



## Guideline implementation tips

Occupational therapy practice guidelines are important to the profession to incorporate knowledge and the evidence-base into practice, and to maintain professional standards.

*Occupational therapy in neonatal services and early intervention: practice guideline* (RCOT 2017) aims to define the best and most effective practice for occupational therapy for high-risk infants in neonatal and early intervention settings. As a primary resource for occupational therapists practising in this area, the guideline can assist decision-making about areas for assessment and intervention, in addition to describing the profession's contribution to the neonatal care pathway.

The guideline may also be of use to other neonatal practitioners and commissioners with regards to the inclusion of occupational therapy within neonatal multidisciplinary teams.

The guideline recommendations are set out in ten categories which loosely represent the stages of an infant's journey through a neonatal unit admission and beyond:

- |                                    |                                       |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Occupation-based assessment     | 6. Infant feeding                     |
| 2. Developmentally supportive care | 7. Parent engagement                  |
| 3. Pain management                 | 8. Parent support                     |
| 4. Skin-to-skin (kangaroo) care    | 9. Identifying developmental concerns |
| 5. Positioning                     | 10. Early intervention                |

In addition to the guideline document, there are a number of implementation resources available to aid translation into practice. Some key tips to consider are outlined in the table below.

### Key tips

1. Look for opportunities to **promote** the practice guideline with colleagues and multidisciplinary team members: include on the agenda of relevant meetings.
2. Present and discuss the evidence-based recommendations with colleagues – preferably with the multidisciplinary team. A Continuing Professional Development (CPD) **PowerPoint** resource is available with information already prepared and which can be tailored for your local use.
3. Use the guideline **audit form** to benchmark your service/practice and assist in identifying actions to progress implementation of recommendations. The audit form is available to download and evaluate your service against the recommendations, and kick-start an action plan.
4. Gather evidence of **outcomes** using standardised assessments and measures. Visit: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/occupational-therapy-topics/outcomes-and-keeping-records>.
5. Use the guideline evidence and recommendations to support the case for occupational therapy as part of your **business planning and commissioning activities** – an occupational therapy **evidence fact sheet** is also available (<https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-occupational-therapy/ot-evidence-factsheets>).
6. Write an **implementation case study** to demonstrate how your service has translated the guideline recommendations into the workplace. Provide supporting performance/outcome data and service user feedback to demonstrate the difference you are making to service users, quality of services and cost-effectiveness. Visit: <http://cotimprovinglives.com/>.

Visit: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/rcot-practice-guidelines>