



A day in the life of...

an apprentice healthcare support worker

CASE STUDY

“I am a Healthcare Support Worker apprentice, working as a speech and language assistant in the Speech and Language Department. I work with adults with communication problems in the stroke unit.

When I was offered the apprenticeship, I presumed it would be in a nursing role. When I was interviewed I was given the apprenticeship in therapy services – I didn't know what it was. But now I love it and I'm really pleased I got it! I can't believe no-one told me about it before – that is something which really suits me.





I usually start my day doing some routine administrative jobs – printing things off and typing up letters. If a speech therapist has a referral, they will go to see the patient and then they will tell me about that patient. I will then make up a resource such as a communication booklet or pain chart for patients who are struggling to speak. I could also pull some pictures together for the speech therapist to support them when they are assessing the patient's capacity.

Between 9 and 3, I go on to the stroke unit. I see up to about 8 patients a day and try to have about 45 minutes with each. I might be helping with slurred speech – giving tips on how to speak clearly. If there's no speech at all, I would use pictures – things are tailored to the patient.

When a patient comes in, we get them and/or the family to fill in a communication history form. That includes things like their favourite food/drink, things about their family, work and interests. I then type it up, include pictures and make a booklet for them. Even if the patient can't speak, we can have a supported conversation, some interaction, using the booklet or other books from the library. You see the patient as a person, rather than someone who has had a stroke.

If the patient is 'nil by mouth', I go and try to keep them occupied. Imagine if you have to go for days without being able to swallow... it's not nice, is it? At visiting times, I chat with families to keep them involved.

I go to college one day a week and find that I am doing really well with my course work. At work I have a mentor who can sit and chat me about work and personal issues. We have action points and she sometimes watches me work with a patient. If I didn't have that support, I might not have stuck it.

Before I started my apprenticeship, I did a 4 week course with the Prince's Trust – I am now a Young Ambassador for the Prince's Trust.

The course boosted my confidence to apply for the apprenticeship. I've two young children with a husband looking after them at the moment. I love the job! I feel really lucky to be an apprentice; to have been given that role. It's what I want to do in life now and I didn't know that before I started!

The apprenticeship takes a year to complete and then I've been offered a permanent job as a speech and language assistant in the community. I will be seeing patients with communication difficulties such as Parkinsons and Motor Neurone Disease – I will be using new technology such as iPads with apps. I will be doing an Access course alongside as my ambition is to be an Occupational Therapist. But in the meantime, I've got this new job. The department is going to get another apprentice. They have asked me to be an unofficial buddy to him/her – I can't wait!!"

For more information see:

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

www.jobs.nhs.uk

www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk