

Awards for Learning, Development and Research

Name of award holder	Kathryn Halsall
Award category	Eden Travel Award and International Activity Award
Year	2024
Title of project	Presentation at 1st Occupational Therapy Europe Conference in Poland

Kathryn Halsall, a consultant occupational therapist with the Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust, received the Eden Travel and International Activity Award to attend the First European Occupational Therapy Congress in Krakow, Poland, from October 15th to 19th, 2024. With a strong background in research and development, Kathryn has completed an MSc study on obesity in forensic services and has published research on occupational therapy practices among mothers from ethnic minorities. She anticipated that the award would provide a unique professional development opportunity to share her experiences, network, and learn from others outside her usual professional circle.

The conference, themed “Future-Proofing Occupational Therapy,” featured 137 presentations, 214 posters, and numerous workshops. Key themes relevant to Kathryn’s practice included engaging and embracing diversity in communities, preparing the future workforce, and using research to demonstrate the effectiveness of occupational therapy. Kathryn attended various learning sessions and networked with global delegates, sharing best practices, innovations, and research in the field. During the conference, Kathryn participated in research workshops, joined ROTOS (Research in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science), and established connections with practitioners in perinatal mental health. She also linked her UK colleagues and supervisees with others who have similar interests or are working on quality improvements. Kathryn learned new approaches from European occupational therapists, such as using board games to enhance preceptees’ skills in solution-focused practice.

Inspired by the conference, Kathryn has continued to pursue professional development. She is set to be a keynote presenter at the Salford University Occupational Therapy conference, has shared her experience of applying for the Annual Royal College of Occupational Therapy Learning, Development, and Research Awards, and has submitted a report about the congress to OT News. Kathryn found the event exciting and enjoyable, gaining new learning opportunities and a broader perspective on clinical practice. She believes the experience has positively influenced her professional approach and expanded her network of contacts.

Kathryn extends her gratitude to RCOT for enabling this career-changing experience.