

Relieving the pressure on social care

the value of occupational
therapy



Royal College of
Occupational
Therapists



Occupational Therapy
*Improving Lives
Saving Money*

#ValueofOT

Occupational therapy in social care

Everyday we hear about the crisis in social care, people not having access to services when they need them, people moving into residential care due to the lack of community services, families and carers under enormous pressure and people living lonely and isolated lives. This report looks at how occupational therapy services are not only cost effective but can make a considerable difference to people's quality of life.

RCOT data indicates that despite making up just 4% of the regulated workforce, occupational therapists address 35 – 45% of local authority referrals. This demonstrates that funding occupational therapy services delivers a significant return on investment.

People who need social services are struggling with daily life. Occupational therapists work primarily within adult social care and also with children with physical and/or learning disabilities. For a growing number of people the need for social care is essential, not just desirable. Everyday activities that most people take for granted can become challenging at best or impossible at worst. Occupational therapists focus on making the things that matter to people possible again. By focusing on the person's ability to participate in daily life occupational therapists:

- identify the right support to address people's needs
- teach strategies and adapt the home to keep people as independent and safe as possible; and
- address the barriers to people staying connected within their local community.

Occupational therapists

At a **UNIVERSAL** level:

- Offer choice, control and a person-centred approach
- Ensure people make informed choices

At a **TARGETED** level:

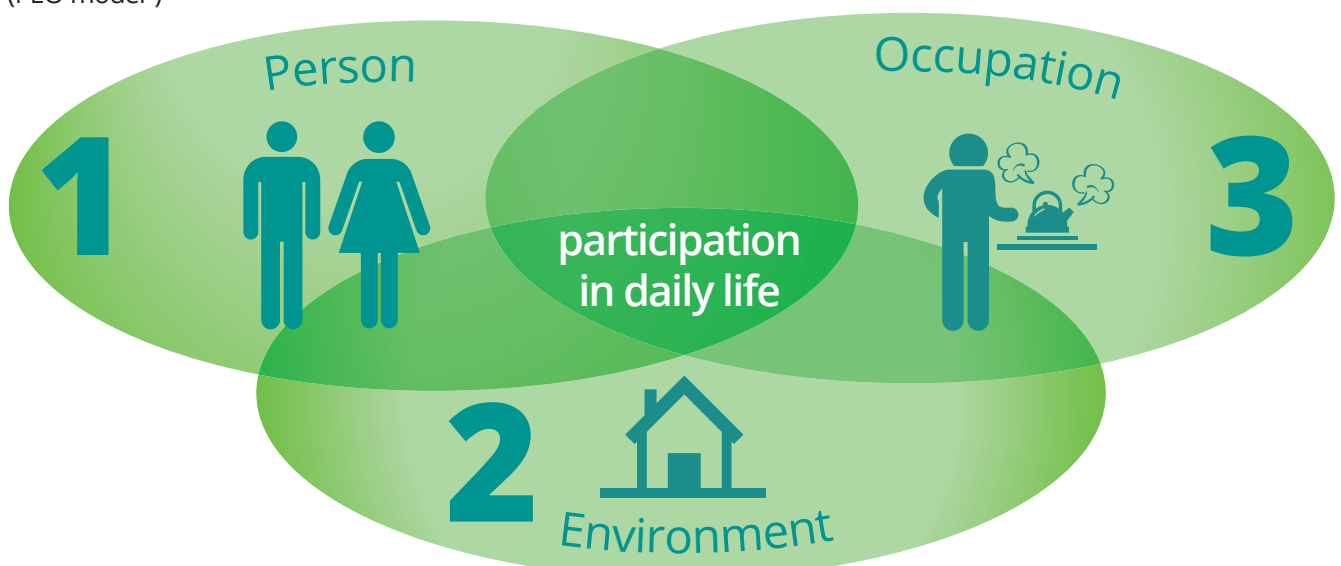
- Personalise packages of care
- Address environmental barriers in people's lives
- Optimise independence through technology
- Train and supervise care and support staff in enablement/reablement
- Assess need and support for carers and family

