



80,000
HOURS

Career Impact Report for Emma Trigg

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Current Situation

Qualifications:

- An undergraduate degree in psychology
- Is currently studying a master's degree in occupational therapy and wants to use the next 14 months to finish this

Criteria for a career:

- Outreach
- Improving the world
- Problem-solving
- Continuing to think about the big picture, including about ethics, rather than being passive
- A flexible and dynamic work environment
- Income with which to pay back student loans from family

Charity:

- Presently involved with Oxfam
- Self-identifies as dealistic - vegan
- Would like to have an impact in health and education. Is particularly interested in female disabled education

Options to pursue in 16 months:

- Working as an OT
 - in the UK
 - elsewhere
- Taking an office job for a NGO
- Doing research with mother (although this would be temporary)
- Doing a PGCE (although this would happen later)

Research question:

- 1) Which of these options will lead to Emma being able to do outreach work with a large impact and a flexible work environment?
- 2) What next steps can be taken to discover related opportunities and learn more about all of these?

The path to outreach + impact + flexible work environment

Emma plans on first achieving her master's degree, then achieving financial security and then finding a job that performs outreach or has a holistic impact. This can play out differently depending on which of the following options is pursued in 16 months.

Working as an OT

Working as an OT in the UK will most reliably put Emma in a stable financial position. The [Hours and Earnings Survey](#) states that the average UK OT earned £27353 in 2013. [Glassdoor](#) reports a median salary of £25,545. Emma guesses that she will be paid £22,000 initially, which seems about right. As Emma reports, working in aged care rehabilitation is not in line with her passions. However, it is by far the most commonly targeted demographic by OTs in the UK, especially in the NHS and so it may be difficult to find a paediatric job that interests Emma.

Emma mentions a possibility of going abroad in the EU to find people in need, for example in Greece. However, in such a location, the pay is lower across most [jobs](#) making this a slower way to repay student loans.

In general, allied health charities operating in the developing world, including MSF, offer volunteer roles much more often than paid roles. Opportunities to make a difference in the health sector, such as the one offered at the Helen Douglas House, while also being paid, will provide some information about the appeal or lack of appeal of pursuing direct impact as an occupational therapist.

The pathways from OT to an outreach role with large impact and flexible work environment would include i) research ii) hospital management iii) volunteering as an OT in the developing world. As a researcher, Emma could help to advocate for selection of effective projects or could attempt to move toward research in a large NGO. In hospital management, the focus would initially be on managing clinical work. Implementing streamlined medical systems in an area of need is potentially very impactful, and there may be an opportunity to switch into management at an NGO later on.

Taking an office job for a NGO

In terms of finding a paid job at a non-government organisation (e.g. [Oxfam Jobs](#)), it is important that the organisation is of sufficient size to take on employed staff. It would be easy to ignore office roles in NGOs because they are outside of the default for an OT student. However, this is an obvious way to have a significant social impact and seems like it should not be ignored. Emma points out that the salaries will be lower than OT, around £18000, which is consistent with [our data](#) on salaries of junior NGO staff.

In these organisations, there may be an expectation that junior staff should be willing to work as a volunteer for months to years before taking on a paid role. Getting into a paid role here would probably require significant networking. Note that a lot of charity jobs that are [most available](#) are in fundraising.

Doing research with mother

Working on research with her mother in Zimbabwe will give some temporary funding. Emma reports that this work, though interesting, is not necessarily playing to her strengths. It is statistically dense in parts and is more research-based than directed toward outreach and action. Nonetheless, it could still be impactful as project evaluation is important for effective charity. This will provide at least some funding. It allows problem-solving and entails some flexibility and seems a reasonable option - if nothing else, a good backup.

Doing a PGCE

Doing a postgraduate certificate in education - a second kind of vocational degree - might not get Emma the kind of career that she wants in the long-run. Rather, it might offer opportunities that are similar in some ways to the ones that are available now. Emma has reported that currently, she has entered a degree in occupational therapy expecting that people there would think more about the big picture and the importance of relieving disability whereas they actually often think about a relatively small frame. Rather than practising as an OT in the developed world, she wants to have an impact that is larger and more holistic in its approach. This entire scenario could be repeated in teaching.

Emma plans not to do a PGCE until she has performed some paid work anyway - i.e. until more than two years have passed - and so this decision can probably be put on hold for now.

Overall thoughts

Overall, if Emma is committed to finishing her occupational therapy masters, it seems like a reasonable path is to try occupational therapy out by pursuing an occupational therapy job that is more interesting than average e.g. one that involves people who are young or disadvantaged. The lack of availability of paediatric rehabilitation jobs in the UK and lack of finances available in developing countries means that this will be a challenge. So it looks helpful for Emma to pursue the opportunities that are available in order to find the best OT job available.

Whether it is possible to achieve both of the things Emma wants - social impact and financial stability - at the same time by working at an NGO, seems like the right question to ask. Again, she has already done the right thing by asking a director at Oxfam about this and getting invited to a dinner, which will give further networking opportunities. It will probably be very helpful to ask some people involved with relevant jobs at Oxfam what she ought to do to get to work there and whether there are any gaps on her CV.

Doing research with her mother in Zimbabwe also looks potentially impactful, though not in an obviously hands-on way. It looks like a good temporary or backup option.

The PGCE looks like it is not currently a good option.

Next steps

Attend:

- Tea and wine evening with Oxfam
 - Take down lots of contacts
 - Ask people how to get to work for their organizations. Note down anything that is missing from your CV
 - Ask people which events these charities attend
 - Ask anyone interesting to meet for coffee
 - Then, discuss further the roles they need filled in their organisation and the extent to which you have shared values and fit these roles
- Other conferences in international development and women's rights - it seems important to keep doing this, but with a strategic mindset, to find people who have organisations that are large enough to be able to offer employed junior roles

Email the following people:

- Ruth, who is at the Center for Disease Control:
 - to ask who is running effective programs
- An acquaintance from The Council for Advancement and Support of Education:
 - to pursue paid fundraising roles and other roles
- Aunt - prof in Italy in anthropology
 - to ask for contacts in NGOs who will talk about how to get a job at a NGO
- Another aunt
 - to ask also has contacts in relevant NGOs.
- Contacts at Helen Douglas House
 - make sure to keep in contact here because this seems like a good opportunity to work as a paid OT in an area of need.