

Howard Hutchins: My Journey



For Occupational Therapist Week 2020, we chat to a member of staff about their journey to becoming an Occupational Therapist (OT).

In this issue, Howard Hutchins, a paediatrics OT at Cognus, tells us why he turned his back on acting.

My first full time course since leaving school was a diploma in acting. I loved the creativity, the problem solving and working together as a team that was required. I loved the work involved in learning to understand myself and others better.

Acting roles are often few and far between when you are starting out. I wanted to explore work I could enjoy whilst waiting for roles to come along. I had already worked in supporting adults, so this seemed like an obvious choice.

Over the years as I progressed through various roles, I worked with young adults with learning disabilities, adults looking for work, people with a wide range of conditions supporting them into employment.

My skills continued to evolve, such as creative problem solving, working as a team, supporting people to help themselves and developing my empathy skills underscored

through the work learning about myself and others while acting.

The last of these roles was empowering older people, with a huge emphasis on prevention and holistic working. I felt very lucky. Our focus was on enablement through information, through utilising the networks around these often-isolated older people.

After taking redundancy due to reduced funding, I spent some time thinking about where my skillset was best suited; they fitted into occupational therapy very well. I turned that tragedy into a great opportunity, applied for and completed a Bachelor of Science in occupational therapy.

I had spent a long time supporting older people to change their habits for a better lifestyle and decided to work with younger people to have a greater affect over a lifespan. I have now spent the last 5 years working within paediatric teams, with the last three being solely in education. I have been enabling students to participate within their school environment, families to support their children at home with their learning and provide advice on evolving the child's or young person's skills relating to preparation for adulthood. A huge part of the role is working within a multi-disciplinary team, with speech and language therapists, teaching staff, social workers, medical professionals and many more. It is vital to develop excellent working relationships to carry out my work. While I very much enjoyed acting, I feel a greater fulfilment in creatively using my skills to provide therapy to support people's daily occupations to be more productive and meaningful, enabling them to live life to their potential.

This is why I love being an OT.

This is why I'll always #ChooseOT.

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