



Case study

Over the last four and a half years, Hanna has worked as a part-time Senior Occupational Therapist for Cumbria's Risedale Estates. She supports the company's six care homes that specialise in residential nursing, dementia and mental health.

Hanna Munro
Senior Occupational Therapist
Risedale Estates

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I care...

Background

Hanna has an academic background, having attained her GCSEs and A-levels followed by a Higher Education Diploma in Spanish and German. Although Hanna's working career started in leisure management, it soon developed into healthcare when she started working for the NHS in Australia for a year.

Career progression

Initially, a mental health nurse friend recommended a social care career to Hanna. She spent a year working as a carer for people with learning difficulties and thoroughly enjoyed the experience, realising that she could make a real difference in this sector. Hanna went to university and achieved a BSc Hons in Occupational Therapy from Salford University.

After qualifying, Hanna took on an occupational therapist role in a hospital-setting whilst setting up her own business to provide care homes with activity training and consultancy demonstrating the benefits of person-centered care. Risedale Estates was one of those homes and a part-time role was created for her. Now at the age of 31, Hanna is progressing a career in occupational therapy and aims to specialise in dementia.



A role in social care

Hanna's senior occupational therapist role is diverse and progressive. It covers the physical, mental and management aspects of social care. She offers key services including fall prevention, wheelchair/seating assessments, the provision of daily living equipment, cognitive intervention and rehabilitation. She is essentially helping to improve or maintain residents' health and wellbeing.

This evolving nurse-led environment enables Hanna to use her own initiative to instigate new patient-centric policies and procedures into the workplace. She works as part of the training team, reporting into the training manager as well as working independently across the care homes, liaising with the nursing teams.

“There’s no such thing as an average day in my role. I can be managing patient referrals or carrying out wheelchair, handrail or seating assessments across the care homes or training the nursing teams.”

Part of Hanna's remit is the responsibility for training a team of activity coordinators and ensuring they are kept abreast of developments and working practices. She has attained a level 3 qualification in assessing so is also responsible for assessing healthcare assistants.

Being the only occupational therapist can sometimes prove difficult in terms of time pressures, but Hanna has risen to the challenge. Her role has become more management-led as she trains nurses on how to identify and manage residents' mobility and feeding needs, so she can provide specialist equipment to adapt the resident's environment for easier living.

Hanna takes an entrepreneurial approach towards her work, often introducing new initiatives to support the team and residents. For example, she has become more involved in staff training and designed a one-day ‘person-centered living’ course for new care assistants and nursing staff. She is also involved in training some care staff to run cognitive stimulation therapy that is proven to improve patients' concentration and social skills.

“I love the idea of spending quality time with residents and making them feel good about themselves. Through my occupational therapist role I can offer a different perspective on things, add value and make a real contribution. There are no limits so I can continue to make a difference.”

Ongoing support

Hanna has found the support from Risedales Estates to be invaluable. The company has funded Hanna to take on a three-year Masters degree in Dementia Studies, as she wants to specialise in dementia.

In addition to her role at Risedale Estates, Hanna has a temporary contract lecturing in Occupational Therapy at Salford University and would consider teaching in the future.

“I would definitely recommend a career in social care as you know you’re doing something worthwhile. Personally, I’ve become more assertive and confident. The environment is so varied and I am constantly developing my practical, communication and management skills. If you’re committed and work hard you can progress through different routes. That might be through on-the-job training or a college or university course, whatever suits you.”

Skills for Care

West Gate
Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP

Telephone 0113 245 1716
Email info@skillsforcare.org.uk
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/recruitment
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