At a **SPECIALIST** level:

- Provide specialist reablement/enablement services
- Provide in-reach support to people in the criminal justice system
- Assess for complex housing adaptations

Occupational therapy approach

(PEO model¹)





1

Person – A personalised approach to care

People are “experts in what is important to them, their experience of illness and their familial and social circumstances”. It is, therefore, essential that people are central to decisions related to their care.ⁱⁱ

When asked to rate what was most important in delivery of social care, 65% of people wanted services to meet their individual needs and 66% rated safety.ⁱⁱⁱ

Personalise packages of care

Reducing the number of carers going into a person’s home to assist with personal tasks makes it easier for care agencies to improve consistency in care. Single-handed care supports a person’s wellbeing by ensuring greater privacy, and fostering more personal one-to-one relationships with fewer carers.

In practice: Devon County Council Double-handed care packages

Occupational therapists:

- Review double-handed care packages
- Review people’s priorities and needs
- Work with care providers to adjust level of support to meet need
- Advise on techniques to ensure safety

IMPACT

- Annual savings to the council of **£472,301***
- Plus a saving of **£178,500** in avoided care costs
- **239** hours of care costs saved

* 2018/19 figures net savings assume care level for individuals remains same for a year



Ensure people can make informed decisions

It is important that anyone requiring information and advice regardless of funding eligibility has access to information on local services. There is evidence that increasing people’s choice increases providers’ focus on quality of care ^{iv}.

Choice can be limited for many people however due to their lack of knowledge. Occupational therapists can ensure that information about housing, equipment, accessing the local community and self-management strategies and techniques are available to the public allowing people to make an informed decision about their needs.

In practice: NHS Northern Devon and Devon County Council – Independent Living Centre

The Independent Living Centre is an occupational therapy equipment specialist service. The occupational therapists train all staff who prescribe equipment in Devon and work closely with manufacturers and suppliers.

This approach generates direct annual equipment budget savings of **£1,875,000**



In practice: Monmouthshire Integrated Care Team – FISH (Finding Individual Solutions Here)

The model allows people to access a professional directly for advice, signposting, solutions or interventions.

- Waiting list reduced
- Need for assessment reduced by approximately **70%**
- **72%** of those requiring reablement are independent when leaving the service



You don't know you need an occupational therapist until you need an occupational therapist.

Quote from a carer



“Occupational therapists play a crucial role in assessing the home and adapting the environment for older people.”^v



2

Environment – housing and adaptations

Millions of UK homes are unsuitable for people with a disability or reduced mobility, with many posing a risk to the safety of their occupants. Just 7% of homes meet basic accessibility standards.^{vi}

Welsh Government research from 2015 showed that the mean cost of adaptation was £3,887, and the mean delivery time was 176 days (with wide variance in that figure).

The best and quickest results are seen where housing departments have their own occupational therapists assessing people’s requirements for adaptations.^{vii}

Address environmental barriers in people’s lives

In later life modifications made to the home can reduce difficulties with activities of daily living by **75%**.^{viii}

Home assessment and modification for people at high risk of a fall offers a return on investment of **£3.17 to every pound spent**; and a social return on investment of **£7.34 to every pound spent**.^{viii}

In practice: County Durham Housing Group

The housing group introduced:

- A priority service for provision of aids and adaptations for tenants and set a dedicated budget.
- Direct delivery team for minor works
- A simple system for installing medium adaptations (up to £10,000), and
- A clear arrangement for agreeing works above £10,000, including use of in-house occupational therapists.



Optimise independence through technology

Assistive technology and home adaptations can increase people’s ability to perform everyday activities by **49%**. A five-month programme delivered by an occupational therapist (six visits), a nurse (four visits) and handyman (up to a day’s work) had people reporting a **53%** reduction in depressive symptoms.^{ix}

In practice: Western Health and Social Care Trust - Assisted Living Technology

The Assisted Living Technology pilot considered how people can realise their potential through the latest technology to control their home environment. This involved:

- Adopting a collaborative approach to ensure that the right technology was matched to the right environment; and
- Most importantly, to the needs and preferences of the individual.

