

Evidence Brief: Occupational Therapy

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Produced by the HEE Knowledge Management team Evidence Briefs offer a quick overview of the published reports, research, and evidence on a workforce-related topic.

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Key publications – the big picture

[The Allied Health Professions \(AHPs\) Strategy for England](#), NHS England, 2022

This strategy is a catalyst for change. Wherever you work, every member of our AHP community has a part in realising our collective ambitions through its delivery. I therefore encourage you to take a moment to consider how the AHP community can enable the change required to deliver future care today.

[Rehabilitation: how can services meet demand?](#) 2021, NIHR
There are examples of excellent multi-disciplinary rehabilitation services in the UK, but there is a lot of variation in the services that are available, and not everyone has timely access to the support that they need.

[The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on occupational therapy in the United Kingdom](#), 2020, Royal College of Occupational Therapists

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) is focused on providing members with guidance throughout the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. To understand how the pandemic is affecting occupational therapy and the different ways occupational therapy personnel are responding to it, RCOT distributed a survey exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on members and the wider profession.

[Full report: Understanding the provision of occupational health and work-related musculoskeletal services](#), 2020, Department of Health & Social Care

This short summary presents the key findings from research conducted by IFF Research on behalf of the Work and Health Unit (WHU).

[Improving Rehabilitation Services](#), 2016, NHS England

The guidance is presented as a fully interactive PDF, containing links to the latest evidence and examples of good practice, along with practical advice to commission good quality rehabilitation including ten top-tips.

[Commissioning Guidance for Rehabilitation](#), 2016, NHS England

A modern healthcare system must do more than just stop people dying. It needs to equip them to live their lives, fulfil their maximum potential and optimise their contribution to family life, their community and society as a whole.

Case Studies

[Pearls of wisdom: using the single case study or 'gem' to identify strategies for mediating stress and work-life imbalance in healthcare staff](#), 2019 *OpenAthens log in required**

This paper reports on a single case study that was part of a wider interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) that aimed to explore the levels of stress and work-life imbalance experienced by occupational therapists working in health and social-care sectors in Wales in the UK.

[Case study: Occupational Therapist Rebecca explains her role within the Home First team](#), 2019

The Home First team provides that initial care and support which for some people is all they need. Home First enables us to get people home quicker and provide them with fast access to the services that they need to help them to recover. This helps reduce recovery times and increases independence.

HEE Star

More resources and tools are available in the AHP Quick Reference Guides Upskilling section of the [HEE Star](#). Alternatively, search for 'Allied Health' or 'occupational therapy' in the search bar.

Statistics

[HCPC Diversity Data Report 2021: occupational therapists](#)

Between December 2020 and March 2021, we collected diversity data in a voluntary survey from 51,710 registrants across 15 health and care professions. This represents 18% of the HCPC Register and a three-fold increase in responses as compared with the 2019/20 survey.

[Statistics on occupational therapists - February 2019](#), Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC)

HEE National Data Programme

HEE staff can look at the [National Data Warehouse \(NDL\)](#) SharePoint site to find out more about datasets and Tableau products.

Published Peer Reviewed Research

Leadership, coaching and education

[Evaluating Impact of an Online Leadership Course for Newly Graduated Occupational Therapists](#), 2022

Participants reported that participating in the MOOC provided education on how to further develop leadership skills. Leadership skill development takes time to develop and further evaluation is required to determine if these skills continue to develop when put into practice.

[The Development of Leaders: Suggested Modules for Education](#), 2022

The development of leaders is critical for the education of all professionals and, particularly, those in the field of occupational therapy.

[Learning Health Systems Can Promote and Sustain High-Value Occupational Therapy](#), 2022

This article is the first to outline concrete action steps needed to transform occupational therapy practice contexts into Learning Health Systems. Such a transformation would represent a system-level change capable of fostering the delivery of high-value occupational therapy services to clients in a variety of practice settings.

[Perceptions of leadership styles in occupational therapy practice](#), 2020

A significant relationship was found between transformative leadership and outcomes, and a strong relationship between contingent reward and outcomes.

