

## Occupational therapy

### Helping people to live life their way

Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals who help people of all ages – babies, children, adults and older people – to carry out activities (or occupations) they need, want, or are expected to do, but are prevented from doing so as a result of physical or mental illness, disability, or as a result of changes in their lives as they get older.

Occupational therapists can suggest alternative ways of doing activities, providing advice on learning new approaches, helping people to get the most from life. For example, an occupational therapist can help people with the following activities:

<b>Self-care</b>	Getting dressed or preparing and eating meals.
<b>Productivity</b>	Going to or remaining in work, volunteering, studying, or caring for others.
<b>Leisure</b>	Playing sports, shopping, or doing hobbies.

### How to find an occupational therapist

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

You can self-refer to a social services occupational therapist by contacting your local council\* to arrange an appointment.

Some places of work have an HR department or occupational health department. You can ask either of these to refer you to an occupational therapist.

To arrange a private consultation with an independent occupational therapist, who will charge you a fee, please visit [www.cotss-ip.org.uk](http://www.cotss-ip.org.uk) to find a local independent occupational therapist.

\*Social Care and Health Department of your local council in Scotland  
 \*Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland

*For leisure, learning, living or working*  
**Occupational therapy**  
*Helping people to live life their way*



**College of Occupational Therapists Limited**  
 The UK professional body for occupational therapy staff

106–114 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LB  
 Tel: 020 7357 6480

**COT.org.uk**

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



Occupational therapy and **EMPLOYMENT**

*For leisure, learning, living or working*  
**Occupational therapy**  
*Helping people to live life their way*

College of  
Occupational  
Therapists



CON 0047

**Occupational therapy**  
*Helping people to live life their way*



## Occupational therapy and employment

### Work is good for you

It helps your physical and mental wellbeing by giving you a sense of worth. However, if you are off work, it can be much harder to return, especially if you are absent for a long period of time. Extended periods away from work are often linked to long term illness, leading to reduced income, which can cause social isolation as well as deprivation.

### Occupational therapists can help you work

Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals who can help you remain in or return to work following an absence due to physical or mental ill health or injury.

An occupational therapist can assess your ability to carry out your job tasks, can suggest strategies to help your performance of work tasks, and can provide therapy to help you manage your ill health.

The occupational therapist can assess the tasks you have to do in your work role to identify the demands of the job and your work environment. The occupational

therapists can also recommend adaptations or reasonable adjustments to make it easier for you to carry out the work tasks when your capacity is limited by physical or mental ill health.

### Below are some examples of the ways an occupational therapist can help you to work:

#### Preparing for work

Introducing a daily routine can make your working day far easier to manage

An occupational therapist can review your daily routine and support you to introduce a routine that prepares you for returning to work. They may suggest doing voluntary work so you can create a manageable schedule before starting a job to develop specific work-related skills.

#### Remaining at work

Determining what work you can do means that you can continue your employment

An occupational therapist will work with you to assess the gaps between your job demands and your abilities and suggest strategies that you can use to improve your capacity to meet any demands. The occupational



therapist's clinical knowledge can also be used to anticipate the progression of your condition if it is progressive; and the occupational therapist will also provide advice on how these likely changes will affect your current and future work capabilities.

#### Returning to work

Changing your work conditions could help you return to work sooner

The occupational therapist may negotiate with your employer what reasonable steps they may need to put in place to help you to return to work. For example, suggesting different working hours so you can travel outside of the rush hour. An occupational therapist may also advise on adaptations to your work environment or equipment you can use, so you can work safely and be as self-sufficient as possible.



**Occupational therapy**  
*Helping people to live life their way*

**COT.org.uk**