

Royal College of  
Occupational Therapists  
Annual  
**REVIEW**  
**2019**

Royal College of  
Occupational  
Therapists





## message from the **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

This has been an exciting year for the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) and I would like to thank you, our members, for all the fantastic work you do, it's only through your efforts that we are able to showcase the value and benefits of the profession.

With around 33,800 members, our highest level of membership to date, our voice as a profession has never been stronger.

Over the last year we have continued to raise the profile of occupational therapy to wider audiences, governments and key stakeholders. Here is a snapshot of some of the innovative work and projects that RCOT has undertaken in 2019 to support your practice and career development, and to promote and secure the future of the profession.

This year has seen our political and stakeholder engagement increase substantially; we received over 100 requests for expert advice and input from politicians and other professional bodies across all four nations.

Governments are engaging with us, listening to our messages and spending time meeting with us. In short, RCOT is definitely on the map, and this level of engagement is testament to the hard work and dedication of both our members and staff.

Throughout the year, the Improving Lives, Saving Money campaign continued to capture the attention of senior politicians and healthcare leaders, with the publication of four more reports.

As this campaign came to an end, Occupational Therapy Week marked the launch of our Small Change, Big Impact campaign, which champions the small changes occupational therapists make that have a big impact on people's lives.

We asked members to share their examples on our interactive story wall and to date over 600 members have submitted their stories, which is a fantastic start. Members tell us that sharing their success stories really helps them to grow in confidence and feel part of their thriving professional community.

RCOT is a four nation organisation and our work continues to reflect that. In Scotland, we met with many Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), and despite the current political upheaval in Northern Ireland, we have been equally active there, promoting the Improving Lives, Saving Money campaign at Stormont.

In Wales, we promoted the value of the profession by continuing to develop links with Assembly Members, the Welsh Government and other important stakeholders. RCOT was invited to give evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee on the Autism Bill and the Suicide Bill.

While we have been engaging politicians and stakeholders, we have also been active in making sure that the education standards we set ensure that budding occupational therapists are trained to the highest standards.

In September, we published our new *Learning and Development Standards for Pre-registration Education* and we will be supporting education providers' moving to the new standards by April 2020.

After completing our two-year review, in November we launched our *Research and Development Strategy 2019-2024* setting out our vision for the direction of occupational therapy research in the UK. The new strategy will help us to inform, guide and direct the development of the research in the occupational therapy profession in the UK, as well as how we promote the role of research within the profession.

Throughout our conversations, with members about the research, the resounding message we received was that there is a need for new research priorities for occupational therapy in the UK. Therefore, in January, we partnered with the James Lind Alliance to begin a project to identify the top 10 research priorities for occupational therapy in the UK. Keep an eye out for the next opportunity to get involved in setting our research priorities.

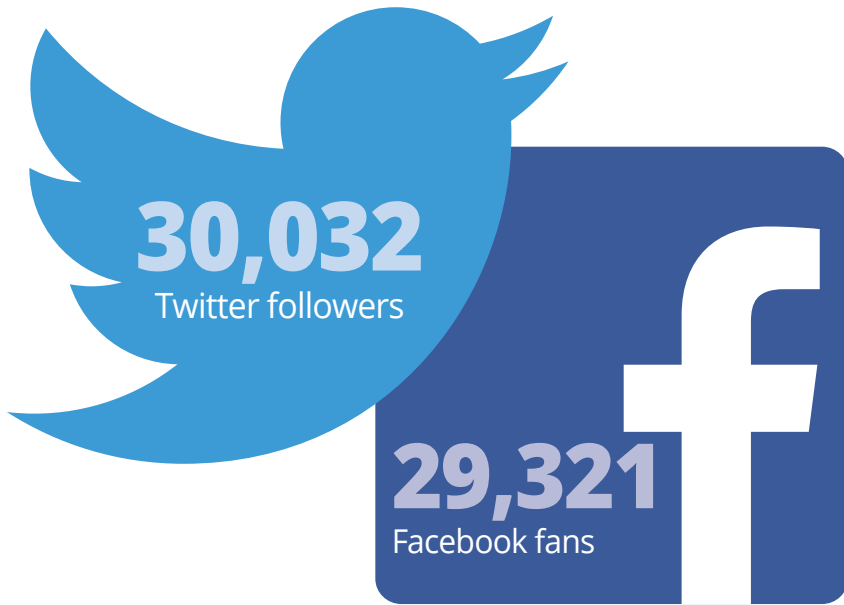
Throughout the year, we ran numerous successful events, roadshows and networking days to bring members together to share CPD and discuss the future of the profession.

