

Podcast transcript

Career conversations: Odeth Richardson

Hannah Spencer:

Hi everyone and welcome to this podcast recorded and produced by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists.

This is one of a series of podcasts which really focus on hearing and sharing the career narratives of our diverse workforce and highlight a whole range of possibilities in occupational therapy.

My name is Hannah Spencer and I'm an occupational therapist that's had the absolute pleasure and privilege of facilitating and capturing these conversations with members of our occupational therapy community.

So let's start with some introductions. Do you mind introducing yourself and your current role or roles?

Odeth Richardson:

Okay, so my name is Odeth Richardson. My day job, as I like to call it, is Head of Service for Occupational Therapy for Newcastle Hospitals and this is sort of an operational role and I do lots of things, including recruitment, CPD, representing the Trust in various different forums, et cetera.

I am also Chair of Council for the Royal College of Occupational Therapist and the British Association of Occupational Therapists, and that role is around governance of the organisation, managing risks and making sure that the organisation is fit for purpose.

I am then co-chair of the Angelou Centre, which is a charity within the Northeast of England that looks after the interests of women and girls suffering from domestic violence and abuse. I am a member of the Northumbria Police SIAG, which is the Strategic Independent Advisory Group for Northumbria Police, and this role entails providing advice as a critical friend to Northumbria Police. I then chair the race equalities network for Newcastle hospitals and also chair the network chairs for the Northeast and North Cumbria ICS group staff networks.

And my final role is that of an advisory group member for the local research network as part of the GRIPS group, which is the group for research inclusivity and participation. And this role I encourage people from minority ethnic groups to participate in research.

So that's me in a nutshell.

Hannah:

It's brilliant. It's great to have you here with us and with lots of different hats on as well to bring to the mix, which is beautiful.

The purpose of the conversation today is around career journeys and thinking about your

occupational therapy career, your experiences. In getting to this point, I found it quite helpful to use the Kawa analogy, the analogy of career journey as river, to kind of guide the questions and guide my thinking.

Let's start right at the beginning. What drew you to occupational therapy? Can you pinpoint the source? How did it all start?

Odeth:

So I think for me, the source of occupation, although I didn't really understand it to be what it is now. It started from a child and it started with my parents, because my parents always instilled with us the importance of occupations. So growing up, we were told that if you're idle, you'll get into trouble, so there's always something to do and there was always a plan. So your days are sort of planned out. You've got chores to do before you go to school, and then your job really was to go to school, to learn, and then to come back and participate in family activities, et cetera. So back then it was really important to my parents that we were not idle and that we were given occupations that help us to focus. And so I think that's where my sort of love of occupation started, because I don't really know what it's like to sit and sort of twiddle my thumbs, because I've never had that experience.

And then more laterally, coming to the UK. I came across OT whilst I was working as a healthcare assistant in London, and I was working in theatres at the time. And I was sent up to one of the new wards to collect a patient for theatres, and I saw OTs in action, and I thought, that's interesting. I've never come across OTs before. So I went and I had a little bit of a research and then I decided this looks like an occupation for me. So I explored training, I got a place at Brunel, I trained and I qualified in 2000.

And the rest, as they say, is history. So that was my introduction to occupational therapy, and here I am.

Hannah:

Brilliant.

What contributed to the flow along the way? What the skills, experiences, opportunities have contributed to where you're at now, how your journey has kind of evolved?

Odeth:

So I think a number of things for me, the first one was curiosity. I was always very curious as a child and I always wanted to learn something new, I always wanted to know how things worked. And I was always very good with my hands, so I was kind of a creative person. So that sort of curiosity and that thirst for knowledge, I think helped to sort of contribute to some of the development of my skills. I've been around people who are sort of high achievers, so my siblings, they're all quite high achievers. And so when you have those type of role models, you try to be like them and you try to sort of model some of the sort of characteristics that they possess. So that was also good, I think, for me.

