

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Date	Wednesday 15 April 2026
Location	Phoenix House, 106-114 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1LB
Status	APPROVED
Classification	Confidential

Trustees present

Name	Position	Items
Odeth Richardson	Trustee, Chair	all
Aisling Durkin	Trustee, Northern Ireland	all
Neil Carnegie	Trustee, Scotland	all
Paul Dunning	Trustee, Wales	all
Cathryn Holding	Trustee, Industrial relations	all
Janine Hackett	Trustee, Learning and Development	all
Anita Atwal	Trustee, Research and Development	all
Sureshkumar Kamalakannan	Trustee, International Affairs (online)	all
Apologies		
Jackie Gordon	Trustee, England	
Eric Sanders	Trustee, Legal and Compliance	

In attendance

Name	Position	Items
Gary Waltham	Chief Executive	all
Satvinder Reyatt	Deputy Chief Executive	all
Gareth Groarke	Interim Director Membership Engagement	all
Karin Orman	Director of Practice and Innovation	all
Rob Smyth	Director of Strategy, Technology and Transformation	all
CJ Odeleye	Associate Director of Finance	all
Kate Monro	Head of Governance and Compliance	all
Angela Daniel	Senior Business Support Partner, minute taker	all
Dr Elizabeth Taylor	Research and Development Manager	5.1
Joe Brunwin	Head of Policy and Practice	5.2/5.3
Genevieve Smyth	Professional Advisor	5.2

Observers [restricted content – not published due to confidentiality re elections]

Please note: Items are recorded in agenda item order rather than the order in which they were taken.

Item	Main point
1.	Meeting opens: introductions and apologies Introductions were given for observers.
2.	Meeting governance and administration
2.1	Declaration of conflict of interest No declarations of interest.
2.2	Approval of RCOT Board minutes and review of matters arising JH requested to provide transparency by confirming the outcome of the final vote on the pre-registration education and early career standards. The Board had not approved the proposed standards during the last meeting and agreed that detailed feedback and resolution would take place outside the meeting, which had took place. It was also suggested that, going forward, the process for discussion and resolution outside formal meetings should be more clearly documented in the minutes to improve transparency and understanding of decision-making. Resolution Council approved the minutes of 22 January 2026 RCOT Board meeting and noted the forward planner and matters arising report. Action KM to review recording and reporting on written resolutions for clarity and transparency.
3.	Standing management reports Purpose / issue for consideration The standing report was presented to ensure the Board was abreast of key development and achievements since the last meeting. Key points highlighted were: • CEO visibility and member engagement • Implementing a hybrid working model • Financial and commercial position • Digital and member engagement improvements • Advocacy and external communications The following standing reports were also presented: • Monthly management accounts • Membership growth update • Performance and strategic programmes reports • Risk report Resolution None.

Item	Main point
	Action SR and GW to review current sickness absence reporting and consider changing to percentage-based reporting to enable better external benchmarking. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board
3.1	CEO report – presented by CEO The Board offered positive reflections, noting the strong energy, strategic insight, and pace of delivery shown in the early months in post. They expressed confidence in the leadership approach, particularly valuing the willingness to listen to long-standing Board priorities and turn them into action, highlighting the implementation of the communities app as something previously thought unachievable. They also welcomed the new top-level communications on advocacy work, recognising the importance of helping members better understand the organisation's behind-the-scenes activity on their behalf.
3.2	Monthly management accounts – presented by the Associate Director of Finance The discussion clarified that temporary resourcing is used only to address short-term capacity gaps and does not rely on agency staff, instead drawing on self-employed or fixed-term support where specialist skills are required. Board encouraged exploring opportunities to offer such work to students, graduates, or trainees as a development pathway and a way of supporting emerging talent, including occupational therapy students with diverse skills. In response, it was noted that while some roles require niche expertise, there is an openness to broadening opportunities through apprenticeships, internships, fellowships, and targeted fixed-term roles. Work is underway to expand internal placements and clarify when volunteering, paid consultancy, internships, or student opportunities are most appropriate, ensuring mutual benefit for individuals and the organisation while strengthening the future talent pipeline.
3.3	Membership growth update – presented by CEO No questions from Board.
3.4	Performance and strategic programmes reports for November, December 2025 and January 2026 – presented by the Director of Strategy, Technology and Transformation The discussion focused on how sickness absence is being managed and reported, with reassurance that a proactive approach is in place. This includes equipping managers to have early, confident conversations with staff, providing appropriate welfare support, and focusing on prevention and early intervention rather than solely on absence outcomes. These measures have contributed to a reduction in short-term sickness absence and the resolution of some long-term cases, with overall performance improving since January. Members discussed how sickness is currently reported, noted that many organisations use percentage-based measures and targets, and suggested that reporting sickness as a percentage may provide greater clarity and comparability for the Board.
3.5	Risk report – presented by the Head of Governance and Compliance Board recognised that while there was an aspiration to see risks reduce, some risks will inevitably remain, making it important to agree collectively what is acceptable and how this is evidenced. Board reflected that risks were currently considered in different forums and would benefit from clearer alignment, particularly where similar risks appear distinct from different governance perspectives. The development of the corporate strategy was seen as a timely opportunity to revisit this work, including clearer differentiation between