Occupational therapists assessed people’s activities and levels of participation before and after installation of the technology. **86%** of people demonstrated improvements in levels of impairment, activity and participation and carer well-being increased.



Assess for complex housing adaptations

Adaptations play a crucial role in prevention and improving people’s health and wellbeing, but need to be delivered in a timely way*. Services that base provision on complexity of a person’s situation rather than the type of adaptation and cost can best utilise occupational therapy skills to lead on adaptations or train and supervise others.

In practice: Southampton Council, Adaptations Team within Adults, Housing and Communities

The Specialist Housing Occupational Therapist covers re-housing for people who need wheelchair adapted accommodation or major adaptations such as ground floor bedroom and bathroom facilities. The occupational therapist writes a re-housing report and views potential properties with the person to confirm suitability and to arrange any further works needed. For new builds the Specialist Housing Occupational Therapist liaises with the Development Team on initial designs for wheelchair adapted homes.





3 Occupation – enabling/reabling people to do what matters to them

Reablement supports people, who have experienced deterioration in their health and ability to manage everyday activities, to relearn skills so that they can return to doing what they want and need to be able to do. There is **good evidence** that reablement improves people's sense of wellbeing, prolongs their ability to live at home, and removes or reduces the need for home care.^{xi}

Offer choice, control and a person-centred approach

Occupational therapists enable people to be independent and to participate fully in daily living activities through reablement programmes. Their role involves leading and supervising support workers, as well as assessing and reviewing people with complex needs.

In practice: Wigan Council Early Intervention Team

The reablement service was awarded Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission.

In 2016 – 2017 **91.7%** of people no longer required ongoing support once seen by the Early Intervention Team.



Provide specialist reablement/enablement services

A national audit on occupational therapy-led reablement in Northern Ireland found **77%** (192 people) remained 'successfully reabled' up to 21 months after being discharged from reablement services. This was calculated at **82,199** days which equates to net domiciliary care costs avoided of **£1.2m**.^{xii}

In practice: Kent County Council Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Enablement

The service allows individuals with autism without a learning disability to access occupational therapy for up to 12 weeks. Occupational therapy is delivered through one to one support based around a person's goals and focussed on their strengths and assets.

ASC Enablement has demonstrated improved levels of independence and quality of life for people, leading to a **64%** reduction in the need for care.



Provide in-reach support to people in the criminal justice system

To meet the needs of a growing prison population with long-term conditions, occupational therapists assess for care and support needs, provide equipment and adaptations and advise on strategies and techniques to manage personal care and other activities of daily living within the prison environment.

