Real-life story - Stephen Luxton

Stephen's career in rehabilitation engineering has meant him being able to design and modify equipment to make the lives of young people easier and more fulfilling.

Stephen Luxton Senior specialist rehabilitation engineer
Employer or university Chailey Heritage Clinical Services part of Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust
Salary range £30k-£40k

How I got into the role

I knew from an early age that I wanted to work in engineering or healthcare which led me to taking science and maths A-levels.

I knew I wanted to go to university so looked for a degree that combined both my interests. I couldn’t believe it when I found a BSc in Rehabilitation Engineering. It was perfect!

I applied and was successful. I spent four years training which included work placements across the country. In my final year, I went to Chailey Heritage Clinical Services, which is part of Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust. I loved it and is where I am working today.

It has been an amazing journey. I feel incredibly lucky to be able to use my knowledge and skills to make the lives of young adults that bit better.

What I do

Every day is a new and exciting challenge. My role involves seeing whether a young person needs specialised equipment. If they do, it is up to me to make sure they are given it and advised on how to use it. Sometimes certain equipment needs to be adapted to meet individual needs and in some cases it needs to be created from scratch. This is when the very special service we offer is particularly helpful. We are able to manufacture and adapt medical devices to meet these needs.

For example, we may adapt standing supports that gives young people increased comfort and safety when enjoying activities with their peers. We may also customise headrests on wheelchairs that helps to improve visual range leading to better social interactions.

It is fantastic to see the difference this can make.

> I am lucky to be able to see a parent's face as their child stand for the first time.

The best bits and challenges

The best part of the job is the difference we make to young people. You can get a real sense of achievement handing over a piece of equipment and seeing what it means to them.

The reaction of the parents can also be really emotive. I am lucky to be able to see their faces as their child uses a trike or stands for the first time.

As with any job, there are challenges. Progress can be slow and stressful for some children, but the small changes we make results in them being more independent, comfortable and happy. Something that many of us take for granted.

Life outside work

I am looking into doing some volunteering by offering some engineering support to a wheelchair rugby team. I would also like to be able to use my skills to help people in countries across the world where the support I can offer is particularly needed.

Career plans and top tips for others

I have done an Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine (IPEM) Diploma in Clinical Technology, passing with a Merit. My employer supported me with this which was really helpful. This has helped me to recently get a promotion. The career progression in the NHS is one of the really fantastic benefits.

I also keep a Continuing Professional Development folder to ensure I am up to date with the

latest development in rehabilitation engineering such as equipment changes and safety notices. In the future, I would like start a Master’s qualification and eventually a PhD.

If you want to work in rehabilitation engineering, you’ll need to be caring, compassionate and innovative. You’ll also need to be a keen problem solver and want to help people.
