Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill

Consultation Response by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists.

# The overall aims of the Bill and whether the Bill can meet these aims

# The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) welcomes legislations for transition and handover processes in health and social care services for young people as they grow and move from children’s to adult services. RCOT members have identified supporting young people at this pivotal life stage as a key concern because poor continuity of care risks disengagement from services, affecting people’s long-term outcomes and quality of life.

# RCOT welcomes the emphasis on personalised care as this is a core principle of occupational therapy practice. RCOT members are skilled in carrying out ‘what matters to me’ conversations and use this information to develop intervention/support plans that address individual goals and priorities. This is particularly important as young people grow and take greater responsibility for managing their own care and support.

# RCOT believes that ensuring easy access to care, support and rehabilitation should be a priority and would welcome further guidance on how this might be achieved. This is a concern particularly for young people who have difficulty accessing services because of disability or disadvantage (including digital poverty), and for young people who have not accessed services previously and who lack support to navigate complex healthcare systems.

# Transitional care is not just about the move to adult services. It is about equipping young people with the skills and knowledge to participate in their communities and live healthy meaningful lives. Transitional care adopts a bio psychosocial approach and includes skill acquisition for independent living, move to further/higher education and the world of work, accessing benefits, health management, community mobility access to leisure and other community facilities etc.

# Working across health, education, social care, employment and other sectors positions occupational therapists well to work in partnership with others. We agree that effective collaboration is essential to meet young people’s needs as they become adults.

# RCOT recommend the guidance includes consideration of a young person’s cultural needs as well as those relating to any disability or disadvantage when developing an individual’s transition and handover plan.

# Young people living with disabilities or who have long term health needs are at greater risk of experiencing mental health issues. We suggest that the need for collaboration between mental and physical health services during the transition period is specifically mentioned in the guidance.

# RCOT would ask that further confirmation is provided on whether this bill will serve those with chronic long-term conditions?

# RCOT would also like to ensure the correct language is used throughout the document- the word child is used even up to age 25, which may to infantilise young people. According to WHO and UN 10-19 year old's are often referred to as adolescents and those 15-24 are usually described as young people.

# If changing the law is the best way to do what the Bill is trying to do.

# RCOT support the Scottish Government introducing legislation to ensure clear procedures and standards are set for the whole of Scotland to promote consistency for citizens in all areas. RCOT also recognise the importance of personalised approaches to transition planning with knowledge of the local area and services considered and therefore support the duty being placed with local authorities to support their children and young people with transition planning.

# Any unexpected or unforeseen effects of the Bill (as it is currently written).

# This legislation should aim to ensure that all young people have access to appropriate planning for their transition to adulthood and adulthood services. Occupational therapists have the skills and expertise to take on the role of named worker to work with a young person and their family to coordinate plans and services during the period of transition. However, workforce challenges mean that many health and social care teams have limited resources, as described in our recent publication- [Survey finds children's services at ‘crisis point’ - RCOT](https://www.rcot.co.uk/news/survey-finds-childrens-services-crisis-point)

# This bill may increase workload for health and social care professionals and therefore the correct support for professionals involved and staffing levels of teams responsible for transition planning must be considered.

# RCOT members note long term concerns surrounding the poor integration of health and social care IT systems. Existing IT systems may impact how well a young person’s transition planning is shared or passed amongst health and social care teams.

# If the Bill adds to or duplicates any existing legislation.

# This Bill could serve to augment the Principles of Good Transitions (2017) provides the current best practice framework for supporting the transition journey for young people aged 14-25.

# The financial impact of the Bill on the Scottish Government, local authorities, or other bodies.

# RCOT recognizes that this may increase the workload for existing staff and further investment in support and staffing may be required.

# Transitional care adopts a proactive and holistic approach to equipping young people with skills needed for adulthood, focusing on helping young people achieve their full potential in life. This is future focused health promoting/prevention and skill building. Investment in this approach needs to be addressed as currently services largely focus on pressing and immediate requests for assistance due to service constraints.

# How will the Bill affect (for better or worse) the rights and the quality of life of the people covered by the Bill?

# RCOT members have identified supporting young people at this pivotal life stage as a key concern because poor continuity of care risks disengagement from health services, affecting people’s long-term outcomes and quality of life.

# The Bill will serve to improve quality of life for the people covered by the Bill, and their families. Evidence has demonstrated that early assessment and intervention can improve quality of life in young people with disabilities and complex needs and leads to good adult outcomes.

# RCOT recognise the importance of early intervention and prevention- the commitment to transitional planning in advance of adult may reduce the incidences of breakdowns in care and support, individuals slipping through cracks in the service, empower individuals to be involved in their own care and support planning and reduce the incidences for crisis interventions.

# The Bill would require the Scottish Government to introduce a National Transitions Strategy (sections 1 to 6 of the Bill).

# Do you agree with introducing a strategy, and that a Scottish Minister should be in charge of it?

# RCOT supports the introduction of a National Transitions Strategy. It is important that the strategy sets out clear guidance on who it is serving. Clear outcomes are essential- there is a need to improve quality of life for Scotland’s young people living with disabilities and to support them to achieve their potential.

# The Bill places a duty on local councils to prepare and implement transition plans. These plans would be for each disabled child and young person within their local authority area. They would also have to explain:

# How are plans going to be prepared and managed?

# What would happen if there was a disagreement about what was in a plan or how it was working?

# Do you agree with the proposals relating to transition plans?

# RCOT support the proposals which include commencing transition planning at age 14 where possible. However, for some young people this may be too late as they may take longer to acquire skills and reach certain developmental milestones. We are aware that many conditions may fluctuate throughout a child’s development and therefore it will be imperative that these plans are reviewed regularly prior to the child turning 18 and accessing adult services.

# Who do you think should coordinate the transitions plan?

# As a profession that works in primary, secondary and tertiary health, and social care services, and across health, education, social care, employment, and the voluntary sector occupational therapists are well placed to fulfil this role. Occupational therapists are aware of and understand the need for integrated, individualised transition plans for individuals with a range of complex health (and other) needs.

# RCOT believes that young people have a right to be heard and to share their views on matters that affect their care and lives. Occupational therapists are skilled in selecting and using appropriate communication tools and approaches to ensure young people understand and can contribute to the care process. RCOT feel it would be beneficial to invest in the development of occupational therapy services to ensure services are equipped to provide adequate support for young people.