



APCP Information - Interested in a Career in Paediatric Physiotherapy?

Many physiotherapists have expressed interest in working with children as part of their physiotherapy career, but state that they struggle to gain relevant experience and thus feel they do not meet person specifications for paediatric posts advertised.

This document aims to support physiotherapists with a keen interest in a career working with children, to draw on experience relevant to the patient group, that might be overlooked.

Physiotherapists working with children and young people bring their generic skills as physiotherapists. They recognise that children and young people are not just small adults and as practitioners working in this specialist field they should have additional skills and knowledge surrounding:

- * anatomy, physiology, neurological and psychological development from new born to adulthood
- * an understanding of the ages and stages from infancy through transitions to adult life
- * child specific medical conditions and disability and the impact they have on participation and wellbeing
- * the ability to recognise atypical development and assess, identify, clinically diagnose and offer a range of interventions and options using their clinical judgement and experience
- * the understanding of the importance of working in partnership with the children and their families to help them gain an understanding of their situation, whilst possibly managing through a parent or carer as implementer
- * teaching and empowering children so that they are able to maximise their abilities and life opportunities
- * an appreciation of the possibility for involvement over a prolonged period of years if a child has a long term condition for which physiotherapy intervention could be beneficial
- * knowing and being prepared to apply the ethics and law around a child's emerging rights
- * the ability to provide an advocacy and educational role in partnership with the child or young person as they progress through key stages of development, engaging with others to ensure consistent optimum outcomes e.g. educational establishments.

Many of these skills are not unique to the paediatric world.

Children come with their own idea of "normal" and for many of the patient's seen by paediatric physiotherapists, they have not experienced normal development as defined by text books, however this is **their** normal. Also, apart from when working in the acute setting, the majority of the paediatric caseload are not ill, but living and learning to develop into functional adults with long term health conditions.



Skills that can therefore be demonstrated as transferable are:

- * **Ability to set patient focused goals with respect of patient's wishes** – working with children regardless of age of consent, requires considerable negotiation and step by step care planning, whilst ensuring intervention is delivered through play or function. *Also demonstrated in working with Older People, Learning Disabilities and Mental Health Services.*
- * **Managing patient expectations**– it is not often that a child enters an assessment understanding that they are the key to successful outcomes; it does happen, but more often than not a child is presented to the paediatric service by an anxious parent. Therefore, the ability to communicate what physiotherapy is and is not, who holds responsibility in the care planning, and realistic goal setting are important skills when working with this client group and their families. *Also demonstrated with all patient groups.*
- * **Ability to communicate needs to care team** – working with children requires all involved in the 24 hour care of that child to understand the importance of good movement opportunities. The child may not be in a position to make good choices for themselves, and relies on the support of others to prompt and facilitate this, in order to achieve the agreed goals. *Also demonstrated with Older People, Learning Disabilities, Stroke rehabilitation and Mental Health Services.*
- * **Experience of children and young people** –. It is likely that everyone has personal experience of childhood pain, either themselves or siblings and friends in childhood, and can reflect that the response of others around them influenced the recovery or coping skills of the child in pain. Considering clear, honest communication to the child about what is happening and will happen is important when working with children to reduce anxiety, recognise successes and encourage engagement with services. Any experience demonstrating working with children and young people, whether baby-sitting, volunteering with youth groups or sports teams, shadowing children's services in health, education and leisure is relevant.
- * **Reading, Knowledge and Learning** – **APCP** is an active professional network alliance within the CSP, with interactive discussions via iCSP, information sharing through contemporary social and internet media, informative journals, newsletters and study opportunities at all levels. The **APCP Introduction to Paediatric Physiotherapy** course is designed to offer supported learning to develop understanding and knowledge of the ethical and legal issues of working with this client group, an introduction to common paediatric presentations and, through case studies, an opportunity to demonstrate clinical reasoning. **APCP Guide to Working with Children** provides a valuable resource for any practitioner new to the paediatric client group.

For further information go to <http://apcp.csp.org.uk> – access to the website, journal and newsletter back copies is free. Annual membership includes twice yearly newsletter and journal, and the opportunity to join regional networks, with reduced course fees for events offered.

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