One of the other bits that helped to contribute to my flow was working in social services. So when you're working in social services and you're doing visits on your own, you kind of have to sort of improvise as you go along. So when you're out in a home visit and something goes drastically wrong, there's nobody else to call, you have to improvise and solve the problem, or temporary put a fix in in terms of supporting your patients or your clients in the community, and then you can put more longer term solutions in place. So working in social services, that sort of helped to develop

some of those skills that were sort of lying dormant for a little bit. And so I was able to hone those skills. I'm quite a practical person and I think I've got common sense, which is another trait that I think is really, really useful.

And again, one of the other things that sort of helped me with in terms of the flow was being given an opportunity, given opportunities to do things that I would normally get a chance to do. So, for example, while I was working at Brent, I knew I was working then I thought, oh, I wanted to get into leadership, and one of the team lead posts became vacant. I knew I wasn't ready and I knew I didn't have the skill, but I thought, you know what, I'm going to put my hat in the ring. So I applied. I didn't get a job, but what that did for me was it highlighted to my line manager at the time that I was looking for progression and that I wanted to try something different. And so she provided those opportunities. She gave me an opportunity to act up into a team lead role later on. She provided an opportunity for me to do some leadership courses, et cetera. And so for that I will always be very grateful to Linda Man, who was our principal OT at the time; she provided me with those opportunities. Although I knew, and she knew I wasn't quite ready, she gave me the sort of grounding and she helped me to develop the skills that I needed. So when the job became available and was advertised later on, I was able to apply for it and I was successful.

So those are some of the things. And also the next thing that sort of helped with my flow is being given permission to fail, because often we expect people to be perfect, we expect them to just go there and do everything perfectly and there's no such thing. So knowing that you have that permission to fail to try something and not get penalised for it, it's really been helpful and it's helped, definitely.

Hannah:

You trained at Brunel. What came next? Can you share a bit more about your journey to where you are now?

Odeth:

I trained at Brunel, but when as part of my training, I had a number of placements, my final placement was actually in social services. So I knew early on that I really wanted to work in social services because that lit my boats and I knew that was where I wanted to be. But I was also told that as an OT, one of the best things to do would be to do a rotational post, because those rotational posts, they were basically posts at the time, they gave you the foundation and they helped you to develop those foundation skills. So, although I knew I wanted to work in social services, I went for a rotational post as my first post, and I did some rotation in mental health in the acute physical setting within the hospital and I did some rotation with the... gosh, the words have slipped me, but it's that equipment sort of adaptation side of things...

And so I then following that rotation, I knew because I wanted to go into social services, I then applied for a job in social services. So that was sort of the way I approached my OT journey, if you like, and that was the start.

Hannah:

And where did it go from there?

Odeth:

So from there, once I finished my rotation, I went into social services within Harrow Social services. And there I sort of honed my adaptation skills, my skills and developed skills in reading plans and

adapting properties and so on. And that to me was one of the exciting bits of social services. It was understanding how the environment can constrain or support people to participate in their activities. And once I understood that, I wish I understood that a little bit earlier, actually. But once I understood that, it sort of gave me wings of fire, because I knew then that I was making a difference to people's lives. From then I went to Brent, and then from Brent I just continued to grow and develop. And I got my first leadership post in Brent, which is where I ended up leading the duty team, following the experience and the opportunities that were given to me by my line manager.

And then from Brent I went on to Newcastle Hospitals as Head of Service for OT, and I'm there now alongside my many other roles. You mentioned then around your understanding of kind of how the environment can enable or restrict someone's participation, someone's life and wellbeing, I guess.

Hannah:

How has your environment enabled or restricted your career journey?

Odeth:

So, in terms of my environment enabling or restricting my career journey, it was really interesting because when I was in Brent, I was surrounded by people who looked like me, who sounded like me, and so I went through Brent sort of in a period of oblivion, not really understanding what was happening in other areas of OT. So when I moved to Newcastle, it was like a culture shock for me because I was the only black person there. And coming from a very multicultural team, it took a lot of adjustments.

