



*“This job has huge variety. Over the years, I’ve worked to make a difference and that’s what it’s all about.” – Christine Ongley (Physiotherapist, Lower Hutt).*

Jeremy’s physiotherapist has big plans for him – to make sure he keeps learning and enjoying school as his physical health deteriorates.

Seven year old Jeremy has a hereditary and worsening condition impacting on his ability to walk, use his hands, and communicate.

Six months ago he began using a powered wheelchair when he lost his ability to stand. Right now, with help from a physiotherapist and team of specialists, he’s trialling a range of other important equipment too.

He’s trying out a new classroom chair, fitted with wheels, brakes, armrests and a headrest to sit alongside his peers at the same height. An adjustable work table that complements the shape of his classroom chair is also working well.

There is also computer software available to help students like Jeremy, and he is trying some of that out too.

His parents say Jeremy is a delightful and bright young man who loves school. So, helping him stay there and learn alongside his friends as long as he can is their top priority.

#### **Nature of the Work**

Physiotherapists, within the educational sector, work closely with parents, caregivers, teachers and other specialists to help children and young people with special education needs learn and develop.

Physiotherapists observe and assess the physical needs of children and young people who are referred to the Ministry of Education. They talk to adults in a child or young person’s life to identify, set up and provide advice about the support, equipment and technology a child or young person may need.

As a physiotherapist, you’ll adapt the way you work to suit the individual needs of a child or young person and tailor your approaches to suit the context in which that child or young person lives and learns.

*“We’re there to remove physical barriers to learning and participating. It’s about giving a child access to the curriculum.”*  
– Christine Ongley (Physiotherapist, Lower Hutt)

Physiotherapists work with other specialists and agencies to provide extra support for children and young people with behaviour, communication, hearing and other special education needs. As a result, they develop close working relationships with a range of education, health and community professionals.

Preparing physiotherapy programmes and providing them to a child or young person’s support team for feedback and ideas are also central to your role.

Programmes become part of a child or young person’s individual education plan (a plan can be made up of several programmes each tailored to meet a child or young person’s different needs).

Over time, programme strategies are implemented, monitored, reviewed and adapted by a child or young person’s support team.

*“This job is professional development in itself. You’re part of diverse and interesting teams made up of everyone from students and families through to education and health specialists.”*  
– Christine Ongley (Physiotherapist, Lower Hutt)

As a physiotherapist, you’ll also have the opportunity to share your knowledge and experience by developing programmes and providing training to early childhood education services, schools and community groups.

Want a job with purpose and variety? You’ve found it.

## **Who are we?**

The Ministry of Education is a significant employer of physiotherapists and we’re looking for more.

The Ministry has offices located throughout New Zealand where we aim to provide access to education and learning to all New Zealand children and young people.

Working for us, you’ll help people see that children and young people with special education needs are more than their disability and with the right support can participate, learn, achieve and contribute.

Still at school or studying at university? In a related career but feel like a change? Regardless of your situation, now is a good time to think about career opportunities with the Ministry of Education.



*“I’m part of a great team. We get on really well. We share and co-work and, when someone new joins us, we nurture them well.”*

## **What skills and knowledge do physiotherapists have?**

- ▶ knowledge of child and human development
- ▶ knowledge of the neuro-musculo-skeletal system
- ▶ skill in managing special education needs in a variety of settings
- ▶ knowledge of the human body and its physiology, neurology and anatomy
- ▶ knowledge of community and family support services
- ▶ excellent communication, teaching, research, planning and administration skills.

## **Where can I go in my career?**

There is plenty of work available in New Zealand. Physiotherapy is on Immigration New Zealand’s long-term skills shortage list.

Becoming a physiotherapist with the Ministry of Education will give you the rewards and challenges of the job itself, as well as opportunities to develop your career.

You’ll be supported and supervised by experienced professionals with the Ministry. Working with a wide range of highly skilled and talented professionals will keep you challenged and stimulated.

The opportunity to move into one of our fixed term, practice focused leadership roles will give you the chance to lead change and improve services from within the organisation.

*“I’m part of one project looking at measuring outcomes. These opportunities all part of being involved in change and making a difference.”* – Christine Ongley (Physiotherapist, Lower Hutt)

# Meet Christine Ongley, a *Physiotherapist* in Lower Hutt



*Christine helps a student use specialised equipment to access the technology she needs for learning.*

*Looking back, Christine says she's really happy with the way her career has developed and would definitely recommend education-based physiotherapy to others.*

**HER BACKGROUND:** Christine Ongley is a Physiotherapist with the Ministry of Education in Lower Hutt.

She works with approximately 50 children and young people aged between 5 and 21 who have high and very high physical needs.

