The [Royal College of Occupational Therapists](https://www.rcot.co.uk/) (RCOT) is the professional body for occupational therapy representing over 33,500 occupational therapists across the UK. There are 1,299 RCOT members in Northern Ireland (RCOT, February 2020). Occupational therapists in Northern Ireland work in trusts, across health and social care services, they deliver services across housing, schools, prisons, the voluntary and independent sectors, and vocational and employment rehabilitation services.

Occupational therapists work with people of all ages who are experiencing difficulties through injury, illness or disability or a major life change. Occupational therapists consider the relationship between what a **person** does every day (**occupations**), how illness or disability impacts upon the person and how a person’s **environment** supports or hinders their activity (PEO Model). Using this approach, we help people to continue or re-engage with participating fully in daily life, including work, social activities and maintaining roles and responsibilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the consultation on the Establishment of a regional care and justice campus. Please find below responses to the questions that are most relevant to RCOT members.

**Services in the Campus:**

RCOT welcomes the proposal to implement a new Framework for Integrated Therapeutic care to be applied across all looked-after children’s settings, including the regional Care and Justice Campus. This will help ensure consistency of care and communication between services when young people move between different settings. Consistency is particularly important in the provision of trauma-informed interventions, including those delivered by occupational therapists.

Members recommend that multidisciplinary teams in the Secure Care Centre should be well-resourced with staff offering a range of skills and expertise, including occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, medical and nursing staff, social workers and psychologists. This range of expertise should be mirrored across Secure Care Centres and community teams.

A variety of therapeutic approaches will be necessary to provide the personalised care required to meet the needs of each young person within the Secure Care Centre. Occupational therapists offer a range of interventions that enable young people to achieve their potential and participate in a healthy balance of activities (occupations) at home, in education and in their leisure time. Occupational therapists offer a non-pharmacological approach, addressing physical, learning, sensory and mental health needs to enable young people to get their lives back on track. As well as working directly with individuals and groups, occupational therapists provide training and mentoring to build the capacity of others to support young people’s occupational needs. An effective system of supervision for all members of the multi-disciplinary team will be required to ensure that safe and high-quality services are provided.

**A needs-based approach:**

RCOT agrees that decisions about where a child will be placed within the Secure Care Centre should be based on an assessment of individual need. A needs-based approach should identify a young person’s therapeutic needs and the functional supports required to prevent admission and prepare for discharge. Appropriate, individualised support and intervention is critical to facilitate successful step-down to community services.

**Discharge/Exit planning:**

Occupational therapists have skills and expertise to identify the factors, strategies and supports that will enable a young person to manage and maintain their health, roles, routines and relationships following discharge. Exit plans should be prepared early and reviewed regularly by the multidisciplinary team with the young person and their family/carers, as part of the overall care planning process for each individual admitted to the Secure Care Centre. Regular contact with the young person’s community team throughout a young person’s admission will be required to ensure that relationships are maintained and support is in place to facilitate successful step down and discharge. Community teams will also need to be appropriately resourced and trained to ensure that interventions/supports provided within the Secure Care Centre can continue in the community following discharge.

**Satellite provision:**

The development of step-down units is positive, but more detail is required about their relationship with local community services. Expertise within step-down units must be shared with community services to ensure that young people are supported to function and thrive within their local communities, especially if they have been away from their local area for some time.

Community-based satellite services should be adequately resourced and staffed by multi-disciplinary teams that mirror those within Secure Care Centres. Occupational therapists’ understanding of the personal, task and environmental factors that support young people’s mental and physical health, participation and achievement means they will play a key role as members of community satellite services in preventing young people from entering the Secure Care Centre and facilitating their transition back into the community.

**Contact**

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