So the environment in Brent, people got you, so the team I was working with, they got me so I didn't have to sort of explain what I meant. If I was making a joke, it was understood, didn't have to explain it. I could be myself, I could be as loud as I wish, I could be as colourful as I wish, and I didn't stand out. Whereas in Newcastle it was completely different, being the only one, you sort of stand out like a sore thumb. So I have been in Newcastle over 13 years and I've actually been the only black OT within this team. And for a long time I was also the only black AHP within the service, and that in itself is quite an interesting place to be in that everybody knows you because you're very different, but also being very mindful. When I came to Newcastle, my start wasn't the best in terms of because people, I don't think most of them have ever seen a black person before. It was really tricky and so lots of little challenges and teething problems and stuff. There were lots of issues around my accent; staff were saying they couldn't understand and all of those things took me a while to understand the geordie accent myself, because they speak so quickly. So it was a two way learning street, really, but it's been a really interesting journey.

Being in the north east in the last, I would say, four or five years, it's much better because we've had so much more diversity within the workplace, within the actual city itself. You can see the difference that it makes. We've been out internationally to recruit a number of internationally trained nurses and so on, and so it feels different. Previously, when I went into a function or something, I'm the only black one in there. And you just feel like all eyes are on you and you just feel a bit strange, but over time, you sort of get used to it.

But I don't think for me, that I've ever brought my entire self to work since I've been at Newcastle Hospitals, like 100%. I've probably brought 90% to 95%, but there's a little bit of me that I still keep hidden and I don't know why, because I've grown, I've got lots of friends and it's just strange. It's just one of those things where you feel different just because you look different. I've also pursued a number of opportunities in the north east, but not sort of been able to progress in any meaningful way. And in my head, I'm thinking, if I was back in London, I probably would have been much further on in my career than I am in Newcastle. But that's just me thinking that, because I have no sort of

facts to back that up. But I know I've gone for a lot of opportunities and never been given them. So in the end, I just thought, well, actually, I need to stretch opportunities because I know I've got all these skills that I've gained from all these different roles that I've undertaken. And so when the Chair of Council role came up, I thought, I've got nothing to lose, so I'm going to go for this because it's something that I'm interested in, it's something I think I can do. I never dreamed for one moment that I would be appointed as Chair of Council, but I thought I had nothing to lose. I needed a stretch opportunity and I thought this would really stretch me, so I went for it, and surprise, surprise, I was voted in. So I was as surprised as anybody else in terms of being voted in as Chairs of Council, but it's been a real I hope... I won't say it's a highlight, because I've only just started, I'm eight months into the role, as you know, but it's opened my eyes to so many possibilities and so much more. And I'm really pleased that I went for it, because if I had allowed fear to sort of keep me back, I probably wouldn't have put myself forward.

Hannah:

What role of supervision had in your progression and development?

Odeth:

Well, I think supervision is really important and as OTs, we sort of kind of grew up with supervision. It's what's sort of the backbone of our profession, isn't it? But for me, from a personal note, supervision is... I always break my supervision down into three elements because I think it's important. So I think there's the personal side of it because if there's something going on in your life and you're not able to sort of function effectively at work, I think it's really important that you can share that with your supervisor and you can get some support to help you through it. Because all of us have life outside of work and things happen that sometimes impact on our ability to sort of perform. So I think that's really important that you look at some of the personal elements. The professional side of things is really important because a good supervision session will support you in terms of your CPD, your development and all of that. And if you're aiming to sort of contribute to the profession and also to grow and develop as an OT, then supervision will help you in that respect. And then if you're in a clinical or a social care setting, the day to day job of supporting patients or clients, wherever, that's important. And sometimes you do need that supervision to help you to sort of manage caseloads, to provide advice or guidance in terms of next steps when you're stuck with a particular client or patient, that sort of thing.

So for me, those three elements are really important in supervision.

More laterally, I have come to rely on things like coaching and mentoring because I think those as well alongside supervision are really important to sort of help you as you grow and develop. And I find that really invaluable as I go on this leadership journey. Because sometimes when you're with a coach, you think you don't know the answers, but the coaches, they just kind of point you in the direction because within, you know you've got the answers. But it's just having that other voice to sort of say, well, actually, have you considered this or have you considered that? And then having that mentoring is also really important.

