

Q&A with Fran and Heather, Occupational Therapists at Wigan Council



How did you get into occupational therapy at Wigan Council?

Fran: “I went to college and did health and social care. I wanted to do something practical and I wanted it to be a healthcare profession. I was fortunate to be able to speak to a community occupational therapist and did some shadowing, which was great as sometimes it's hard to know what OT is all about until you've actually experienced it. After that I knew that's what I wanted to do, so I went to Liverpool University and qualified when I was 21.

Heather: “I've been an OT for a year and a half, so I'm still newly qualified. OT is my second degree, I've come into it much later in life than most people do, and that's mostly because I didn't know about it when I was at school. I was working in a variety of public sector roles and came across OT and it just looked like such a lovely role. I studied part time for four years, all while working for the early intervention team at the Council. Wigan was very supportive in encouraging me to do that. They were always there to motivate me, to ensure I did qualify and get to the end of it!”

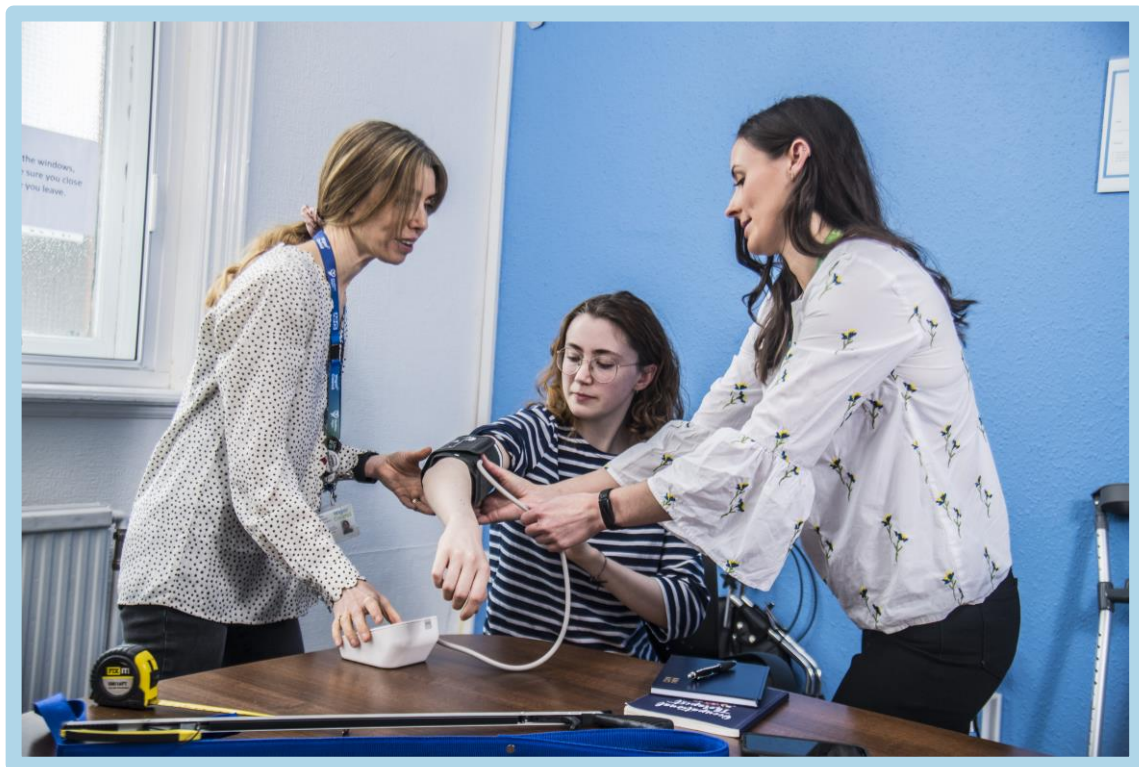
Fran: “I was working in the NHS and got a secondment at the Council. When the chance to apply for a permanent post came up, I took it – and that's where I am now! I love working for the Council because it's so varied; every case is different.”

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What's your role at Wigan Council?

Fran: "In my role I work within the early intervention team, so aids and adaptations equipment and assistive technology. We also work really closely with other services like reablement and other adult social care services."

Heather: "I also work with in the early intervention service, which is part of the adult social care and health department. My role involves identifying the support needs of adults who are 18 years and over and live in the Wigan borough. The adults I work with have a range of physical health or complex needs. This means that tasks that we all find easy, like bathing, dressing or getting in and out of their home are more difficult for them. I provide support to make everyday tasks easier, enabling their independence and increasing wellbeing."



What does a typical day look like?

Fran: "To be honest, there isn't really a typical day because of the kind of job I do and every patient we see has different needs. But I like that variety and that challenge. It's why I love this job. We manage our own caseload, too. We're responsible for prioritising cases and see if any need to be seen more urgently than others. Then of course there's admin, meetings and training."

Heather: "I agree! There is no typical day for an OT! It's such a varied job and that's part of why it's so interesting. It's never boring, there's never a dull day. But while it's really varied, it does require flexibility and it's always challenging, so every day I learn something new and every day I'm challenged by something."

"The typical tasks would include keeping on top of CPD. Wigan is excellent in terms of that and we have lots of training available to us. As an OT we also need to do

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external training to make sure that we're fit for practice and we're keeping our skills up to date. We spend time in clinical supervision with an advanced practitioner where we discuss cases. Obviously we've got our assessments, which can involve going out with social workers and health workers too. And then we attend lots of meetings to make sure that we are doing our best for our patients."

What's it like working for Wigan Council?

Heather: "Working here offers you a really good opportunity to make a positive difference to people. I live in Wigan, it's my hometown, so it's really nice that you're part of improving people's lives. Living in the borough means having those natural connections. A lot of older people like to talk about the history of Wigan, so it's nice to have an understanding of that."

Fran: "I think it's a great Council to work for, I've always felt very valued and supported. It's rewarding and it's challenging. But challenge is good because it helps you learn. You get to use your problem solving skills, be creative and think outside the box. And there are lots of opportunities for training and development. You can really take your career where you want it to go."

And finally, what's the best thing about being an OT?

Fran: "There's so many, I can't narrow it down to one! It's just so rewarding and the feedback you get from patients means so much. It could just be a small piece of equipment that has a positive impact on that person or it could be an extensions or a wet rooms, but getting that positive outcome and knowing you've made a difference means everything."

Heather: "It's so varied, it's so interesting, there's a lot of contact with people and I'm always learning things from the people that I go out and see. And you see a lot of kindness, you see a lot of care for people. For example, a husband caring for his wife who has dementia, it's lovely to see that human side of life and I feel very privileged to have the job that I do when I see things like that. I know that the work I am doing is making a massive difference to people, it can transform lives."