

Research and Development Officer RCSLT



Lauren Longhurst

What does your current role involve?

I help support the profession to engage in evidence based practice and to get involved with research. This may include involvement with projects and campaigns, answering member enquiries, engaging with research champions, attending events or presenting.

What was your first role after graduating?

My first role was a split NHS post. It involved working in the 'named children service' with children that had speech, language and communication needs included on their statement of special educational needs. I also worked in a provision for children with language disorders.

At what stage did you decide which area of the profession you wanted to work in?

I'm not sure I ever decided as such, I really enjoyed my first role and this naturally paved the way towards specialising in language disorders. I found myself always asking why I was doing something and striving for efficiency which led me towards evidence and research.

How did you progress from your first role to your current job?

I started out in mainstream schools and provisions first in Surrey and then Barnet. I got involved in a journal club, measuring outcomes and service delivery projects. I also chair the Mainstream CEN. When the research and development role came up at the RCSLT it seemed the ideal opportunity to combine my clinical knowledge with my interest in the wider profession and research.

How have you used CPD to help you progress in your career?

Ever since being a student I have always been on the look out for opportunities to improve my knowledge and skills, be that through reading journals, attending courses or going to a CEN event. I also really enjoy training others and maintaining my CPD has been crucial for this. I don't think you ever stop learning as an SLT.

My advice to students looking to get into my current area of work:

Network! Get out to events, sign up to projects, email that person about their research. Connections are key in keeping up-to-date and learning new things.

Be flexible! Your ideal role is unlikely to appear in a band 5 advert near your house. Once you get a foot in the door often internal 'swap around' opportunities arise or you might realise you like something different anyway.

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