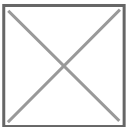


"Our work as occupational therapists is truly person centred in approach and philosophy. There are so many areas you can work in from mental health and physical disability, to community work in prisons and schools."

Ben White was a Lance Corporal in the British Army after trying out many different roles, he found his passion as an occupational therapist.

Ben White

Occupational therapist



How I got into my role

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After leaving the armed forces, I tried many different roles including lorry and digger driving, conservation and surveillance. It wasn't until I became a staff trainer in the care sector that I found a role which felt right and I could use some of the skills I learned in the Army. I really enjoyed this role for over nine years, but some major life events led to me reviewing what I wanted out of life, once again.

I felt that I wanted to do more, I wanted to be the person others made referrals to, and I wanted to have a profession which gave me a sense of identity and I knew that I could achieve it.

After graduating, I worked in a community learning disabilities team which was the job I wanted when I decided to become an occupational therapist. The team had a wealth of experience and knowledge and everyone was happy to help and offer advice and support when I needed it. The management and leadership were second to none, they were personable and supportive in helping me manage my caseload, while also ensuring I met deadlines and completed my tasks.

After a year with this team I was offered a job at a higher pay band working for a charity with veterans suffering from PTSD. Unfortunately due to relocating back to Devon I was unable to continue working for this charity and now I work for Dame Hannah Rogers, a charity which provides residential and respite care for adults with learning disabilities and complex postural and health needs.

What I do

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In the Army, you have to think on your feet and use your initiative to solve problems. I remember my first troop sergeant saying to me “don’t give me problems, I want solutions”, which was an important lesson to me as a young man. Its similar in occupational therapy, you are relied upon to imaginative and resourceful to make decisions and get results.

Another similarity is helping people; you might not associate soldiers with helping people but they do. My first operational tour was in Bosnia dealing with the aftermath of the war, we helped so many people and this had a huge impact on me, it was what I felt I needed to do in life.

The best bits and challenges

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I am lucky to have a fantastic job. It’s been a very different challenge to my other OT roles utilising my knowledge, resilience, and ability to adapt. I think a lot of what makes me so versatile and able to adapt comes as a result of my military career.

Occupational therapy is a little heard of profession which can be a challenge but we have so much ability to help people live their lives, in a way that suits them. Our work is truly person centred in approach and philosophy. There are also so many areas you can work in from mental health and physical disability to community work in prisons and schools.

Career plans and top tips for others

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If you are planning to leave the armed forces, you will need a profession where you will be well-paid, have many options for where you take your career and great prospects for the future. You get all these things as an occupational therapist. It can be expensive retraining mid-life but the result is worth it, you will have a job, career and role you can be proud of.

One of the biggest things people miss when they leave the armed forces is having that sense of identity, who you actually are now. I'm proud to be a veteran but I'm also extremely proud to be an occupational therapist.

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