

As a natural communicator with highly developed interpersonal skills, I have always dreamed of a career working as part of a multidisciplinary team, improving individuals' lives on a direct and practical level. With my genuine interest in people and fascination for the workings of the human body, a lecture at Newcastle University immediately inspired me to pursue a career in the valuable and vibrant field of speech therapy. Having been involved in drama from a young age (receiving prizes for performances at the Nottingham Drama Festival and taking part in an ITV acting workshop prior to appearing on the soap Doctors), public speaking has never been a problem for me. However, voluntary work has opened my eyes to the frustrations faced by those who cannot verbalise their needs or engage with others. At my part-time sales job, whilst trying to serve a lady battling with a stutter, I realized that speech therapists not only help the individual client but also the many people close to them whose daily lives are affected by these communication difficulties.

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Having involved myself in a 'befriending' scheme, I first met autism-sufferer Katie in 2007 and am certain that I have helped her to integrate more with peers and the wider community, whilst her progression has fuelled my passion for the work of speech therapists and made me eager to learn new ways of encouraging such advancement in others. Now volunteering at a local school whose pupils all have similar additional support needs, I have been instructed in basic Makaton signing to allow me to communicate with children possessing little or no verbal skill. Observing a speech therapy session where individuals from all aspects of the autistic spectrum were taught, I appreciate how different, tailored approaches can result in faster and further progress. Over my past two years volunteering at a nursing home, I have built up rewarding relationships with residents and vary my approach depending on ability level (dedicating particular attention to a stroke victim who is slowly working on regaining their powers of speech). In contrast, spending one day a week at a children's nursery has allowed me to witness the development of vocal skills in the very young.

With dedicated study ensuring my impressive academic record, I am also proactive in gaining relevant work experience. Arranging a placement with a local speech and language center to undertake over half-term, I have contacted the QMC too and am looking forward to their next speech therapy lecture. A regular visitor to the Royal Speech and Language Therapy website, I

am currently furthering my knowledge of the ways therapists can get involved with harder-to-reach sections of the community. Balancing academic and extracurricular responsibilities successfully, my life within school has been extremely active and has seen me assume the positions of environmental captain, charity captain, sports captain and head of my house.

Excelling in sport, particularly netball (where I have achieved regional success) I have worked for my Sports Leader Awards and a lifeguard qualification. The Girl Guiding organization has helped in forming this mature and committed attitude; I assisted in running a local unit for a year and reaped rewards including bronze and silver Duke of Edinburgh awards. My most enjoyable after-school occupations include ice-skating and dancing (ballet and modern), reading about history and playing the violin via the Suzuki method. With my enthusiastic and hands-on approach, your course appeals to me especially as students learn not only in the classroom but by getting involved in practical sessions. My long-term ambition, which I believe marks the fulfillment of my true potential, is to gain enough experience as a speech therapist to establish my own clinic for the clientele that I choose to specialize in, whilst participating in research projects that will add to the sum of knowledge within the field.