Over the last 12 months, Specialist Sections held over 100 well attended events across the UK. Since June 2019, 630 occupational therapists have attended RCOT roadshows, organised by the regions throughout the UK. We also organised 12 networking days which have been attended by around 500 members, as well as numerous CPD and other learning events. We are so grateful to our volunteers who help run these sessions, together we ensure that the RCOT goes from strength to strength.

In summary, we undoubtedly saw a change in gear last year – our work is becoming more influential, more doors are opening, and the visibility of our beloved profession is growing steadily. We are successfully showcasing the value of occupational therapy far and wide and are positioned well for the inevitable changes that the 21st century will bring.

**Julia Scott, Chief Executive**  
December 2019

# Engaging members and networking



## INSTAGRAM

**Instagram** is our newest and fastest growing channel. Our community grew seven times bigger throughout 2019. It is a budding new channel, but with lots to offer, so if you haven't already, start following us!

Over the year, RCOT's social media channels grew by

16%



Twitter

13%



Facebook

626%



Instagram

38%



LinkedIn

22%



You Tube

## POSTS WITH GREATEST REACH



**Tweet** with the highest number of impressions launched Occupational Therapy Week and asked people to support the **#SmallChangeBigImpact** campaign.

57,616  
impressions



**Facebook** post with the highest reach promoted the powerful **Guardian** piece 'My occupational therapist gave me hope when I had none. That's why I became one'.

20,594  
people



## WEBSITE STATS

**397,703** (unique) visits

Most popular pages (after homepage and login pages)

Events page with **133,542** page views

*What is occupational therapy* with **62,613** views

**54%** of visits from desktop,  
**36%** from mobile, and **10%** on tablet

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY WEEK 2019

### #OTWeek2019 and #OTWeek19

were used **36,949** times during the week

**#SmallChangeBigImpact** was used **28,099** times

**#OTWeek2019** and **#SmallChangeBigImpact**  
**trended on Twitter** during the week



**610**  
**members**  
shared their  
Small Change,  
Big Impact  
stories

## RCOT PODCASTS



In 2019, we published three podcasts on topics of leadership, annual conference and research priorities. They were listened to over **3,200** times.

Listen to all our podcasts at [rcot.co.uk/podcasts](http://rcot.co.uk/podcasts)

# 2019 KEY HIGHLIGHTS

## January

We kicked off the year's lobbying activities with a public response to the long-awaited publication of the government's NHS Long-Term Plan.

Chief executive Julia Scott warmly received the plan as a 'sound roadmap for the future of health care in England', and commented that it was reassuring to see that the overall direction of the plan, and themes within it, reflect many of the key recommendations RCOT has been making in recent years.



Later that month, a working group comprising organisations from across a range of health and social care sectors including RCOT, launched a set of principles for continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning.

Prepared by the Interprofessional CPD and Lifelong Learning UK Working Group the principles were designed to guide individuals, employers and wider systems to create a culture of continuous improvement, workforce development and to improve outcomes for service users.

During the month, The Royal College and the Tower Hamlets Together team were delighted to welcome Caroline Dinenage MP to Mile End Hospital. The visit showcased how occupational therapy-led services are improving the health and wellbeing of people in the local area, with Ms Dinenage thanking staff for all their 'brilliant work'.

In Northern Ireland, RCOT met with DUP Policy Adviser Philip Weir, which led to both the Royal College and occupational therapy being named in the *Modernising Health and Care* document, published by the DUP in the spring.

## February

At the start of the month, RCOT published a comprehensive overview on the profession's role in social prescribing. It highlights all the work the professional body has been undertaking on the topic of social prescribing and the unique contribution occupational therapy can make; a thread woven throughout much of our work over the past few years.

As part of the ongoing Improving Lives, Saving Money campaign, a new RCOT report, *Making personalised care a reality: the value of occupational therapy*, identified three key factors to enable personalised care: focusing on a person's strengths and balancing choice and risk; enabling people to take part in daily activities that are important to them; and ensuring people stay connected to family, friends and communities.



## March

March saw the launch of the RCOT Priority Settings Partnership (PSP) with the James Lind Alliance (JLA). The project has the ultimate aim of producing a list of the 'Top 10' research priorities for occupational therapy in the UK, established through a collaborative project between occupational therapists, service users and carers.