Hannah:

And are those kind of opportunities within and beyond the workspace, would you say?

Odeth:

Some of them are within the workspace and some of them are beyond, and a combination of both I think would be invaluable for anyone because sometimes you need somebody outside of your

actual work environment who doesn't necessarily know your day to day job, but can bring other world experiences into the equation and help you. And sometimes it's necessary to have people who know the system that you're working in to provide that support as well. So a bit of both is quite useful.

Hannah:

What about challenges along the way, Odeth? What about boulders in your flow?

Odeth:

Boulders in my flow. So I've had a few myself. So in terms of boulders, I've had a couple, well, more than a couple. I've had sort of boulders like ill health, bereavement, racism, the usual stuff. So for my first one that really sort of impacted on my my career journey as such was in 2016, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. And that came at a time when I was really because I moved from Brent to Newcastle and I wanted to do this. I was down to do the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Leadership Course, and it was a combination of academic reading and also sort of work based assignments and so on. I was really excited because I've been wanting to do this course for the longest while, so I got permission to do it. And then in July, we had the four day residential to introduce the course and to launch it. And two weeks after the course, I went to the residential. I was really fired up and thinking, this is great. I've met all these folks who are going to be in my ALS and I'm really looking forward to the course because it's something I felt I could get my teeth into. And then two weeks after that, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. And I thought, this is really awkward timing because there's never a good time to be diagnosed with breast cancer. But I was really disappointed and I was really angry because I thought, you know what, I've waited so long to do this, and at the point when I can do it, this thing just comes out of nowhere. But I was determined to sort of deal with it. So I went to have my operation and my treatment and because some of the course you could do online, I was still able to do some. Although my line manager, my boss, said to me, you're meant to be concentrating on getting better and getting back to work and not thinking about the course, the course will wait, you can pick it up later on. But for me, I think the course kind of helped to keep me sane because it gave me something else to focus on whilst I was going through my treatment and stuff. And in a strange way, it kind of helped too so the rest of my action learning set, they took some inspiration from the fact that I was still able to complete the course and I was able to graduate with my cohort because they said, well, if you can do it despite all you were going through, then we have no excuse. So they used it as a bit of inspiration, which is quite good.

So that was kind of like my first boulder that kind of sideswept me a little bit. And then I had some bereavements one after the other, which was the other boulders that came. So I was diagnosed in 2016 and then my sister died in 2017 from pancreatic cancer. Dad died in 2018 from prostate cancer, my brother died in 2019 from pancreatic cancer, and then my sister died in 2020 from pancreatic cancer. So I went through a period of three or four years where there was always a death and it was always a significant one, and it took a while to sort of put things into perspective. But in a strange way, my diagnosis helped me to do that, because I felt, well, actually, I was diagnosed, I had my treatment, I'm still here, I must be here for a reason. So I kind of use that as a sort of when the days got a little bit dark, I used that to help me to sort of move forward. And it was a grieving process, but I think in all of it, because when you're from a large family, as I am, you tend to go through the grieving process over and over again in all of it. The one that sort of hit me the most was my last sister, who died in 2020. She died during COVID and that was the one funeral I wasn't able to go to because she died in the States. And of course, being in the UK, with the borders closed, we had to do the funeral via Zoom. And it was really strange because it was a busy time at work as well and I just never had the time to grieve. So that took some time after COVID for me to work through some of those processes.

So for me, those kind of felt like big boulders and I had to deal with them in order to move forward. So the way I dealt with them, it was acceptance, I think is a good thing, because there were a couple of my family members who just couldn't accept the fact that we have a faulty gene and we're more prone to this pancreatic type of cancer. The good things that came out of it, because we're all in the screening programme at the moment. But I also know that I still have a limited time and that I need to make as much use of that time that I have as I possibly can and to do as much good as I can for all the people that I need support and so on.