[A Narrative Phenomenological Approach to Transformative Learning: Lessons From Occupational Therapy Reasoning in Educational Practice](#), 2020

An argument is presented that draws on research in occupational therapy professional reasoning and that makes visible the dimensions of transformation that are inherently experiential and meaning oriented. Three key concepts for a transformative pedagogy are defined and illustrated: scenes, emplotment, and embodied metaphors.

[Examining the Relationship between Leadership Style and Student Outcomes in Occupational and Physical Therapy Academic Programs](#), 2020

The results of this study suggested that occupational and physical therapy chairpersons who demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors may impact departmental factors (climate, pedagogy environment and student engagement), which may impact student outcomes in their programs.

[Capitalising on the transformational opportunities of early clinical academic career training for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals](#), 2020

The findings suggest that individuals, funders, and organisations may need to relinquish the notion that training is purely or largely a transactional exchange in order to establish collaborative initiatives.

[Scoping review of mentoring research in the occupational therapy literature, 2002–2018](#), 2019 *Abstract only**

Methodological gaps in this research emphasise the need for occupational therapy practitioners and researchers to continue researching mentoring experiences by integrating theoretical frameworks, uniform definitions, rigorous design and standardised measures to evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring.

[Informal Leadership in the Clinical Setting: Occupational Therapist Perspectives](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

This novel qualitative research considered participation in the role of informal leader for 10 occupational therapists in Ontario, Canada. A qualitative analysis supports understanding the role and its unique clinical contribution. Recommendations for curriculum and professional support are provided.

[Enhancing leadership and relationships by implementing a peer mentoring program](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

Evidence found in this study demonstrates that peer-mentoring programs can promote leadership development and establishment of networks in an occupational therapy emerging professional community, at a low cost.

[Why is leadership such a hot topic for occupational therapists right now?](#) 2018

We should collectively start owning our expertise, put ourselves forward more and all take responsibility for nurturing the talent we see in our occupational therapy support staff, students, and recently qualified occupational therapists.

[Building clinical academic leadership capacity: sustainability through partnership](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

Key to the success of our partnership model is the strength of the strategic relationship developed at all levels across and within the clinical organisations involved, from board to ward. We are supporting nurses, midwives and allied health professionals to climb, in parallel, both clinical and academic career ladders.

Community, primary, secondary and tertiary care

[School-based allied health interventions for children and young people affected by neurodisability: a systematic evidence map, 2022 Abstract only*](#)

Our interactive evidence map can be used to help stakeholders prioritise the interventions most in need of further evaluation and implementation research, including tiered models of universal, targeted, and intensive allied health support.

[Mind the gaps: therapists' experiences of managing symptomatic hypermobility in Scotland, 2021](#)

We found that therapists in Scotland do have expertise in the management of HSD/hEDS patients; however, this expertise tends to be concentrated in secondary care, which makes it difficult for patients who are managed in primary care to access.

[Community Occupational Therapy for people with dementia and family carers \(COTiD-UK\) versus treatment as usual \(Valuing Active Life in Dementia \[VALID\]\) study: A single-blind, randomised controlled trial, 2021 Abstract only*](#)

Providing community occupational therapy as delivered in this study did not improve ADL performance, cognition, quality of life, or mood in people with dementia nor sense of competence or mood in family carers. Future research should consider measuring person-centred outcomes that are more meaningful and closely aligned to participants' priorities, such as goal achievement or the quantity and quality of activity engagement and participation.

[Role Emer Role Emerging Placements: Skills De ging Placements: Skills Development, P elopment, Postgraduate Employment, and Career Pathways, 2019](#)

Study results highlight the need to further understand the experiences of graduates in their REPs and the factors in REPs

that may influence the career trajectory of occupational therapists.

[Evaluating a specialist education programme for nurses and allied health professionals working in older people care: A qualitative analysis of motivations and impact, 2021 Abstract only*](#)

Understanding the motivations to undertake a specialist gerontological programme and the impacts on practitioners and older people care and services will help inform the continuing professional development agenda for nurses and allied health professionals working in this field of practice. Policy makers, commissioners, managers, and educators can use the findings to inform continuing professional development priorities and provision for the gerontological workforce.