Our Patron HRH The Princess Royal was the special guest at the opening of The OT Practice's new head office in Hampshire, where she met with staff and clients in a celebration of the work delivered by independent occupational therapists.

*Highlight*, our monthly e-newsletter, was relaunched and has gone from strength to strength over the year, delivering the latest news, resources and ideas for how members can play an active role for the profession.



## April



April saw us launch an ambitious local government manifesto in preparation of the Northern Ireland elections that took place in May. The manifesto called on local government candidates and party members to recognise the vital role occupational therapists play in delivering better health outcomes for the people of Northern Ireland.

April also saw RCOT and Unison, alongside other NHS unions and professional bodies, launch a new charter supporting volunteers working in the NHS in England. The

charter outlines the valuable contribution volunteers make and clarifies the relationship between volunteers and paid staff. It also defines what volunteering looks like in a healthcare context and provides a framework against which concerns about volunteer roles can be taken forward within organisations.

Together with the Allied Health Professions Federation, Royal College of Nursing and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, we helped launch a consensus statement that outlines how healthcare professionals should promote the benefits of good work and help support workers to look after their own health and wellbeing.

## May

As part of the Allied Health Professionals Federation, and alongside Public Health England, RCOT launched the AHP Strategic Framework, setting out the vision for the roles of allied health professionals in public health over the next five years and how they will achieve that vision.

Building on previous strategies, the framework provides a united approach to public health for the allied health professions across all four nations.

The key goals of the new strategy are: developing the AHP workforce; demonstrating impact; increasing the profile of the AHP public health role; strategic connections and leadership; and health and wellbeing of the workforce.

## June

On 17 and 18 June, over 1,100 people came together for the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual conference and exhibition at the ICC in Birmingham, which opened with inspiring plenary speeches from Suzanne Rastrick OBE, chief allied health professions officer at NHS England, and care minister Caroline Dinenege.

At the conference members had the opportunity to contribute to the review of our flagship event.



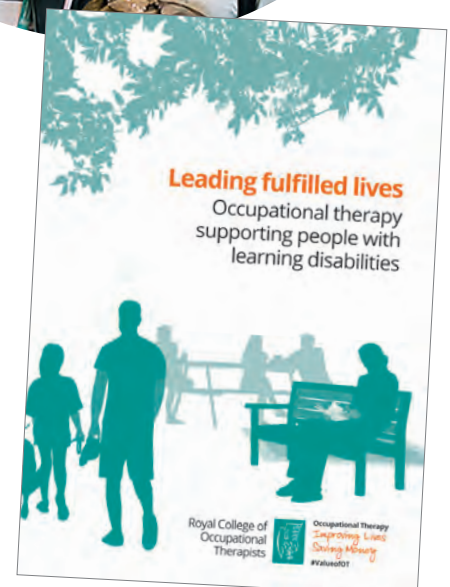
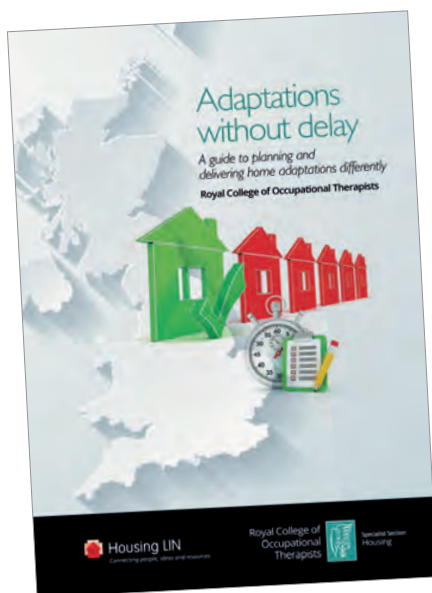
On 17 June Professor Diane Cox also started her term as the new chairman of council at RCOT's Annual General Meeting.

June saw the publication of three key reports. The first was *Adaptations without delay*, a new guide to help speed up the process of delivering adaptations to people's homes.

Hot on its heels came the second report, demonstrating how occupational therapy can support people with learning disabilities to have a good quality of life. Part of the Improving Lives, Saving Money campaign, *Leading fulfilled lives: Occupational therapy supporting people with learning disabilities*, makes recommendations for how occupational therapists can be

most effectively used to enhance the life opportunities for people with learning disabilities.

The third report, *Care homes and equipment*, sets out the principles for the assessment, maintenance and provision of equipment for residents of care homes.