So those are my two big boulders. But I also then when you experience things like racism and bullying and all those microaggressions and things like that, those can be boulders. And initially, when I came to Newcastle, I had a lot of those as well, but for me, I just thought at that time there was no I didn't know anything about our unions or chaplain to service and all the support networks that are available now. We didn't have a staff network at the time, so when the opportunity came first to develop a staff network, I was the first one in the queue to say, I'm in. So I put my hand up and I thought, I don't want anybody to come to this organisation and go through what I went through and so whatever I can do in my power to try and make that path a little bit easier, then that's what I will do.

So for me, it was about using those incidents and turning them into opportunities and to try and make it better for everyone because inherently I like to help people and I think that's one of the reasons why I became an occupational therapist, because I think you have such an opportunity to change people's lives. That was part of the values that I had growing up in terms of my parents always instilled belief you can make a difference to somebody, then do it expecting nothing in return. And so those values are quite intrinsic to me and so I try to live by them each day but that was my way of coping. If I didn't find the positive in there, I could have gone on a road where it was just all negative and sometimes you just have to try and find some positives, isn't it?

Hannah:

Absolutely. So what's helped you along the way? Or what would have helped in those times and those darker times?

Odeth:

So for me, support from your family and friends, when you have good people around you who can provide that support, that really helps. When you have people with willing to just listen, sometimes you don't need them to say anything, you just need somebody to just listen. And when you have colleagues who are really there, really supportive, who kind of understand what you're going through and they provide that support, that's been really beneficial for me, being able to talk through issues. So sometimes, whether that be with a coach or a mentor or friend, I like to talk. So rather than read something, or rather than say, some people find it easy to sit and I like to talk, I like to read, I like to listen. But for me, when I have a problem, I think a problem shared, the problem halved, as they say. So I like to sort of test things out. So I'll say to my friend, 'well, I've got this situation, this is what I think I will do with it. What do you think?' So I tried to provide an answer and then they might say they might show me the pros and cons and say, well, actually, if you did this, this might happen. Or have you considered this? And so it always helps me. It's good to talk.

In terms of time to grieve, I think for a long time I didn't, and that's really important, but also to show up my resilience. Sometimes you just need to take a little time out. And I've learned I was never very good at self care when I started, I used to think that I had to be all things to all men and I tried to do everything to my own detriment. But over the years, I've learned that you cannot pour from an empty cup and I've learned to recognise when I need to just take a step back or take a break. And so, for me, the way I cope is I love to dance. So if the music's on, I'm on the dance floor and I really

don't care if anybody thinks I can't dance or not. I dance as if no one's watching because I'm just grasping that opportunity, I'm so glad to be alive that the music starts and that's me. I like to go on walks, I like to read and I like to go on cruises because that's my favourite way of relaxing. You wake up in a different port every day, you can go to the spa, you can go to the shows and the theatres and there's somebody else cooking your dinner and somebody is making the bed.

So when I need to recharge, those are the things that sort of help me. Being able to talk to people, being able to take a break, being able to just pamper myself and take some self care and so on. So that's really helped.

Hannah:

Do you feel that you've been able to be or to bring your authentic and best self to occupational therapy? You kind of alluded to this a little bit earlier.

Odeth:

Yeah, I think I wouldn't say I brought my best self. I brought three quarters of myself to my various different roles for various reasons. I find the most challenging one for me is the Chair of Council role, because this is where some of my imposter syndrome kicks in a little bit. And although I know I've got the skills and the capability of doing it, because it's a new role, sometimes when the impostor syndrome kicks in, it's really tricky.

I've been working in Newcastle for a long time, I think my colleagues know what I can bring to the table, they know what I can deliver, and so the imposter syndrome doesn't click in anymore in Newcastle because I'm very comfortable in my skin. I know the contribution that I make to the team and to the service, et cetera. But because this role is so new, there's a lot of expectations on my shoulders. I am learning, I am still enjoying it. It's a challenge. But whether or not I bring 100% of myself to it yet, not yet, I have a little bit more to give. It a process and I'll get there eventually, but for now, I'm making good progress, as I say.