[Occupational Therapy in Primary Care: Positioned and Prepared to Be a Vital Part of the Team, 2019](#)

Occupational therapy practitioners are educationally prepared and successfully poised through policy to engage in evidence-based practice in the primary care environment.

[Community-based occupational therapy in Norway: Content, dilemmas, and priorities, 2019 Abstract only*](#)

The therapists struggled between 'traditional' occupational therapy tasks and new ways of delivering occupational therapy services. The study reveals similarities and differences between rural and urban occupational therapy practice. The ideal types can help community-based therapists to reflect on their own practice and empower them to be more in keeping with the OT's objectives and preferences.

[Placement replacement: A conceptual framework for designing simulated clinical placement in occupational therapy, 2018](#)

The purpose of this statement is to describe the role of the occupational therapist in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and provide guidance in the areas of occupational therapy evaluation and intervention.

[Moving beyond the individual: Occupational therapists' multi-layered work with communities](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

The conceptualization that emerged from this study can assist occupational therapists in reflecting on current practice and furthering an appreciation of how their work with individuals can include a community focus, responding to calls within the profession to look beyond the individual.

Role progression and development

[Enablers and barriers to progressing a clinical academic career in nursing, midwifery and allied health professions: A cross-sectional survey](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Nearly three quarters pursuing a clinical academic career indicated 'clearer career paths' and 'greater integration across clinical and academic departments' were desirable. Most common barriers related to research roles, availability of positions and funding.

[The Advanced Clinical Practitioner \(ACP\) in UK healthcare: Dichotomies in a new 'multi-professional' profession](#), 2022

It is possible that ACP is an early sign of a different future for professions, where the classical 'protective' model of professionalism is increasingly not supported by the state, but this does not mean that professions will disappear.

[Relationship between labour force satisfaction, wages and retention within the UK National Health Service: a systematic review of the literature](#), 2022

Pay was found to influence satisfaction, which in turn affected retention. An increase in wages alone is unlikely to be sufficient to ameliorate the concerns of NHS workers.

[An Appreciative Inquiry Approach to Understanding What Attracts and Retains Early-Career Therapists to Work in Community Organizations](#), 2022

This study highlighted that community organizations could enhance their attraction and retention of early-career therapists through a focus on opportunities for early-career therapists' formal and informal learning and professional development opportunities. Having a clear supervision framework and continuing development for supervisors is another key attraction for early-career therapists. Finally, time and opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with colleagues and clients enhances job satisfaction and wellbeing of early-career therapists.

[The Clinical Challenges Experienced by New Graduate Occupational Therapists: A Matrix Review](#), 2021 *Abstract only**

New graduates often do not feel fully prepared for all aspects of occupational therapy practice. As they may not have access to substantial workplace support, exploring personal resources and professional support may assist this challenging transition.

[Understanding professional identity in occupational therapy: A scoping review](#), 2021 *Abstract only**

Four themes emerged: developing a shared ontology, embracing the culture, enacting occupational therapy, and believing in occupational therapy. Factors which influenced development and maintenance of professional identity included occupation-centred practice, ontological reflexivity, linking theory to practice and professional socialization.

[Royal College of Occupational Therapy Career Development Framework](#), 2021

The Career Development Framework - guiding principles for occupational therapy supports the professional development of the whole occupational therapy workforce to help meet the needs of people who access services, their families and their carers.

[Developing a consolidated research framework for clinical allied health professionals practising in the UK](#), 2020

The consolidated framework was entitled 'Shaping Better Practice Through Research: A Practitioner Framework' by stakeholders, thus emphasising its ambition to embed research activity into practice. It instigates a new perspective within AHP research by offering practitioners and managers a tool that can be applied across public, private, and voluntary settings for AHPs in all disciplines.

Workforce perspectives and mental health

[A Comparative Study of the Education, Background, Job Satisfaction, and Well-Being of Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Between the two professions, no differences existed for job satisfaction, career satisfaction, consideration of pursuing other professions, compromised physical, mental, and nonwork relationships, hours worked per week, direct admission, undergraduate or graduate internship hours, undergraduate research studies, or undergraduate GPA. Differences between career and sex were not significant.