In June, senior health leaders and politicians in England and Wales visited two occupational therapy led vocational clinics (OTVoc Clinics), where occupational therapists are a key part of a pioneering new approach designed to help people with mental health and musculoskeletal problems stay in employment.

The clinics are an occupational therapist-led trial set up after RCOT was awarded funding from the Challenge Fund (Joint Work and Health Unit). To date, RCOT has run OTVoc Clinics across eight GP surgeries, and they have seen 190 people.

## July



The Royal College was delighted to announce its partnership with the Skills for Care Accolades 2020 awards this month. The awards set out to celebrate adult social care providers and individual employers committed to delivering high-quality care.

In Northern Ireland, a new framework to support allied health professionals working in advanced practitioner roles launched, which RCOT contributed to the development of, to ensure that the roles are well understood by decision makers, and also to provide a roadmap for members to advance their careers, and as a guideline for education development.

## August

August saw the launch of the third report in the Improving Lives, Saving Money series, *Relieving the pressure on social care – the value of occupational therapy*, was launched mid-month.

It outlines how the work of occupational therapists can relieve the pressure on the social care system and highlights that despite making up just four per cent of the regulated workforce, occupational therapists address 35 to 45 per cent of local authority referrals.



## In 2019, RCOT undertook



**15** accreditation visits

**6** universities have been accredited to deliver the degree-level apprenticeship



# September

In September, we held the annual Celebration of Excellence in Occupational Therapy Awards at the Shard, in London. 2019 saw a record five Fellowships handed out, two Merit awards and three UKOTRF awards, and 10 members received an RCOT Annual Award for Learning, Development and Research.



The awards recognise individual members' lifelong contributions to the profession, and the dedicated members who are pioneering new ways to bring occupational therapy to the public. Research awards and grants also provide financial support to those at every level to advance their work.



The fourth report in the Improving Lives, Saving Money series, *Occupational therapy: unlocking the potential of children and young people*, was released. It outlines the role that occupational therapists play in improving the lives of children and young people with physical, learning and mental health needs.

At the end of the month we published the new learning and development standards for pre-registration education. The new standards will support the profession to meet the future demands of an ever-evolving health and care landscape and ensure that education providers are drawing upon the latest evidence, techniques and technology to educate learners taking the various pre-registration pathways to enter the profession.

In Wales, RCOT developed a Welsh manifesto as a key tool to inform discussion around the value of occupational therapy with politicians ahead of the 2021 elections.

# October

In Wales, RCOT met with the health and social care minister Vaughan Gething to discuss primary care and the long-term plan for health and social care, *A Healthier Wales*. RCOT Patron HRH The Princess Royal also saw first-hand the work done by members at Hywel Dda University Health Board in West Wales, when she met with occupational therapists and other staff at an event to share best practice.



In Scotland, RCOT called for 'a paradigm shift' to make the patient 'the expert in their own condition', as part of a Parliamentary inquiry into the future of primary care. RCOT gave evidence to the health and sport committee, which ran the enquiry to address the rising and changing needs of the ageing population, alongside other AHP body representatives.

In a long-called for move, occupational therapists were added to the occupation shortage list after continued RCOT lobbying, with RCOT director of professional operations, Karin Bishop commenting that the move was a 'really positive step for the hard-pressed health and care workforce in the UK'.

And following the completion of the Research and Development Review, the Royal College of Occupational Therapists Research Foundation opened for grant applications, replacing the old UK Occupational Therapy Research Foundation (UKORF).

## November

As part of Occupational Therapy Week 2019, we launched a new campaign, Small Change, Big Impact which celebrates how the small changes occupational therapists make can have a big impact on the people they support.

Fantastic engagement from our members across the UK helped this year's celebrations to be a huge smash: over 600 Small Change, Big Impact stories were shared on the website story wall and viewed by over 15,000 people; and Twitter went wild with 35,570 uses of #OTWeek2019 – a substantial increase on last year. We provided resources to help thousands of members support the events that took place across the four regions to raise the profile of the profession.

In Scotland, as part of a series of events, RCOT chief executive Julia Scott spent most of Occupational Therapy Week travelling the country meeting occupational therapists working in a variety of sectors, from prisons to care homes.

During the week Ruth Maguire MSP met occupational therapists at the Douglas Grant Rehabilitation Centre, and Julia Scott, Alison Keir, RCOT policy officer for Scotland, met with David Cullum, the Scottish Government's Health and Sports Committee Clerk.