She helps change school environments so children can learn. Mostly that involves modifying property and providing advice and information to school staff.

Starting out in hospitals, Christine specialised in orthopedic physiotherapy, before taking up positions in rest homes and a special school. Later, she moved on to work for Specialist Education Services (SES), which merged with the Ministry in 2001.

She studied for her physiotherapy qualifications at Otago University, and is currently studying towards a Postgraduate Diploma in Rehabilitation.

**HER STORY:** Christine's got heaps of great advice for people thinking about a career in the education sector.

Top of the list is to understand that a Physiotherapist's role is not about "fixing" people. Instead, says Christine, it's about acknowledging the expertise that comes from a child's family, teachers and other specialists.

"You're just one member of a wider team. You need to have confidence in your own knowledge. But you have to move away from being the expert. We're there to support and to help," she says.

Wanting to learn and stay updated on the latest research evidence need to be at the top of the list for prospective Physiotherapists, too.

"Working in education is ideal for someone with three or four years general experience who wants to look outside the one on one treatment model and who loves the idea that he or she will keep learning," says Christine.

Looking back, Christine says she's really happy with the way her career has developed and would definitely recommend education-based physiotherapy to others.

"I feel this job has huge variety. Over the years, I've worked to make a difference and that's what it's all about."

**REWARDS AND CHALLENGES:** The job's flexible hours are a big plus. So, too, is the teamwork that's central to everything physiotherapists at the Ministry do.

"I'm part of a great team. We get on really well. We share and co-work and, when someone new joins us, we nurture them well."

**HER FUTURE ASPIRATIONS:** Christine is keen to continue doing what she does locally, as well as take whatever opportunities come her way to improve services at the national level.

Want to speak to someone like Christine about a career as a Physiotherapist? Give us a call or drop us an email.

Other career opportunities include management, getting involved in special projects and offering and receiving supervision.

What are you waiting for? The professional possibilities are endless.

### **What salary and other benefits can I expect?**

Salaries for Physiotherapists vary between \$40,000 and \$74,000 per year, depending on skill level and experience.

The Ministry of Education offers five weeks' annual leave and flexible working conditions, giving you the opportunity to balance work with child care, travel and training commitments.

### **What qualifications and experience do I need?**

You will need a Bachelor's Degree in Health Science (Physiotherapy) or its equivalent. You'll need to be registered with the [Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand](#).

Undergraduate degrees in physiotherapy are offered by [Otago University](#) and the [Auckland University of Technology](#). These qualifications suit school leavers or people new to tertiary education.

Postgraduate qualifications in physiotherapy are available through [Otago University](#) and the [Auckland University of Technology](#).

Research and plan for your career by checking out the [Career Services](#) website.

If you're still at school, you'll need a tertiary training entrance qualification to go to university. Useful subjects include biology, chemistry, physics and English.

### **What about my personal qualities?**

You'll spend lots of time with people from a range of ages, cultures, backgrounds and lifestyles.

Being understanding, patient, supportive, creative and practical are all great personal qualities for a physiotherapist.

Having a strong interest in team work and collaborating with other professionals is important and you'll need to be able to listen, build trust and inspire confidence.

### **Who can I talk to?**

Speak to a Physiotherapist or contact the ministry at:

- ▶ 0800 622 222
- ▶ [special.education@minedu.govt.nz](mailto:special.education@minedu.govt.nz)

### **Where can I find out more?**

Special education careers, professional development, scholarships and study awards

- ▶ [www.minedu.govt.nz/SpecialEducation.aspx](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/SpecialEducation.aspx)
- ▶ [www.minedu.govt.nz/sestudyawards](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/sestudyawards)

Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand

- ▶ [www.physioboard.org.nz](http://www.physioboard.org.nz)

New Zealand Society of Physiotherapists

- ▶ [www.physiotherapy.org.nz](http://www.physiotherapy.org.nz)

Careers information

- ▶ [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)

Studying Physiotherapy

- ▶ [www.otago.ac.nz](http://www.otago.ac.nz)
- ▶ [www.aut.ac.nz](http://www.aut.ac.nz)