Hannah:

Yeah, for sure. And I like your willingness as well, Odeth, to acknowledge some of that vulnerability as well.

Odeth:

I think so often, kind of leadership is perceived as unshakable. You're human, you're expected to know everything and I don't know everything. Absolutely. And the times when those imposter syndrome kicks in the most is because I'm very different to all previous chairs of council. I am not a professor, I haven't got a doctorate, I'm not an academic, but I'm not white. So all of those insecurities kind of come in and sort of they sit there and you kind of have to learn to deal with them, isn't it? You got to learn to sort of take people with you when you go and change journeys. Because as Chair of Council, I can't change the organisation by myself, I need to make sure that I take the members with me and the senior leadership team and all the other folks who work within the Royal College, and that takes time.

So, yeah, change is always a good thing, although some people don't like it and it's frightening and it's uncomfortable, but it's often necessary and it doesn't mean you have to change everything, because there are lots of good things that we need to keep, but there are some things that we definitely need to change.

Hannah:

It's a process... consistently evolving.

Have there been points where your river has turned or changed course in a way that you'd not really anticipated?

Odeth:

There have been a couple for me.

So, firstly, when I came from Brent to Newcastle, when I moved from Brent to Newcastle, I moved from Brent to Newcastle because of the breakdown of my marriage. And I needed a change, I needed to just get away and do something slightly different. And that was one of the biggest changes. So I'm changing from social service because I always thought that I would start my career in social services and I would end in social services, and it meant a big change from social services back into an acute trust. And that was a steep learning curve because the two are so different in terms of how they work.

So that was like changing course, really, and doing something slightly different. Took a while to settle back into the NHS, because the NHS is a big beast, and in Newcastle itself, it's a huge organisation, there's 18,000 staff. So having to understand how the system works and how the Trust itself works as an organisation, it took a while, but that was a complete change of course for me in terms of my current role.

I did it for a little while and I became comfortable and then I decided I needed some stretch. So hence I went for the Chair of Council role. So that again was another change in terms of direction this role, because it's a national, it's more strategic, although I do have some strategic elements in my current head of service role. It's not as much as it did. So that again was a big change.

And for me, in terms of changing and adapting to situations as they go, you learn to do that because in all the various forums that I've sat on in terms of my voluntary roles, they've all been very different. But each of them, although they're completely different, they've taught me skills and opportunities and they've just given me such a wide range of different skills and experience that I can bring into this Chair of Council role. And it all helps really, so you pick a bit from there and a bit from there and it all helps to create a sort of a whole.

Hannah:

I guess that leads on to the next question what's been most important or helpful in your development and progression as an occupational therapist or throughout your career? And I'm hearing saying yes to opportunities, getting involved, volunteering...

Odeth:

Remaining curious because with that curiosity comes a thirst for knowledge and being able to learn and just sometimes just say I wonder why that happens in this way or something. So that curiosity has really helped me to sort of stretch myself but also to understand how things work and why it works. And I think when we lose that curiosity it's like a child, isn't it? A child grows by being curious and exploring their environment and so on. When you lose that curiosity you become a little bit stale.

So for me, remaining curious has been a really great part of the journey and one that I really want to

continue with being given the opportunity to fail and being brave enough to take those opportunities when they present themselves even though you might not know where it's going to lead, it's an opportunity. So being prepared because sometimes and knowing when to take those opportunities because sometimes opportunities present themselves but you're not in the right frame of mind or you're not at the right point in your journey to embrace those opportunities. And I think that can be as detrimental if you take on those opportunities when you're not ready as opposed to when you feel you're ready but also not being afraid to be stretched. Because if we stay in control and if we stay where we're comfortable we'll never grow. So it's also getting that balance between being uncomfortable and stretching and growing.

And also one of the other things is being able to cope with change because in the last few years we've had so much changes it's unbelievable. And if you're someone who really don't like change and really fear it then you find it a little bit more challenging because nothing stays the same. Things will always be changing and evolving around us and being able to evolve with that change, I think that's really important.

