

Social care messaging guide

Right Support, Right Time: Unlocking the Power of OT

In this guide you'll find messaging around the value of occupational therapy in social care for RCOT's **Right Support, Right Time: Unlocking the Power of OT** campaign. It's designed to help you speak consistently and confidently about the value of occupational therapy in social care when it's delivered early and in the right way.

The campaign as a whole places occupational therapy at the heart of health and social care, shifting the focus to prevention: helping people sooner, easing pressure across services and showing how OT is an essential part of the solution.

Use this guide to keep your conversations and communications aligned, confident and clear and to help show why occupational therapy must be central to the future of social care.

Social care key messages

- Investing in occupational therapy within local authorities ensures occupational therapists are in the right place at the right time - embedded in communities, preventing avoidable deterioration, reducing pressure across the social care system and delivering better outcomes for people and better value for public money.
- Occupational therapists are involved in almost half of local authority referrals to adult social care, with around 3,700 occupational therapists employed by local authorities. They play a vital role in helping people remain at home, reducing delays to hospital discharge and easing pressure across both the NHS and social care.
- Occupational therapists who work in social care don't only adapt people's homes and provide equipment, they also support early intervention to prevent people's health deteriorating, support people with relearning daily living skills (for example, washing, dressing and feeding themselves) and help build confidence.

Key facts and figures

- OTs make up only 4% of the regulated social care workforce, yet they intervene in 35-45% of local authority referrals – a huge impact relative to size.
- Home adaptations prevent falls, reduce hospital admissions and keep people at home. Falls cost the NHS £2.3 billion annually and research shows adaptations reduce falls requiring hospital admission by 3% per quarter.
- According to RCOT's recent workforce survey:
 - 52% of occupational therapists working in local authorities struggle to provide the necessary equipment.
- 83% of occupational therapists working in local authorities reported an increase in demand for their services in 2024.

Occupational therapy in action

Here are a few examples that demonstrate the difference occupational therapists make across social care settings.

You can use these as prompts to shape examples that reflect your own practice, showing clearly how your work supports prevention, early intervention and improved outcomes for the people you work with.

Driving personalised recovery through occupational therapy (Sheffield)

An adult social care occupational therapy team worked with a person following an amputation to build confidence and re-engage in meaningful activities. The team introduced tailored equipment and strategies to reduce handling, manage pain and build tolerance. Working closely with family and professionals, they enabled safe transfers and supported the person to take part in everyday routines again.

The intervention prevented deterioration, improved wellbeing and supported a return to daily life – demonstrating the value of occupational therapy in delivering personalised reablement.

Embedding sustainability in social care practice (Rotherham)

An occupational therapy team led a project to improve homecare for people with complex needs. Working with a person with bariatric requirements, the therapist sourced recycled equipment — including a gantry hoist and bed-turning system — cutting the environmental impact of manufacturing and delivery.

The approach reduced the number of carers needed, halving weekly care costs and freeing up capacity in the homecare provider. The person said, 'I feel like my needs have been put first for once, and the equipment has really helped me to feel safer and more comfortable at home.'

By reducing travel and preventing avoidable hospital admissions, the intervention lowered carbon emissions and supported the council's environmental goals – showing how sustainable occupational therapy delivers better outcomes for people, services and the planet.

Supporting independent access to services for a deaf person (Nottinghamshire)

Delphine, a deaf woman whose first language is French Sign Language, was facing significant barriers to use everyday services. Working alongside her, an occupational therapist built her confidence to use different interpreters, introduced accessible remote interpreting options such as Sign Live and BSL999, and supported her to manage appointments on her own. They also helped her prepare for her driving theory test with tailored visual aids and a bilingual dictionary.

Delphine now navigates services independently and is moving closer to employment as a result.