

Our Research and Innovation Strategy

2025 to 2035

Easy read booklet



Royal College of
**Occupational
Therapists**



Who we are and what we do



We are the **Royal College of Occupational Therapists**. We are the **membership body** for **occupational therapists** in the UK.



The **membership body** means we are the organisation occupational therapists can pay money to belong to. We give them advice, training and support, so they give people good care.



Occupational therapists help people who find daily tasks and activities difficult. This might be because they are ill or have a disability.



They help people find new ways to do daily tasks and activities, so they can be more **independent**. This means they can do things for themselves.

About this booklet



This booklet is our **Research and Innovation Strategy** for the 10 years from 2025 to 2035.



Our **Research and Innovation Strategy** tells you about how we will learn new things and test new ideas to make things better.



It is our 10-year plan to make occupational therapy better.



It is for all UK occupational therapy

- students.
- teachers.
- **researchers.**
- leaders
- people who make decisions about occupational therapy services.
- people who use occupational therapy services and their families.



Researchers are people who collect information about something so they can understand it more.

Our research and innovation goals



We think that if we learn new things, we will help other people in a better way.

We want

- to make occupational therapy services better.
- to make people's health better.
- more people to know about us.
- more people to know we do a good job.
- to show occupational therapists how they can make good changes.
- to get more **funding**.
- to offer occupational therapists more choices in their job.
- to make sure occupational therapists have the information they need to do their job well.
- to make sure we can do more research and innovation in future.



Funding means money to help you pay for something.



We want everyone to feel welcome and included.



We should all work together and ask questions.



When we try to do better every day we can help people feel happy, healthy, and cared for.



When we work together with people who provide and use occupational therapy services, we can make sure everyone gets what they need.



When everyone shares good ideas we can keep getting better and better.

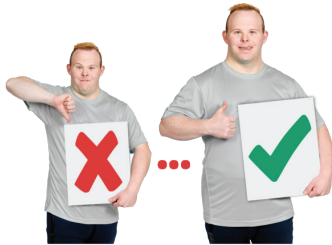


Occupational therapy services will be better when occupational therapists can

- use the information they learn from research and innovation to help people.
- do the best job they can.
- give everyone fair access to funding.
- turn ideas into new ways of working.
- make good changes so they can help more people in the right way.
- enjoy their job more.



Our ideas



We can fix problems in health and care by working in new ways.

We should

- try out new ideas that help people get better care faster.
- learn what works best by testing ideas in real places like hospitals and homes.
- share what we learn to help everyone do a better job.
- check if new ideas help people.
- think about how our new ideas can be made even better.
- make sure we use new ideas to help solve problems.
- give people good tools to help them look after other people.



Research and innovation can make things better for

- people who need help.
- people who give help.
- the places where care happens.

What is stopping new ideas



It can be hard to make changes. Trying new things needs time, funding, support and teamwork.



Occupational therapists need more time to learn or try new ideas, so they can make things better.



Some people think research is only for clever people. We want everyone to understand that learning and testing new ideas is part of everyday work.



People need to feel their ideas are important. We need to make sure people speak up and try new things.



Occupational therapists do not get as much support as doctors and nurses to do research and innovation.



It is hard to share good ideas when different places do not work well together.



We need to look more at the changes we make to see if they are good or bad. This will help us learn and do better.



Sometimes occupational therapists are treated unfairly because of their **gender**, **disabilities**, **sexual orientation** or **race**. This means they do not get the same chances to learn and grow as other people.



Gender means if you describe yourself as male, female or something different.



A **disability** is something that makes it harder for someone to do things that other people might find easy.



Sexual orientation means who you are attracted to.

Race means your background or skin colour.

What we will do



We will help occupational therapists use what they learn in research and their new ideas to make new

- tools
- activities
- ways to help people feel better.

If we support new ideas, more people can see an occupational therapist and everyone gets better care.



To make occupational therapists happy we will

- help them grow and learn so they can do the jobs they enjoy.
- help them to be leaders, keep learning, ask good questions and try new ideas.