One of the things that's also helped me is being able to live my values often if you're in an organisation that's at odds with your own personal values, you get that tension, don't you? And you can't really be yourself. So finding the right organisation that helps you to live by your values is really important and I think it's one of the key bits for me.

And my final bit is having aspirational role models. I like to look up to people and I like to think, oh, actually, that person is doing so and so maybe I could do that too. So having those role models, I think, is really, really important.

Hannah:

What do you wish you'd known as an early career OT or prior to joining the profession? What would you say now to your early career self, almost, if you were your own role model now, what would you say?

Odeth:

I wish I'd known at the beginning, before I even trained to become an OT. I wish I'd known the value that occupations bring to people's lives and I wish I'd known at an earlier point in my journey the impact that your environment can have on your occupation. So what I mean by that is occupational wellbeing is really important because, as you know, we're all occupational beings and we need to be doing things that help us. When you have a child who is not able to play effectively because they might be constraints from a social point of view, because they're in a socially deprived area, that then impacts on you and their development for the future.

And so I wish I had known earlier that impact that your environment has on your occupational performance, because then I would probably have done things slightly differently. But once I train to become an OT and I understand that, it just helps me to be able to help others, but I wish I'd known that slightly earlier, if that makes any sense.

Hannah:

Absolutely.

Odeth:

I wish I'd also known a little bit earlier about the wealth of opportunities that are available to

occupational therapists. So when I trained, there were three avenues open to you. Basically, you're either going to mental health, you're going to the acute hospital setting, or you go into the social services. There was none of this exploration of all the different areas in OT that you could approach, whereas now there's just so much, so much opportunities. Perhaps if I had known about some of the others on my career, might have taken a different route. I quite where that is, I have no idea. But I'd like to think that I would have been curious enough to sort of explore something different than the traditional routes to OT.

Understanding my skill set and where my passion lies is really important and I think that's important for any OT out there. So if you're in a job and you're not passionate about it, find the one that's going to bring out that passion in you. That's going to make you so enthusiastic to wake up in the mornings, because you can't wait to get into work and you can't wait to do what you need to do. Because without the passion, sometimes the job, it becomes a chore and it's not good for anyone because you're not able to sort of do it to the best of your ability. You're not able to do it effectively. So find your passion, find that niche in OT that works for you.

And I think had I known where that is, I know now, but when I trained, it was quite early and I thought, well, it's either acute services, social services or mental health. No other options. So, yeah, as a brand new OT, just joining and just starting their journey, I would encourage you to search for all the opportunities that are out there and find the one that lights your fire, basically.

Hannah:

What's next for you?

Odeth:

So what's next for me? I would love. I've only been in the role as chair of council for eight months, but at the end of June, it's the end of my term of office. But I'd love to be given another opportunity for a further year at least, just so I can continue to build on some of the work that I've started in the Trust... in the Council.

And then I love helping people or watching them grow and develop, and it gives me great pleasure when I see my new grads, how they've flourished and they've changed and they've grown over the years and they've gone off to do great things. I love to do that, and I'll still do that in whatever role I'm in. I just like to help people to grow and develop.

And so what's next? I have no idea what's in store for me, but I'm open to any opportunities and I'm sure that there will be some out there. I just need to sort of go and find it, as I've told everybody else. But I really enjoyed the challenges of the new role as Chair of Council and just wanted to do a little bit more.

Hannah:

Is there anything else you'd add to anything we've discussed today?

Odeth:

I guess no, I think we've covered it all, actually.

Hannah:

Brilliant.

It's really been a really good conversation. Thank you for sharing your story with me.

I guess we've got a quick fire, finish the sentence question to end with.

Being an occupational therapist is...

Odeth:

Is a privileged spot to be in because you can make such a difference to people's lives. You can empower them to make meaningful changes to their lives and it's a privilege.

Hannah:

Brilliant. It's a lovely way to conclude. Thanks for thanks for talking with me today.

Odeth:

You're very welcome.