

Lee [01:00:02]

Hello and welcome to your first of everything. My name is Lee and I will be hosting the podcast today. I am a registered child nurse by background and really excited to have Sara with me, who is an occupational therapy student who's going to be sharing some of her first experiences. Hi Sara, how are you?

Sara [01:00:23]

I'm good, thank you. How are you?

Lee [01:00:24]

I'm very well. Thank you. Thank you so much for coming to speak to me today. Welcome. Do you want to start by sharing a bit of background as to your first experience?

Sara [01:00:34]

Yeah. So my first experience coming into occupational therapy as a student. Prior to that, I was a therapy assistant working on the acute stroke unit. So that was working with people that had had a stroke and they'd come straight into hospital. And then as a therapy assistant, I was working with the occupational therapist and the physiotherapist to kind of help rehabilitate people after they'd had a stroke. Wonderful. And then from there, I had my first placement allocated to me. And that was acute stroke.

Lee [01:01:10]

So what were your first thoughts when you saw that sort of placement allocation?

Sara [01:01:15]

At first I was thinking, oh, like, no, I feel like I've already worked on stroke for three years, and even though it was a therapy assistant, I thought I'd have a bit of a familiarity to the area. And I think as a first time sort of student, going into a first placement as kind of wanting an area that I didn't know because I felt like I might need more help in that first year. So then I was a little bit like, oh, do I ask my tutor if I can have a different placement or all of these things? And then I thought, well, no, because I am a therapy assistant at the moment. I'm not an occupational therapist.

So there's still things that I do have left to learn. And so it's worth me going ahead and just getting that new experience really.

Lee [01:02:03]

I suppose I was well, it must be. It must have been comforting in some aspects to have that a level of confidence if you like to walk on going, I know some stuff. Yeah. I've got, I've got my, I've got my phone, I've got some foundation to this.

Sara [01:02:16]

Yeah I think it did. I think it definitely felt comfortable because I do feel comfortable in that area. So when I came in and I didn't feel like it was as overwhelming because I was kind of thinking, right, I've worked with this kind of service user client group before. And so that wouldn't be so daunting when you see people that are quite unwell, when they've obviously just had a stroke.

Lee [01:02:39]

Oh, wonderful. Yeah. So in terms of. Your development then, even though you were returning very much to maybe a similar area to what you were used to in your previous role, how did that what did that look like?

Sara [01:02:55]

My previous what did my previous role?

Lee [01:02:57]

Sorry. No, sorry. So in terms of returning to a similar area, I can I can understand the point where it would be like, oh, am I what am I going to take away from this? I've done a couple of years already, but actually, how did return into that sort of placement area within? Your the new role as a student occupational therapist. How did that support you develop in that respect?

Sara [01:03:20]

Yeah, I think it supported me kind of like taking on another level of responsibility in a way, even though that wasn't expected on my first placement, because they are very supportive and they, they kind of like drip feed you and lead you into it. But, I did feel

a bit like, oh, God. Like, now I've got to do assessments myself and I've got to do these sort of 1 to 1, interviews, I guess, with patients that I had done prior. But it wasn't at the same sort of level or expectations, I think. And that was quite daunting really.

Lee [01:03:53]

And did you. I mean, I think this is quite a common theme, isn't it? We do see people who, Maybe make a bit of a career shift, but a very experienced by the time they join the program. Was it a challenge at all to transition to the role and learn without falling back into maybe what you used to do previously?

Sara [01:04:13]

Yeah, I think that's what I found the most hardest. I think really, because I would just go into sort of therapy assistant mode and be like, right, what do you need me to do? Who am I seeing today? What sort of, treatments or rehab have we got on? And I kind of had to take a little bit of a step back on that and sort of have more of like a watching, observing role, whereas I was more used to just getting on and, yeah, just getting on with my job, really. So that was hard.

Lee [01:04:45]

Because we know, don't we, that, you know, across all health programs, whether it be nursing, midwifery, you know, it isn't uncommon for people to come with a wealth of experience. What sort of what sort of advice would you give to somebody who was maybe, beginning that transition to the role of, a student? And how they navigate, bringing all their sort of previous experience into that role.

