

# Commissioning occupational therapy services for people who have had a stroke



# Occupational therapy reduces long term costs for stroke

Stroke is the single leading cause of disability in the United Kingdom. Evidence based rehabilitation services which include occupational therapy can maximise the recovery of stroke survivors<sup>1</sup>. A Cochrane systematic review (2007) demonstrated that people who receive occupational therapy interventions following a stroke are less likely to deteriorate and are more likely to be able to perform personal activities of daily living<sup>2</sup>. Occupational therapy services are essential for stroke patients to enable them to lead independent lives and self-manage their condition. Thus, commissioning occupational therapy services will result in reduced health and social care costs in the long term<sup>3</sup>.



## Occupational therapists help people to maximise their recovery after a stroke

Occupational therapists address the physical, cognitive and psychological challenges brought on by a stroke, and can help stroke survivors regain their ability to engage in daily activities through using evidence based methods. Occupational therapists offer expert stroke services in primary, secondary and social care. For example, occupational therapists can:

- Provide expert specialist assessment and intervention for people with visual, perceptual, physical and cognitive dysfunction
- Recommend specialist equipment and adaptations for the home to assist a person to complete functional tasks
- Evaluate the home environment for safety hazards to reduce falls
- Build a person's physical endurance and strength through using therapeutic activity
- Offer targeted therapy to facilitate a return to work
- Support carers by reducing the person's care needs

When people cannot do the activities they need or want to do as a result of having a stroke, their health and wellbeing will be affected. Occupational therapists are skilled in activity analysis and help people to overcome barriers to return to their optimal level of performance to enable people to get the most from life.

## Commissioning occupational therapy achieves positive outcomes for people

The Royal College of Physicians Guidelines for Stroke (2008) state that there is a clinical consensus that occupational therapy intervention is effective for people who have vision and memory difficulties, and for facilitating activities of daily living which can include returning to work and driving a vehicle<sup>4</sup>.

Systematic reviews have consistently demonstrated the positive effects of occupational therapy intervention, enabling stroke patients to improve their functional performance to continue with their chosen activities<sup>5</sup>.

## The benefits of occupational therapy intervention

Occupational therapists can reduce the length of stay in hospital for people with stroke through their early supported discharge rehabilitation programmes. The early supported discharge services for stroke can result in considerable savings being achieved. In addition, focused occupational therapy such as outdoor mobility rehabilitation can reduce long term disability and reduce the burden on carers, whilst improving the quality of life<sup>5,6</sup> for people who have had a stroke.

## Occupational therapy provides effective rehabilitation for people who have had a stroke

Recovery from stroke is a key indicator in the NHS outcomes framework (2012/13)<sup>7</sup>, and is highlighted in the NHS operating framework (2012/13)<sup>8</sup>. Occupational therapists play a vital role in achieving these quality standards by providing effective rehabilitation for people following a stroke.

## Occupational therapists can reduce the demand on primary care

Occupational therapy intervention can support primary care services by **reducing**:

- The length of stay in hospitals
- The number of GP visits
- Unplanned hospital admissions





## Occupational therapists provide evidence-based services including:

- Six month reviews for people with stroke, to include their carers
- Providing specialist acute intervention and treatment for stroke patients
- Providing expert stroke rehabilitation in hospital and in community settings
- Facilitating long-term self management for stroke patients
- Specialised wheelchair seating assessments and provision
- Carrying out home assessments and recommending modifications
- Facilitating a return-to-work where appropriate
- Undertaking driving assessments
- Providing care home rehabilitation to reduce deterioration

## Occupational therapy services provide value for money for commissioners

Occupational therapy services help patients to maximise their recovery after stroke and reduce the burden for their carers. This leads to a reduction in the number of GP visits, a reduction in unplanned hospital admissions, and a reduced length of stay in hospital settings, resulting in significant savings being made.

### References

1. Department of Health (2007) *National stroke strategy*. London: DH.
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3. Allied Health Professions Federation (2005). The role of allied health professionals in the treatment and management of people with long term conditions. London: Allied Health Professions Federation.
4. Intercollegiate Stroke Working Party (2008) *National clinical guideline for stroke*. 3rd edition. London: Royal College of Physicians Clinical Effectiveness and Evaluation Unit.
5. Steultjens EM, Dekker J, Bouter LM, van de Nes JC, Cup EH, van den Ende CH (2003) Occupational therapy for stroke patients: a systematic review. *Stroke*, 34(3), 676–687.
6. Logan PA, Walker MF, Gladman JRF (2006) Description of an occupational therapy intervention aimed at improving outdoor mobility. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 69(1), 2–6.
7. Department of Health (2011) NHS outcomes framework 2012/13. London: DH.
8. Department of Health (2011) NHS operating framework 2012/13. London: DH.

## What is an occupational therapist?

Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals who help people of all ages – babies, children, adults and older people to carry out activities they need or want to do, but are prevented from doing so as a result of physical or mental illness, disability or the effects of ageing. Activities can include the necessities of daily living such as getting dressed, preparing a meal, going to work, or simply continuing with a favourite hobby. Occupational therapists will work with individuals to help them to find alternative ways to carry on with activities to enable them to live life their way.

## An occupational therapist can:

- Help people with work-related stress to re-prioritise tasks to improve their work–life balance
- Assess and recommend equipment such as mobility aids, wheelchairs and artificial limbs and, if needed, advise on special devices to help around the home, school or in the workplace
- Support people to remain in or return to work
- Support children with co-ordination disorders to develop new skills, to help them to remain in school and reach their full potential

## How to contact an occupational therapist

Ask your GP, nurse, or other health or social care professional to refer you to an occupational therapist.

## To find an occupational therapist in your area

visit: **[www.COT.org.uk](http://www.COT.org.uk)**

Telephone: **0800 389 4873**

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