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	organisational risks and professional or sector-wide risks, and exploring more transparent ways of presenting these to the Board.
4.	Statutory reporting and financial decision-making
4.1	RCOT Annual Report and Accounts Purpose / issue for consideration The Board was updated on the successful completion of the annual audit process and present the auditors findings in the audit management letter including the audited RCOT 2024-25 Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements. Resolution The Board approved: • The RCOT 2024-25 Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements as recommended by the Audit, Investment and Risk Committee. • Delegate authority to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees to formally sign the annual account and the letter of representation presented by the auditors. • Delegate authority to the Company Secretary and Associate Director of Finance to file the accounts with Companies House. Action None. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board No questions from Board.
4.2	Communities Designated Fund
4.2.1	Communities Designated Fund – Terms of Reference Purpose / issue for consideration The Communities Fund was established to support member-led initiatives that strengthened learning, leadership, innovation, and professional growth across the occupational therapy profession. It was outlined how the Fund was aligned to strategic priorities, held as designated monies, and focused on equitable access, collective benefit, and high-impact use of charitable funds. There would be phased investment priorities over five years, covering platform development, professional development, innovation funding, and regional activity, alongside clear principles for allocation, eligibility criteria, governance arrangements, and evaluation measures to ensure accountability, impact, and long-term sustainability. Resolution Board approved the plans for the Communities Fund, with the explicit caveat that additional clarity and assurance would be brought back to them in relation to any legal risk posed by this approach.. The Board approved delegation of authority to the Director of Practice and Innovation to manage and report on spend, delivery and impact. Action

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	It was agreed that, regardless of the vote, the proposals would be reviewed in more detail, with specific scrutiny around legal risk. A further report would be brought back to the Board to provide assurance. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board The discussion explored how a finite communities funding pot was intended to be spent over a five-year period to test new projects and ways of working, with the expectation that successful approaches would eventually transition into business as usual. Concerns were raised about the perceived risk that money previously paid by members of specialist sections for exclusive benefits was now being redistributed more widely, potentially causing resentment or a sense of unfairness among those who had contributed extra. While there was recognition that equitable access across the whole membership was positive, there was also acknowledgment of high expectations associated with specialist section fees. It was generally agreed that the new approach represented a positive step after a difficult transition period, helping to rebuild opportunities for local CPD and professional development, but that perception and communication would remain critical risks. The importance of being explicit about how funds were being reinvested for members' benefit was emphasised, alongside using clear examples, stories and evidence of impact to demonstrate value. Financial context was provided to explain that, historically, wider membership resources had subsidised specialist activity, and that unmet commitments had led to reserves building up. Overall, the funding approach was supported in principle, with a shared view that careful, transparent communication would be essential to address lingering concerns and expectations among members. Board voted with the caveat that this was scrutinised and come back to them with more clarity.
4.3	Communities Designated Fund - In-person events Purpose / issue for consideration The proposal outlined a national approach to delivering up to 13 in-person regional events, each supported by up to £2,000 from the Communities Fund, representing a total annual commitment of £26,000, subject to funding availability. Resolution Board approved: • The proposed approach to allocating the Communities fund for 25-26 to support delivery of in person events • Delegate responsibility to the Director of Practice and Innovation to oversee expenditure and delivery of the in-person regional events. Action None. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board Board discussion focused on plans to reintroduce and support in-person events by allocating funding of up to approximately £2,000 per event, while remaining flexible and open to lower-cost, asset-based approaches where existing venues and networks could

