



# Careers in Dietetics:

## Dietetic and Therapy Assistant Practitioner

### Tell us about your NHS role and the difference it makes to patient care:

My role is comprehensive of dietetic, occupational therapy and physiotherapy roles. The aim is to support the qualified AHPs by providing early intervention and continued support within all specialities and implement/alter plans where appropriate.

This role allows patients to receive tailored care plans from their initial assessments in a timely manner.

It allows patients to have continued care from the same care giver allowing patients to feel more at ease, decreasing confusion and improving patient experience. It helps to decrease wait times for patient assessment.

### What does a day in the life of your role look like?

I work closely alongside registered dietitians, occupational therapists and physiotherapists. I screen the frailty assessment ward to identify patient that require input from all three above specialities and add to the caseload. Assessments start initially with an in-depth and detailed social history, inclusive of MUST, diet and weight history. I then assess

current functional abilities and nutritional intake, identifying any deficits. From this, early intervention and plans can be implemented to support nutritional and functional goals.

### Why do you love working in the NHS?

The NHS provides a brilliant environment for networking and a multitude of opportunities for professional development. The feeling of making a positive difference to someone's day provides great job satisfaction even under extreme pressures.

### What attracted you to being a Dietetic and Therapy Assistant Practitioner?

After working alongside my dietitian colleges within the frailty MDT I developed an interest into this speciality. I was able to identify the importance of nutrition for functional development and when this integrated role became available it was the perfect opportunity to develop my dietetic skills set.



Can you tell us a bit about your educational background? What education route did you take, and why? What are your qualifications.

I have always had an interest in the human body, leading me to study Human Biology, Sports and Exercise Science and Health and Social care at A-level.

I then went on to achieve a First Class Honours in BSc Sports Therapy from University of Kent.

I am currently studying BSc Physiotherapy via the NHS apprenticeships.

Did you undertake any work experience before applying for the role? Can you suggest any work experience that may help entering this specialism?

Prior to this role I was working as a Therapy Assistant within the same NHS Trust. My Dietetic experience prior to the role was developed via time spent shadowing dietitians/dietetic assistant whilst in my previous post. I was able to gain an understanding of the importance of nutrition within an acute care setting.

How has training and development in your role helped you so far?

I have been completing a Band 3 to 4 dietetic and therapy assistant practitioner development programme within my role meeting variety of competencies. This has allowed me to work autonomously on the wards and identify priority and nutritionally at-risk patients within a timely manner, implementing nutrition protocols or raising to seniors where appropriate.

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Kathryn Cullen

What are you most proud of in your role?

Being able to make a positive impact on an individual's life, allowing them to reach the goals they wish to achieve and help to maintain independence.

I am now able to train other members of the MDT including senior members of staff to complete malnutrition screening and raise awareness of the importance of nutrition within frailty.

What would you say to others to encourage more people to work in the Dietetic Workforce?

Engage with the MDT and develop an understanding of the role of the Dietetic Workforce and continue to seek opportunities for professional development to improve patient care.

Anything else you would like to say?

This role is very new within Medway Foundation Trust, and when looking nationwide, roles of the same description have not been identified.

I feel the role has a positive impact within the frailty speciality, working across all three disciplines which streamlines therapy services.

“[I'm proud of] being able to make a positive impact on an individual's life, allowing them to reach the goals they wish to achieve and help to maintain independence.”

Kathryn Cullen

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