[Early career programs for mental health occupational therapists: A survey of current practice](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Early career mental health occupational therapist development should be responsive to their local service environments. A

better understanding of the outcomes of these programs for early career occupational therapists, from both an individual and service perspective, could also provide a firmer rationale and foundation for sustained resourcing of this valuable approach to workforce development.

[Exploring Well-Being: Resilience, Stress, and Self-Care in Occupational Therapy Practitioners and Students](#), 2022

*Abstract only**

Practitioners (n = 235) and students (n = 200) reported well-being "less than half of the time" on the WHO-5, "moderate" stress on the PSS, and "normal" resilience on the BRS. The BRS, PSS, and MSCS explained a significant proportion of variance on the WHO-5 for practitioners and students. Most participants used at least one self-care strategy and desired additional organizational services.

[Self-Care: An Occupational Therapy Student Perspective](#), 2022

Total time spent in self-care practices ranged from 9-55 hours, and duration of self-care was not found to correlate with perceived stress or demographic variables. Results demonstrate that the type of self-care activities in which students engage may be more beneficial than duration of self-care alone. Students may benefit from further skill development in self-care to improve their current and future well-being.

[Joining the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic: views of Allied Health Profession students](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Although the transition from student to practitioner continues to be a stressful period, only a minority of participants reported COVID-19 as an explicit stressor.

[Wellbeing and coping of UK nurses, midwives and allied health professionals during COVID-19-a cross-sectional study](#), 2022

*Abstract only**

Health services are now trying to respond to the needs of patients with COVID-19 variants while rebuilding services and tackling the backlog of normal care provision. This workforce would benefit from additional support/services to prevent further deterioration in mental health and wellbeing and optimise workforce retention.

[Relationships between job satisfaction, burnout, professional identity and meaningfulness of work activities for occupational therapists working in mental health](#), 2019

Efforts to increase the meaningfulness of work activities for occupational therapists in mental health may enhance work-related wellbeing. Supporting staff to engage in work duties they find valuable through individualised work allocations across teams may be an innovative approach to improve staff satisfaction and wellbeing.

[Experiences of Six Male Occupational Therapy Practitioners at Varying Career Stages: A Phenomenological Study](#), 2019

Emergent themes included: (a) personal fit, (b) the male advantage, (c) rolling with the punches, (d) the constraint of masculinity in society, and (e) the effect of unique experience.

Diversity and inclusion

[“Raising the curtain on the equality theatre”: a study of recruitment to first healthcare job post-qualification in the UK National Health Service](#), 2022

The Healthcare Workforce Equity + Diversity Lens we have developed can help to ‘raise the curtain on the equality theatre’ and inform more inclusive approaches to recruitment such as

contextualised recruitment or effective allyship between employers and universities.

[Making a difference: Belonging, diversity and inclusion in occupational therapy](#), 2021

The purpose of this editorial is twofold: First, to share conversations with occupational therapists (OTs) in the United Kingdom, around racism, support for ethnic minorities and career progression; Second, to stimulate debate and dialogue with the wider occupational therapy profession alongside multi-professional groups.

[When the river runs dry: Leadership, decolonisation and healing in occupational therapy](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Right now, the occupational therapy profession needs to make conscious decisions about its collective leadership. This involves critically reflecting on the leadership it has built with Indigenous people and/or will build with Indigenous people.

Competency Frameworks

[Standards of proficiency: Occupational therapists \(HCPC\)](#)

In August 2022, we updated our standards of proficiency for the first time since 2015. The changes, which will come into effect on 1 September 2023, have been made following an extensive period of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

[Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics](#)

These Professional standards for occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics are produced by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) in consultation and collaboration with its members.

[Development of a digital competency framework for UK Allied Health Professionals](#), 2020

This framework has been developed to support the enhancement of digital competence (knowledge and skills associated with digital technology in practice) for all allied health professions from band 3 to band 9. It is intended to be a developmental and supportive tool that can enable all staff to meet their digital potential.

***Help accessing articles or papers**

Where a report/ journal article or resource is freely available the link has been provided. If an NHS OpenAthens account is required this has been indicated. It has also been highlighted if only the abstract is available. If you do not have an OpenAthens account you can self-register here.

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