected due to receiving high levels of support and an in-depth induction. I felt challenged but in a good way as it allowed me to begin developing necessary skills.

The biggest challenge I faced was the lack of confidence I had in myself and imposter syndrome. I believed I didn't know enough and that I should be better. I overcame this by liaising with other NQPs who were also feeling this way and having an open conversation with my supervisor. My supervisor was able to reassure me that I was doing well for the stage I was at and explained that I shouldn't feel comfortable that I know it all and probably will never feel this way as I will always continue to learn throughout my career. She acknowledged that I didn't have anything to compare my experience to as I was so new and encouraged me to link with other band 5s.

Impact, learning and support

Being a student during the pandemic introduced me to the benefits of working virtually e.g. video call appointments. I have a lead role in a motor/functional skills group which we run virtually and outdoors and the virtual element works better for many families. I have also developed my technology skills as a result of this which is very important as I use IT on a daily basis in work. I am now able to prioritise my workload as I have to identify which patients need to be seen sooner rather than later and which patients need a face-to-face appointment rather than a virtual appointment. I wear my NQP signifier badge which I received after contacting the AHP Practice Education team. I have regular supervision sessions with my supervisor, where I can come up with my own agenda to discuss general learning and development, specific caseload queries or any other issues. I also have opportunities to link with other band 5 Occupational Therapists as part of our band 5 network. Within our building, there are two other people doing Flying Start at the same time as me; we have regular peer support meetings to discuss Flying Start with our facilitators present.

I am very lucky to be part of a team who support me with any queries I have and consistently offer me learning opportunities, give me praise/reassurance and provide constructive feedback. When I first started, I had an in-depth 4-week induction period to settle in. As a NQP, I have had opportunities to shadow senior members of the team, as well as members of the wider inter-professional team, to gain a better understanding of my own and others' roles. I am also encouraged to attend training events even if it is within my clinical day. All of these opportunities have been vital in allowing me to develop the building block skills required for future practice and to increase my confidence. I believe that overall I have had an excellent start to my career.



An experience I have had as an NQP which will impact me as I move through my career was when I attended a home visit with a senior colleague to see a girl with cerebral palsy and very complex high tone. My colleague was keen for me to attend to increase knowledge and understanding of this condition, how this feels, how to break up this pattern and how best to seat children like this. As a novice, my colleague went out her way to give me an excellent hands on learning experience and challenged me whilst ensuring it was safe to do so.

My colleague was an excellent role model as she allowed me to observe whilst she explained what she was doing in a way that I could understand before giving me an opportunity to try. She also gave me constructive feedback along the way. She was very supportive and later praised me. This is important for me going forward as I will continue to work with children like this and she has given me the confidence and knowledge and skills required to handle such children safely.

Flying Start NHS programme

I am finding the resources in the [NHSGGC: Flying Start Portal](#) very helpful and I access them regularly. I would recommend anyone doing Flying Start to look at the portal as the available resources helped me better understand the programme. I became aware of the Flying Start portal following the Flying Start support session on MS Teams. Although it took me a while, I feel like I have a very good understanding of the requirements of the programme. This is due to resources on the portal and attending the study days. I have been allocated a Flying Start facilitator and have informal chats around Flying Start regularly with them.

I have started to think about relating my learning and development to the Flying Start learning outcomes and am now considering which pillar each learning experience fits under as it occurs. One example is how having a student shadow me and explaining what I'm doing and why, falls under the facilitating learning pillar. I have chosen to upload all of my evidence to Turas as it is a professional requirement to evidence my learning and development and I plan to continue using Turas for this throughout my practice. I have mainly used Gibbs reflections for my evidence but also have resources from the portal e.g. leadership questionnaire, self-assessments, zones of discomfort, self-development steps etc. which will mainly fit under self-leadership. I also plan on gaining written feedback from colleagues to help evidence the pillars of practice.

I am really looking forward to continuing to learn and develop my skills. I have made so much progress with building my confidence but as this has been such a barrier, I am keen to continue working on this. I am also looking forward to finishing my Flying Start portfolio and presenting it to my facilitator so that we can reflect on my progress from my first year of practice as I know I have had so many learning experiences.