

# Research Guide: recruiting occupational therapists as research participants

## Introduction

As the professional body for occupational therapists in the United Kingdom, we often receive enquiries about recruiting our members as research participants. In line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, and in the best interest of our members, we can't give permission to researchers to use our data sources to directly contact members with research recruitment information.

However, there are other options for alerting our members to research recruitment opportunities through:

- RCOT Communities
- RCOT-led Forums
- OTnews
- RCOT social media

If you are considering using any of these options as a research recruitment strategy, you should be aware of potential limitations. Don't use these options as your primary means of recruiting research participants, as it could leave your project vulnerable:

- These options are discretionary, and acceptance of your request can't be guaranteed.
- The recruitment timescales for your research project may not fit with the dates when information can be disseminated for example in a particular issue of OTnews
- As an opportunistic sampling method, it's not possible to accurately predict how many RCOT members will see or access the information.
- Response rates may be low.

You can [find more guidance on ethics here](#).

## RCOT Communities

RCOT Communities is our online engagement platform. All members will have access to the full range of practice, professional and regional communities as a member benefit from early 2025. At the moment we are in a test and learn phase, so we may make changes to processes later on. At the moment any member can join Research Connect. You can advertise for recruitment via either posting as a discussion thread in Research Connect or in the Global share and discuss space. [Read the most up to date guidance on the RCOT Communities project here](#) and [how to join Research Connect](#).

Please consider sharing your requests in relevant communities that might have a target recruitment audience aligned to the subject of your study.

Please provide full ethical transparency on your post by including your ethics approval number and the name of the institution who approved it. Please also make sure that you tag or categorise your post to reflect that it's a recruitment request.

### **RCOT-led Forums**

Please make sure to contact forum leads for permission to recruit for your research project with forum members.

We ask that you think about the target audience of your study when considering the best place to share your recruitment information.

We also encourage you to follow up on your post with an update of the outcome of your study. It's likely those who've volunteered their time to fill out your survey or take part in your focus group will have an interest in your research and its outcomes. It's also a good way to help others who might have overlapping research interests or might be interested in using a similar methodology. Think about answering: *What did you do? What are your key findings? What went well? Were there any particular challenges? Can you signpost to these outputs?*

### **OTnews**

RCOT members can make a request for research recruitment information to be included in the 'Professional Resources' section of OTnews, our monthly magazine sent that is sent to members. To do this you need to complete an 'OTnews – Research recruitment request form', available at: [www.rcot.co.uk/news/otnews](http://www.rcot.co.uk/news/otnews) and send it to the OTnews editor.

Please note, you can only send a request to include recruitment information in the magazine once you have ethics approval for your study.

Unfortunately, the editor can't guarantee publication as inclusion is dependent on factors such as available space in any given month, advertising pressures and number of requests.

Timescales for your recruitment are also an issue to consider. In line with most printed publications, there can be a delay of a minimum of six weeks between a request being submitted and it reaching the reader.

### **RCOT social media**

Researchers can use their own X accounts to raise awareness of their project by tagging @theRCOT.

Please note, RCOT doesn't post research recruitment requests directly to either the @theRCOT X account or @theRCOT Facebook page.