



<p><i>Name</i></p>	<p>Claire D'Agostino</p> 
<p><i>How long have you been an occupational therapist (OT) for?</i></p>	<p>Since 1996 so 26 years</p>
<p><i>What inspired you to be an occupational therapist?</i></p>	<p>I met an OT when I was volunteering as teenager, I'd wanted to be a nurse or a teacher and when she explained her role, I could see elements of both roles so decided it would be a good career.</p>
<p><i>What does your role involve?</i></p>	<p>My current role is broad and diverse, and I do my best to represent and provide strategic leadership for the 6 professions who make up the AHP workforce at CCS. I also represent and provide leadership to the Research Team and Patient Experience Team.</p>
<p><i>How did you get into this career? What steps did it take since leaving school?</i></p>	<p>I left school with very little qualifications following a close family bereavement at a crucial time in my schooling. On leaving school, I started to work where I'd been volunteering, with a London local authority holiday provision, supporting children with special needs, I joined the team full time to work on their play bus, during the next few years while I worked on the play bus I also worked at a local hospital and went back to college part time and did 2 A 'levels. Once I achieved my A' Levels, I worked for 6 months as a nursing assistant and then for six months as an OT assistant. The combination of my A 'Levels and my experience enabled me to finally get</p>



	<p>accepted at university to study OT at the age of 21.</p>
<p><i>Can you tell us a bit about the training you undertook for your role?</i></p>	<p>It was a 3-year full time course; we had a mixture of academic classroom-based lessons and clinical placement training. To qualify I needed to achieve 1000 hours of clinical practice. When I started my course, I thought I wanted to work with children, but the placement experience made me consider alternative areas to work once I qualified. I had placements in Older Adults Physical Health, Adult Mental Health Neurology Rehab and HIV Hospice. While I was training, I worked as a bank nursing assistant at a local mental health hospital during term time and back at the holiday provision in the holidays. All the experience I had prior and during my training has been and continues to be so valuable to me, throughout my career.</p>
<p><i>What's been the highlight of your career so far?</i></p>	<p>Obviously achieving my current post! I'm so passionate about the work the AHP professions do and opportunity to influence patient care through the fantastic work carried out by the AHPs in the Trust, the patient experience team, the co-production team and the research team. I've had the opportunity to work with some amazing people (both staff and people who have used the services) over the years. I've worked in acute hospitals, a community rehabilitation setting including older adults care, neurology and falls prevention, mental health services which included end of life care, a regulatory body back to mental health and community settings. There are too many highlights to mention, but here are a few: Supporting patients in end-of-life care, working with whole families following a person's brain injury, providing person-centred care for people with dementia and helping a lady get home following a stroke to be able to support her daughter and I also set up a 'pub'!</p>



<p><i>What do you like most about your role/career?</i></p>	<p>The versatility, I've had the opportunity to move to different settings and roles. I've worked in both traditional OT roles and non-traditional roles such as a ward manager, service manager and a CQC inspector.</p>
<p><i>What's the most challenging part of your role?</i></p>	<p>That there is not enough time in the day and making sure all areas of my work and responsibilities get the same amount of attention.</p>
<p><i>What's a typical day like for you in your role?</i></p>	<p>Meeting with a variety of people across several different settings. Supporting change, reviewing quality, mentoring, coaching. Every day is different</p>
<p><i>What are the main skills needed to do your role?</i></p>	<p>Problem solving, creativity, organisation, good communication, patience and compassion.</p>
<p><i>Do you have any advice for someone considering your career?</i></p>	<p>Go and speak to a few OTs to hear from them what the job is like. Seek work experience/volunteering opportunities. Apply to work as or alongside an OT in a support worker role. There are fantastic apprenticeship opportunities out there. Do it! After 26 years, I still love being an OT!</p>