Sara [01:05:11]

Yeah, I think it's kind of going in with like an open mind and sort of not preconceptions of what you're going to experience or expect, because I think the experience that you've probably had in your past isn't necessarily going to be the experience that you're going to have in the present. So it's sort of just being mindful that you do have more to learn, whether you've already sort of worked in an area and it's different ways of working as well. There was things that in this area of stroke, the acute stroke ward that I was on, they did different things, different ways of doing things, sorry, as my old trust did. So that was interesting to see the sort of contrast. And there was treating the same sort of condition. So yeah, just coming in with an

open mind, sort of being willing to learn new things and accept that you don't know it all.

Lee [01:06:00]

No. Well, we're never not learning, are we? Yeah. The learning never stops. Yeah. And I think that's a really interesting key point. And because over the course of any programme, you could be returning to certain areas or certain trusts. So I suppose keeping that open mind is really, really important.

Sara [01:06:20]

Yeah, definitely.

Lee [01:06:21]

Because that's how you can access more opportunities isn't it, by not being closed off to those. So during that you sort that sort of experience in that transition period, did you encounter any challenges, maybe that you weren't expecting or and how did you navigate those?

Sara [01:06:42]

Yeah. So I think the main challenge was kind of going away from that therapy assistant role, and not being almost like dragged into other things that maybe I shouldn't have been doing at that time, if that makes sense. So obviously I would help on the ward with what I could, you know, if people needed drinks or if people were struggling. There was low staffing and they needed somebody to help with personal care and things like that. I would help, but I think I needed to remind myself that I was meant to be there in a different kind of role. And so and needed to maybe not set boundaries in a way, because I don't want it to seem like I wouldn't want to do those things, but sort of making it known to other people that I was there for a different purpose at that time. And kind of my responsibilities weren't. To do that at that moment in time. I don't know if that makes sense.

Lee [01:07:35]

No, no, it absolutely, absolutely does make sense. I could imagine people hearing that you have that background sort of going, oh yeah, you're you you know what we're doing. Come on, let's have it. Yeah. I suppose it is very easy to be sort of pulled into those other tasks. And of course, we want to help people. We want to be

part of the team. And we want to support patients and service users. At the end of the day, it's why we're all here, isn't it? Yeah. So I suppose it's been really clear about what actually you're learning objectives are and knowing what those are prior to going and kind of, navigating those discussions. Yeah. So sort of reflecting on that, then what would your key bit of advice be for somebody who's maybe having a similar experience or returning to an area that they're very familiar with?

Sara [01:08:27]

I think maybe going in with an open mind, like a I'd said previously, not having those preconceptions and then maybe just, being mindful that other people might expect a bit more from you in certain ways, that they might want you to do a role that's not your role at that time. And sort of managing that in a way that's polite and, you know, understanding. And I don't know, I'm not really sure what I'm trying to say here, but like, yeah, just being respectful of other people and their kind of like their needs at that time in terms of the wards, staffing levels and things and helping out where you can, but then also putting those sort of respectful boundaries in place to say, I'm really sorry, but at the moment I'm a student on placement and I'm not sure that I can do that right now. And that's kind of the advice I would give really just sort of know your boundaries in a way. And just to be respectful and polite to other people. Yes, absolutely.

Lee [01:09:31]

But what what you're discussing, though, is that professional boundaries and having those discussions is actually part of your professional as you move forward into your career. Yeah. You know, you're always going to have people asking for things. But actually sometimes we do have to say, well, actually we have to prioritise things within our day to day, don't we? So actually there's some, skill development within that in itself, isn't there.

Sara [01:10:00]

Yeah. And I think not taking on too much either and offering yourself to everybody and sort of spreading yourself in making sure that you kind of focussed on what you're doing as well. Yeah, is a good one.

Lee [01:10:10]

Reminding yourself of those, those learning objectives. And actually, what am I.

Sara [01:10:14]

Why am I here. Yeah. What am I doing.

Lee [01:10:19]

What is there. Yeah. So thank you so much, Sarah, for coming to speak to me today. I found it really, really interesting. And I think a lot of people will be able to relate to sort of those, really key points that you've raised. So thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to come and speak to us.

Sara [01:10:37]

Oh thank you. No, thank you for having me. It's been great.

Lee [01:10:41]

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