

Occupational therapy with children and young people

Occupational therapists (OTs) help children and young people take part in the daily activities that are important to them – at home, at school and elsewhere.

Some children and young people have difficulty doing the things they want or have to do because they have physical, learning or mental health needs. Others struggle due to illness or family circumstances, or because of changes that happen as they grow and develop.

Whatever the reason, we help children and young people take part in the activities and routines – the occupations – that give purpose and meaning to their lives.

These include:

- **self-care activities** – getting dressed, eating and sleeping
- **productive occupations** – learning, writing, doing PE
- **play and leisure** – playing with friends and doing sports or hobbies.



Making great occupational therapy referrals

Good quality OT referrals help us provide the right OT service from the start – enabling people to live their best lives at home, school, work and elsewhere.



Find out more at rcot.co.uk/cypot

Or scan the QR code to learn more:



rcot.co.uk

© 2024 Royal College of Occupational Therapists. A registered charity in England and Wales (No. 2751119) and in Scotland (No. SC039573) and a company registered in England (No. 1347374)

Occupational therapy with children and young people



RCOT Royal College of
Occupational
Therapists

What can occupational therapists do?

Occupational therapists are trained in physical and mental health and have an understanding of child development.

We help children and young people grow, thrive and reach their full potential by identifying:

- activities they do well and those they find difficult
- personal, environmental and task-specific factors that help or limit their ability to take part
- different ways of doing things, teaching new skills or changing the environment to make it easier for them to participate, have fun and achieve.

“OT helped my son immensely. We understood more the impact of sensory sensitivities, we used the report to inform school intervention, our OT went to school to talk through interventions. The role of OT has been huge for us as a family.”

“Our daughter's life has been transformed by occupational therapy. Every single self-care act has been patiently taught by a skilled professional.”

OTs work across traditional health, education and social care boundaries – we provide holistic, person-centred care that prepares young people for adulthood.

“Occupational therapy really helped me at a young age. They advised simple, practical strategies like a ruler with a handle and a sloping desk to help my writing which really improved it. Also things like laying clothes in the order of putting them on, as this was a struggle...I have massive appreciation for the work OTs do!”

Types and levels of OT support

Offering a range of support means we can provide the right help, at the right time.



Universal support

This is available for everyone – you don't have to be referred to benefit.

The aim is to help the adults who spend most time with children and young people understand and promote their learning, growth and participation. We also help adults identify those who need more help.

Universal support includes:

- information on websites and social media about everyday activities such as riding a bike and getting organised
- webinars and workshops for parents/carers/teachers on areas such as promoting physical activity and adapting environments to reduce sensory overwhelm.

Individualised support

This is for children and young people with the most complex needs and circumstances.

Some will require a period of direct intervention to address a particular need. Others benefit from personalised input to monitor and adjust interventions as their needs change, or at times of transition.

OTs take a strengths-based approach – helping individuals and families develop the skills and confidence to understand and manage their occupational needs throughout their lives.

Targeted support

This is for children and young people whose health, wellbeing and development are causing concern. Targeted interventions are often delivered by OTs in partnership with others.

The aim is to prevent difficulties from escalating, reducing the need for more intense, specialist support.

Targeted support includes:

- OT-led workshops for young people, families and professionals with specific needs, for example 'Understanding your child's sensory differences'.
- Programmes developed and overseen by an occupational therapist but delivered by others, for example school-based handwriting programmes.
- Support to help educators understand how sensory/motor/mental health/medical/other difficulties affect children and young people's participation and achievement and recommending strategies and approaches to help.
- Advice for parents/carers/teachers to adapt activities, equipment and environments so individuals and groups of children and young people can take part, achieve and enjoy life.
- Advice to help parents/carers/teachers include approaches that support a child or young person's health, development and wellbeing in their daily routine.

