

RCOT Policy and Public Affairs Working Group: Northern Ireland

Terms of reference

1. Context

RCOT works closely with its members to deliver policy and public affairs work in Northern Ireland. Members of our RCOT Policy and Public Affairs Working Group (PPAWG) will be asked to support a variety of activities.

This includes:

- supporting RCOT at events
- contributing to consultations
- representing RCOT on external working groups e.g., Department of Health*
- giving evidence to government committees
- working with the media
- providing intelligence to inform policy and public affairs activity.

*RCOT members may sit on an external working group in relation to a specific area of practice without being a member of this working group.

2. Purpose

To support the delivery of policy and public affairs, influencing and campaign activities to raise the profile of occupational therapy in Northern Ireland.

This will include:

- providing context of occupational therapy in the Northern Ireland health and social care system, including the challenges experienced by members and people who use services
- providing examples of occupational therapy practice, service improvement, innovation and research.

3. Structure and processes

- The group will consist of approximately 15 people.
- RCOT will seek representatives from the five Health and Social Care Trusts, including managers, HEI colleagues and independent practitioners.
- We ask that members of the group commit to the group for a year in this pilot phase.
- The group will not meet regularly but may meet virtually when we're seeking specific advice, for example, to contribute to a major consultation response.
- We'll offer opportunities to the group by email.
- RCOT will work collaboratively with the group using SharePoint.

4. How the group is formed

RCOT members in Northern Ireland are invited to submit an expression of interest and a summary

CV to join the group. We will then discuss your skills, experience and preference with you so we can match them with predicted future activity. We'll offer media training to members who wish to volunteer in that role.

We advocate strongly for a culture which values, respects, and celebrates diversity and positively supports those with lived experience. We encourage applications from people who identify themselves as LGBTQIA+; living with a disability or long-term condition; or from a minoritised ethnic community or other marginalised groups.

5. Responsibilities

We'll ask members, depending on experience, preference and availability, to:

- act as ambassadors for the organisation and profession
- consider new and emerging policy and legislation in Northern Ireland (and UK-wide where applicable) and to contribute information on the potential impact on the practice and delivery of occupational therapy
- identify new and emerging areas of delivery of occupational therapy and opportunities for promotion of the profession
- support and promote RCOT campaigns and influencing activities
- support RCOT with media activities including acting as spokesperson and taking part in interviews, following RCOT media training
- provide a steer or advice on important matters related to policy and practice
- to contribute to RCOT responses to key government consultations and parliamentary inquiries
- to advise on opportunities for influencing stakeholders and members in Northern Ireland via established networks and meetings. This may include supporting relevant RCOT Officers at specific events to influence appropriate government representatives to promote the profession.

6. Links

- The group will work with the Policy and Public Affairs team, Professional Advisers and Brand and Marketing teams.
- The lead RCOT Officer for the group is Kate Lesslar, Professional Practice Lead Northern Ireland.
- The Administrator for the group is Ann O'Hagan, Practice Administrator – Policy and Public Affairs.