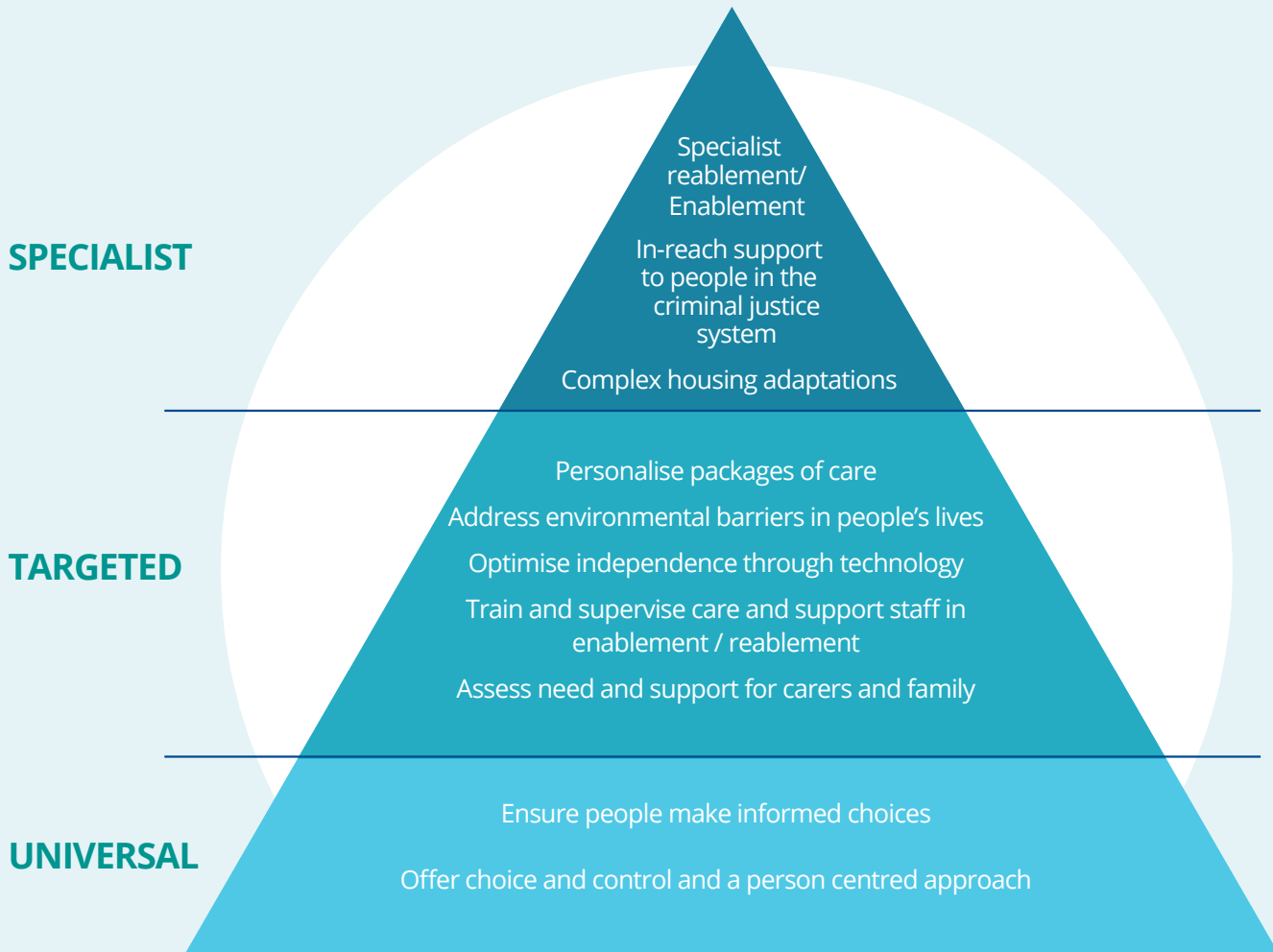
In practice: Royal Borough of Greenwich The Prison Social Care Assessment Team (PSCAxT)

The occupational therapists in PSCAxT review social care provision in the local prisons to address gaps and minimise risk to vulnerable prisoners. The team has been able to evidence the level of support services required; support hours used by the commissioned service, and in the first two years of its implementation, make a cost saving of approximately **£80,000** on the social care contract. Other initiatives include training Care & Support Orderlies (C&SO) to assist other prisoners with non-personal care tasks. The C&SOs support vulnerable prisoners to participate in communal activities and education, vocation and resettlement programmes.



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The full list of references for this report is available at www.rcot.co.uk/ilsm

The RCOT Occupational Therapy Improving Lives, Saving Money campaign's overarching recommendations are:

To empower people to manage their health and wellbeing occupational therapists should be deployed across the health and care system to:

- > **Intervene** early within primary care
- > **Embed** personalised care through training and supervising others
- > **Develop** wider partnerships to further innovation
- > **Expand** therapy-led services

Find out more: www.rcot.co.uk/ilsm

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References

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Find out more: www.rcot.co.uk/ilsm