To show everyone how we help we will

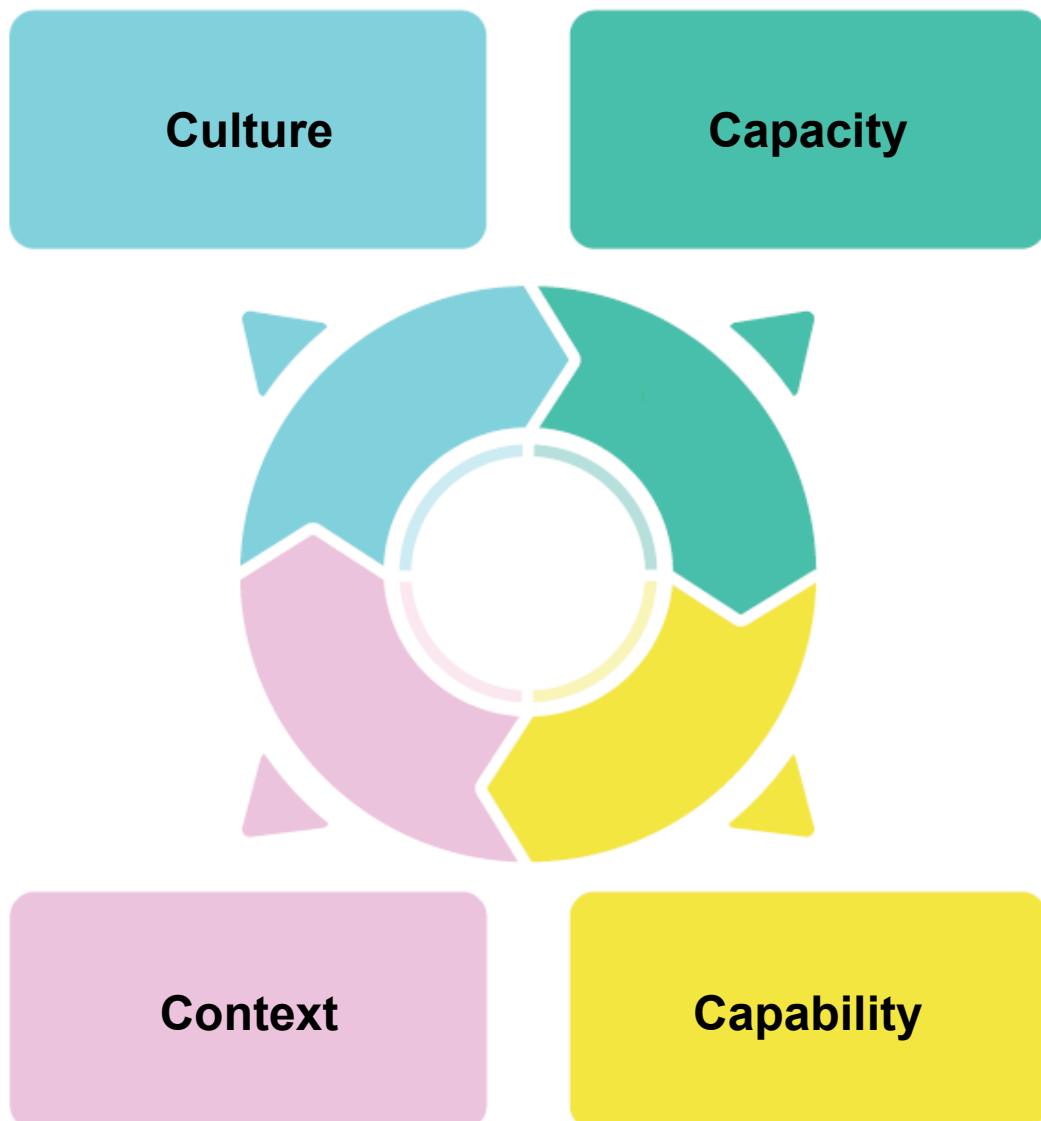
- collect stories and facts that show occupational therapy works.
- work with leaders to decide the best places for therapists to work.
- make sure we have enough therapists where they're needed.



To help occupational therapists make good plans we will

- share helpful information about people who are occupational therapists.
- use what we find out to make good choices about their jobs.

What we are going to look at



Capacity



Capacity means how much we can do. We want more capacity.



We will ask for money and support to help occupational therapists grow in their jobs.



We will talk to organisations and charities across the UK because we want them to give us money to help us make good changes.



Each part of the UK is different so we will make sure all places get the things they need.



We will work together with groups like the **Community for Allied Health Professions** so we can share information and help each other.



Allied health professionals are people who work with doctors and nurses. They help people talk, do things, move, eat healthily and feel better.