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	be used. The intention was to empower regional groups with a clearer purpose and practical activities, allowing a wide range of topics, including emerging and new areas of practice, to sit within broad thematic headings and be informed by evidence and local projects. Events were seen not as one-off activities but as opportunities to capture learning through case studies, feed into innovation and community platforms, and build longer-term relationships that could support future consultation, advocacy and expertise sharing. Emphasis was placed on creativity, collaboration between groups, cost-effective delivery, accessibility (including options such as live streaming), and sensitive communication to ensure the initiative was framed as a positive return to local, face-to-face networking rather than a replacement for existing specialist activity. There was strong support for the value of in-person connection, recognition of existing expertise among members, and agreement that learning over time would shape how this approach developed.
5. 5.1	Strategic progress and decisions RCOT Professional Standards Dr Elizabeth Taylor, Research and Development Manager joined. Purpose / issue for consideration The Professional Standards of Practice, Conduct and Ethics define the expected level of practice and professional behaviour for all members of the occupational therapy workforce, including students, and apply across all roles and settings. Developed in close alignment with Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) requirements, the standards support practitioners in meeting their regulatory obligations. Recently reviewed and updated through a structured, evidence-informed process, the standards ensure continued relevance to contemporary practice, policy and workforce expectations, and will serve as a core reference for learners, practitioners, employers, educators and the public. Resolution None. Action None. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board Board discussed the need to make professional standards more practical and routinely used, with suggestions to develop additional resources such as data packs, development tools and examples of good practice to support reflection, supervision, appraisal and workforce planning. It was agreed that the standards should act as a minimum professional baseline aligned with regulatory requirements, alongside refreshed career development, learning and development frameworks. Participants highlighted ongoing work on safe staffing, workforce planning resources, supervision and record-keeping guidance, and the importance of accessible, interactive resources, including e-learning. Wider issues raised included post-registration education, research and academic capacity across the UK, particularly in smaller nations, the growing importance of impact and value for money evidence, and the inclusion of themes such as AI, equality, sustainability, and public-facing summaries to improve understanding and relevance.

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5.2	Workforce strategy Genevieve Smyth, Professional Advisor and Joe Brunwin, Head of Policy and Practice joined. Purpose / issue for consideration Neighbourhood and community-based health approaches are central to health reform across all four UK nations and align closely with RCOT's workforce strategy to deliver occupational therapy that meets local population health needs. Following an internal review of the workforce strategy in November 2025, and guidance from the UK workforce advisory group, RCOT identified integrated community and neighbourhood health as the next priority area for focused influence. This proposal sets out a plan to work with members to position occupational therapy as integral to neighbourhood models and integrated community services, using consistent terminology across nations. While sharpening its strategic focus, RCOT will continue to deliver existing workforce actions, including the launch of new workforce planning resources for members in April. Resolution The Board approved the proposed approach to delivering the next stage of the workforce strategy. Action None. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board The discussion focused on the opportunities and risks associated with the growing emphasis on integrated community and neighbourhood health, highlighting occupational therapy's potential to make a significant impact while stressing the need for careful, strategic implementation. There was strong agreement that success depended on robust post-registration training, supervision, mentorship and workforce planning, alongside safe staffing and clear professional development pathways, to avoid setting practitioners and services up to fail. Board emphasised the importance of balancing ambition with readiness, protecting the existing workforce across and beyond the NHS, and ensuring practitioners were confident and supported in new roles. The conversation also underlined the need for stronger, more robust evidence of impact and value for money, building on existing data and case studies while working towards higher-level evaluation. Overall, the move towards neighbourhood delivery was seen as a systems-wide opportunity to refocus on occupation, demonstrate the profession's unique value, and align long-term strategic vision with member needs, policy direction and public benefit.
5.3	Positioning the profession and strategic influencing Joe Brunwin, Head of Policy and Practice joined. Purpose / issue for consideration RCOT has four influencing priorities aligned with its workforce strategy and UK health and social care policies: transition from hospital to home, neighbourhood health and community care, children and young people and schools, and health and work. The paper summarises activities and impact from the last quarter and outlines ongoing work with members to support the future of the profession. Building on the workforce strategy,

