

Steve Davidson, Mobile Physiotherapist

The second best job I ever had found me working as a hospital porter at Barnet General Hospital circa 1984, way back when Big Brother was watching us. Up until then I was a cork bobbing on the sea, work-wise at least, but portering introduced me to the world of healthcare, and by 1988 I was qualifying as a physiotherapist at Kings College Hospital in South London.

There have been many twists and turns along the road, but a full career biography may well see this page of the paper heading for the recycling bin prematurely. Brief highlights would probably include a short spell working on Harley Street, a stint at the Chelsea and Westminster hospital treating the rich and famous (whose names I cannot mention), and a few years as an Occupational Health Physiotherapist for the Metropolitan Police at their facility adjacent to New Scotland Yard. Anyway, by 2003 I had found my way into the prison system - not in the back of a van - and I worked there as a physio for almost 20 years, until a random internet search earlier this year alerted me to the Chapel Mobile Physio vacancy.

For people who don't know, the Chapel Mobile Physio service is a charity. I am the only paid member of staff - everyone else involved generously gives their time for free. It was set up 50 years ago with the intention of providing physiotherapy to older residents of the small villages within High Peak who would otherwise struggle to access treatment. I believe I am only the fourth post-holder in that time, which must be telling us something. There is an increasing demand to access the service as it offers a unique, holistic approach targeted at the patient's specific needs and not constrained by any pre-determined treatment path.

I have to say since taking up the post I drive to work every morning feeling as if I have had a small lottery win, humming the tune to 'All Creatures Great and Small' as I make my way from Sheffield where I live, over Winnats Pass and across to Chapel or one of the neighbouring villages. My working day is spent visiting patients in their own homes offering hands-on treatment, devising exercise plans, or assessing their living space with a view to prescribing aids and adaptations to help maximise and maintain independence. If asked I can also out the bins out or make a passable cup of tea.

As alluded to earlier, this is the best job I've ever had. Anyone reading this will probably be a resident of the High Peak and will know the character of the area already, but my six months in post has introduced me to the extremely diverse population of the area. I have met many interesting people ranging from artists to gardeners, ex-professional footballers to F1 race team crew, and clairvoyants to champion sheep-shearers. I have yet to come across any of my old patients from the prison days, but no doubt it will happen eventually!

I believe I have inherited a fantastic service and I intend to keep it that way. Anyone interested in accessing it for themselves or for a family member needs to seek a referral from their GP. Assuming the referral is appropriate - that is to say the person requiring treatment would have difficulty attending a hospital or clinic - then there shouldn't be much more to it than that. I look forward to meeting some more of you.