We will get ready for changes in job roles and leadership.



Leadership means helping others and working together to reach a goal. A leader listens, guides, and helps people to do their best. They should be kind, work with their team and make good choices that help everyone.



We will make sure there are chances for therapists to take on new tasks and help them do research and innovation.



We will help find and share where people can learn and get new skills.

We will ask all occupational therapists to take part in research and think of new ideas.

Capability



We want to be able to do more things.
This means we want more **capability**.



We will make sure that new
occupational therapy students learn
about research and new ideas from
the start.



From 2026, we will make changes to
our teaching and learning so new
occupational therapists will be ready
to use their skills.



We will give extra support to students
so they can understand and use
research and innovation.



We will make friendly online spaces where all therapists can practice and grow their research and innovation skills.



We will show them helpful tools and plans to become good researchers.



We will help our occupational therapists to try new things like **artificial intelligence (AI)** in their research and projects.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is when technology, like computers, do things that normally need a human brain.

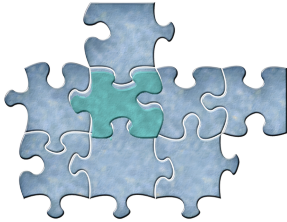


We will help them learn how to use the information they already collected in their everyday work to make things better.



We will explain how research can help show how much money is needed and what that money does. This will help them make good decisions.

Context



We want people to understand more about our services. We want them to have more **context**.



We will make sure we think about our **Equity, Diversity and Belonging Strategy**. We call this our **EDB Strategy** for short.



Our **EDB Strategy** is our plan to stop **racism, discrimination** and **injustice** in our organisation and in occupational therapy services.



Racism is when you are treated unfairly because of your background or skin colour.



Discrimination is when you are treated unfairly because of things like your age, gender, religion, background or a disability you have.



Injustice is when you are treated unfairly.



We will support our **community volunteers** so they can use our Research and Innovation Strategy.



Our **community volunteers** support our online groups where they can share ideas and learn from each other.



We will make sure our research is fair, **accessible** and **inclusive**.

Accessible means your research can be used or understood by everyone.

Inclusive means everyone can be involved.



This means our occupational therapists can have the same chances to do research as other health and care workers.



We will work with the **Community for Allied Health Professions Research** to make this happen.



We will make sure people with **protected characteristics** get a fair chance to take part in research.



A **protected characteristic** is something about a person, like their disability, ethnicity or age, that the law protects to make sure they are treated fairly.



We will tell people when there has been good teaching and learning through our online groups.



We will work together with **universities** and places where occupational therapists work so they can learn from each other.

Universities are places where adults learn and do research.



We will help universities to share new ideas about research and innovation and learn from each other.



We will ask more occupational therapists to join in important meetings about research and innovation.



We will work with the people we already have a **partnership** with and make stronger **partnerships** across all parts of the UK.

Partnerships are when your organisation works closely with another organisation.



We will look for new partnerships to work with that share our values and goals.



We will make sure our projects are environmentally friendly.



We will make sure we work most on what matters most.

Culture



We want Occupational Therapy services to have a good **culture**. Culture means the way we choose to live our lives and run our services.



We will tell people that everyone can have great ideas.



We will make sure all places get the things they need because we understand that each part of the UK is different.

We will help people find **role models** and **mentors**.



Role models are people who do good things. Other people might want to be like them.

Mentors are people who teach and support someone else.



We will help people work together through online groups.



We will show occupational therapists how to work with people with real-life experience, families and carers.



We will show leaders how research and innovation can help, so they can tell other people.



We will show occupational therapists that research and innovation are an important part of their whole career.

How we made our strategy



We made this plan by

- talking to people in small groups across the country.
- asking people to tell us their thoughts in an online survey.



After that we talked to and worked with lots of groups, people who have had occupational therapy and **experts** from across the UK.

Experts are people who know a lot about a subject.



We thought about what people said and then we decided what to do.



We will talk about this new way of working in our 3 year **action plans**.

An **action plan** is a document that says what you will do.

Where to find our first action plan



You can read our first action plan on [our website](#).



We want to say a big thank you to everyone who helped make this plan and will help guide our work in the future.



The full version of this document is called
‘Advancing occupational therapy: Research and Innovation Strategy’
and can be found on our website at
rcot.co.uk/research-and-innovation-strategy-action-plan