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	RCOT intends to refine its focus to community delivery, schools and work, bringing these areas together under a single community and neighbourhood health umbrella. Resolution None. Action None. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board The discussion focused on the need to make policy, influencing activity and strategic priorities more accessible and meaningful to members, particularly by simplifying language, explaining how policy influence works, and improving communication. There was strong support for community-based occupational therapy, especially in schools and housing, as a way to address health inequalities, child wellbeing, and wider social determinants of health through system integration rather than siloed approaches. Board emphasised the importance of articulating occupational therapy's demonstrated impact across health, education, employment and housing, using clear narratives and evidence that resonate with policymakers and partners. The conversation also highlighted the need to better equip and support practitioners to influence systems, strengthen leadership capability, involve members more actively, and align advocacy, communications and investment decisions with strategic priorities to maximise the profession's value and visibility.
5.4	International report (WFOT) Purpose / issue for consideration A summary was presented of RCOT's current international activities and highlights how these can be strengthened and better leveraged to support its strategic aims of maintaining an international presence, fostering global collaboration, and increasing international influence. Resolution None. Action None. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board A closed group was established for members attending WFOT, and follow-up meeting dates were shared, although there was no initial uptake. It was agreed that the group would be re-engaged to gather learning and identify any actions to take forward. The proposal was then to evolve this group into an international community within the platform, addressing an identified gap for international member engagement. This would be supported and reviewed over time to assess whether it met member needs and added value. No questions from the Board.

Item	Main point
6.	Policy
6.1	Assessment process for statements on global humanitarian emergencies [RESTRICTED ITEM – content redacted]
6.2	Member conduct and investigations policy Purpose / issue for consideration The Board were updated on progress towards establishing a formal Investigations Policy and Conduct Committee to manage member conduct complaint. Draft versions of the policy and Conduct Committee terms of reference had been prepared and work was underway to align membership terms and professional standards. As the policy was not yet ready for formal approval, the paper sought Board approval to create a transitional Member Conduct Policy Working Group to complete the policy, capture appropriate Board expertise, and manage any conduct issues in the interim. The proposed approach was underpinned by key principles including clear separation of BAOT and RCOT roles, strong governance to avoid conflicts of interest, fair and evidence-based investigations, transparency and procedural safeguards for members, automatic alignment of RCOT membership outcomes with BAOT decisions, and proportionate responses including informal resolution where appropriate. Resolution Board approved the establishment of the Conduct Policy Working Group and its Terms of Reference as set out in this paper, with immediate effect. Action None. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board The discussion clarified that member misconduct investigations were intended to be grounded in RCOT's Professional Standards of Practice, Conduct and Ethics, which already combined professional standards and a code of conduct. It was agreed that, while these standards could be consistently referenced when concerns about behaviour or practice arose, expectations needed to be made more explicit to members, particularly through clearer membership terms and conditions. The importance of distinguishing this role from statutory regulation was emphasised, alongside the need for proportionate, fair and sensitive responses, including informal resolution where appropriate. Overall, the conversation highlighted the value of a clearer, standalone articulation of member conduct expectations to protect the organisation's reputation, support professional integrity, and provide greater clarity when managing concerns.
6.3	Contract approval - Scheme of Delegation change Purpose / issue for consideration The Audit, Investment and Risk Committee approved a revised procurement policy at its meeting on 19 March 2026. The updated policy strengthened risk controls, clarified approval thresholds, embedded a consistent organisation-wide approach to due diligence, and consolidated roles and responsibilities across the contracting process. As part of this approval, the Committee also recommended related amendments to the Scheme of Delegation.

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	Resolution The Board approved the changes to the Scheme of Delegation. Action None. Key factors discussed and taken into account by Board No questions.
7.	Cost of living negotiations [RESTRICTED ITEM – content redacted]
8.	AOB No other business.
Meeting closed at 12.48	

These minutes were approved by the Board of Trustees at the meeting held 16 July 2026.

Signature	<u>Odeth Richardson</u> Odeth Richardson (Jul 17, 2026 15:45:30 GMT+1)
Name	Odeth Richardson
Role	Chair
Date signed	17/07/26

Action summary table

Item	Action	Owner
3.4	Review current sickness absence reporting and consider changing to percentage-based reporting to enable better external benchmarking	SR / GW
4.2	In relation to the Communities Designated Fund approval, it was agreed that, regardless of the vote, the proposals would be reviewed in more detail, with specific scrutiny of the points and risks raised during the discussion. A further report would be brought back to the Board to provide clearer assurance, particularly in relation to governance, financial oversight, and how the fund would operate in practice.	KO