In Northern Ireland, several members of the Northern Ireland Assembly attended an evening at the Parliament Buildings, sponsored by Paula Bradshaw Alliance MLA, showcasing the wide-ranging work occupational therapist do across different sectors.

On 12 November, we launched our *Research and Development Strategy 2019-2024*, setting out our vision for the direction of occupational therapy research in the UK. That vision for research is that, within the next decade, a UK-wide culture that embraces engaging in and with research as every occupational therapist's business will become embedded within the profession.

# OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY WEEK 2019

MEMBERS HELD THOUSANDS OF  
EVENTS, SUPPORTED BY OVER  
**3,000** PROMOTION PACKS

## December

By the end of the year, our overall membership stands at almost 33,800 individual members, and our 10 specialist sections had increased their total number of members by nine per cent to 4,185, with the largest being the Specialist Section – Children, Young People and Families, which hit the 1,000 members mark at their 2019 conference.

Total number of  
RCOT members  
**33,800**





## message from the **CHAIR**

Six months into my role as chairman of council has revealed much about the extent of work that goes on, not only the outward facing activity, but also behind the scenes at our professional body to promote and highlight the amazing work of occupational therapists.

It's been quite different from my usual work as the director of research at the University of Cumbria and a fascinating learning curve.

First, the realisation that, as a profession, we are an incredibly strong tour de force. As part of a 33,800-strong community, RCOT members can have a powerful voice in shaping the future of our occupational therapy profession.

The evidence for my conclusion? #OTWeek19 saw the most social media activity ever for the Royal College and the new Small Change, Big Impact campaign generated hundreds of inspiring stories of how occupational therapy and occupational therapists change people's lives for the better.

Members' stories uploaded onto the website wall gave, in one hit, the breadth and variety and impact of our profession – showing how truly inspirational our members are.

The world is changing fast and it is great to see occupational therapists actively on board and rising up to the challenges within our profession.

Last year saw the strengthening of the influence and impact of occupational therapy through the Improving Lives, Saving Money campaign, and the publication of four new reports.

Each report focused on a carefully chosen topic, addressing a national challenge and one that occupational therapists are skilled and able to address: unlocking the potential of children and young people, relieving the pressure on social care, supporting people with learning disabilities to lead fulfilled lives and making personalised care a reality.

And to make the most of our communications RCOT has used social media to play a key role in spreading the word. Many occupational therapists use the hashtag #ValueOfOT to highlight the inspiring work that they carry out.

Moving from good to great, what does our profession need to set us on this trajectory? Two recent publications are invaluable for both the future of the profession and each individual occupational therapist.

The first starts at the roots, revitalising training with the publication of the new learning and development curriculum framework. The second, our Research and Development Strategy, sets out our

vision to ensure that research becomes everyone's business, speaking to researchers, practitioners and managers alike.

But this is just the start. I believe that we need to publish more to raise awareness about the work we do. It is only those that are doing the practice, education and research, that can communicate our value with passion and expertise\*.

It is an honour to be chairman of council, and to help shape the work of your Royal College. I see my role as ensuring that we continue to challenge our thinking as a profession and that the Royal College continues to support its members to excel at what they do.

Meeting members at Royal College events across the UK and hearing first-hand about the established and innovative services and research that occupational therapists are involved in across health and social care, has been invaluable.

The world is changing, with further technology embedded in our lives. However, I was struck recently by a quote from Sue Adams, talking about what we need to consider for housing for life, which said that: '80 per cent of the homes we will be living in 2050, as we age, are already built. 22 per cent of new homes built are accessible, but only one per cent of these new homes are wheelchair accessible'.

Karin Bishop, RCOT director of professional operations, then posed the question: Anyone see an issue here? As our population ages, everyone will need an occupational therapist.

Occupational therapists need to be positioned at the forefront of health and care in social prescribing, community, public health, and statutory services. With your continued engagement, whether it is through social media, or promoting the profession through your daily work, I believe the Royal College and its members are set on the right path.

**Professor Diane Cox**, chairman of council

\* Cox DL (2017). The Dr Elizabeth Casson Memorial Lecture 2017: Life as an occupational being. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 80(9): 525-5322 Accessed on 21 November 2019, through the tweet of Karin Bishop, RCOT director of professional operations attending the #NCASC19.

Information accurate up to and including 31 December 2019

[www.rcot.co.uk](http://www.rcot.co.uk)

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists is a registered charity in England and Wales (No.275119) and in Scotland (No.SC039573).

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