

Delegation

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Country relevance: UK wide

Introduction

The purpose of this briefing is to summarise the concept of delegation within the context of occupational therapy practice. It will provide useful links and resources and identify any implications to qualified occupational therapists, occupational support workers and technical instructors. Delegation is when you ask someone else to carry out a task on your behalf.

Safe and effective delegation

Delegating a task can be an efficient use of resources and so can improve the service for service users, enabling a much quicker response.

When delegation works successfully, the following may happen:

1. The person delegating the task is able to concentrate on more complex parts of the job.
2. Support staff undertake more aspects of the work, developing their knowledge, skills and potential.
3. The person delegating the task makes the most of effective resources available to them.

When delegating a task, you will need to be confident that the person to whom you are delegating to is suitably trained, experienced, well supported, supervised and competent to undertake the task safely and effectively. You must not delegate a task that is outside their competencies.

Point 3.1 You must keep within your scope of practice by only practising in the areas you have appropriate knowledge, skills and experience for. (HCPC 2016 pg:6).

Section 6 of the *RCOT Professional Standards for OT Practice Conduct and Ethics* (RCOT 2021) also refers to competence in relation to delegation. You only provide services and use techniques for which you are qualified by your professional education, ongoing learning and/or experience. These must be within your professional competence, appropriate to the needs of those who access the service and relate to your terms of employment. 'RCOT 2021, 6.2.1'

Accountability for the task

You may be concerned about delegating a task because you are unsure of who will retain ultimate responsibility. In such circumstances the delegating occupational therapist will retain responsibility for any care given (HCPC 2016, standard 4).

The Colleges *RCOT Professional Standards for OT Practice Conduct and Ethics* (RCOT 2021) also states 'Although all registered practitioners are autonomous professionals, responsible for their own practice and professional judgement, you, as delegating practitioner, retain ultimate accountability for any actions taken' 'RCOT 2021, 6.5.3'.

Supervision

Supervision also plays an important role when delegating tasks. All support staff should receive appropriate supervision.

The Health and Care Professions Council do not set out how this should be done because the supervision can depend on a number of factors. These may include the nature of the task and whether there are any risks involved.

The supervision that is provided should be appropriate to the individual, making sure the task is carried out safely and that the person carrying out the task is competent to do so.

Point 6.5.2 of the *RCOT Professional Standards for Occupational Therapy Practice, Conduct and Ethics* also refers to supervision and delegating. 'You provide appropriate supervision and support for the individual to whom you have delegated the task/s' (RCOT 2021)

The College's supervision publication (COT 2015b) also outlines what is to be expected with regards to supervision. The publication can be read in full via the following web link – <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/rcot-publications/member/a-z>

References

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (2021a) *Professional Standards for Occupational Therapy Practice, Conduct and Ethics*. London: COT. Available at: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/rcot-publications/downloads/rcot-standards-and-ethics>

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