

Specialist Section - Independent Practice Member handbook



Contents

Welcome from the Chair	3
Specialist Section-Independent Practice	4
National Executive Committee	5
Regional network	7
Clinical forum	8
Research, innovation and development	8
Member activities and resources	9

Welcome from the Chair

Dear Member

We would like to extend a warm welcome from your RCOT Specialist Section - Independent Practice. We hope that you find this handbook both interesting and useful and that it goes some way in answering the questions you may have and to ensuring that you get the most out your membership.

Our National Executive Committee (NEC) is made up of volunteer members, all of whom are themselves independent occupational therapists. We value input from all our members, and so would like to invite and encourage you to be as active as possible. Your support, contribution and feedback are vital so we can thrive as a Specialist Section and develop networks and activities that not only help you but also help further our profession.

There are lots of opportunities to get involved in, from volunteering to be a NEC member or Regional Contact, to working as part of a small sub-group to progress a particular task (e.g. conference organisation), or contributing to our newsletters. We invite you to attend our Annual Review Meeting, and to contribute your feedback and ideas as to how we can best support you.

Welcome to the world of independent practice and our Specialist Section.

Kind regards

Mary McCarron

Chair

Specialist Section – Independent Practice

Specialist Section - Independent Practice

Our Specialist Section is one of 10 within the RCOT. It is a membership-led organisation for independent occupational therapists: new, developing and established; from sole traders and contractors to business owners; and working either part or full-time.

Our aim is to support independent occupational therapists in the start-up, running and development of their businesses; to provide relevant activities (communication, networking and learning) and resources; to form alliances and facilitate research, innovation and development; and to promote and raise the profile of members and the profession.

History

In 1989, the Occupational Therapists in Private Practice (OTiPP) was founded. At that time a National Executive Committee (NEC) was elected, a constitution drafted, and regional groups set up; with the core aim being to provide mutual support and relevant information to a growing number of occupational therapists working outside the statutory sector.

In 2002, the membership voted to change the name to Occupational Therapists in Independent Practice (OTIP), based on this being more appropriate in terms of describing and representing the diversity of practice that members were engaged in. At the same time, regional groups were re-formed to promote local networking and make best use of electronic forms of communication; and the OTIP website was created to provide information to both members and the public, and to make possible the bulk emailing of information to members. As part of the website, OTIP created a new online directory - Find an Occupational Therapist - to replace earlier printed versions and to provide members with a new and exciting marketing opportunity. In addition, OTIP established and managed a helpline to respond to enquiries from both members requiring support, and the public requiring assistance with finding an appropriate independent occupational therapist.

In 2006, in line with all other Specialist Sections, OTIP was re-branded as part of an exercise to ensure consistency and good governance. As a result, OTIP became the College of Occupational Therapists Specialist Section - Independent Practice (COTSS-IP) and, at the same time, joined with the Medico-Legal Forum (MLF) - the Forum that represents the interests of occupational therapists practising in the medico-legal field and with responsibility for organising the MLF Annual Conference (delivered in conjunction with the COTSS-IP Annual Conference).

In 2017, with the College having been granted Royal status, our name changed again - to the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) Specialist Section - Independent Practice (SS-IP). Despite the name changes through the years, our core aim today remains true to that of the original founders: to support and promote independent occupational therapists - new, developing and established - through the provision of a range of relevant activities (communication, networking and learning) and resources.

National Executive Committee

The NEC is made up of volunteers - who are themselves members and independent occupational therapists with their own businesses. The NEC has responsibility for the core business of the Specialist Section - both in terms of day-to day execution and strategic planning for the future. This is outlined in and driven by the annual business plan and core strategic aims contained therein; overseen via quarterly meetings (October/January/April/July); and reported on to the membership via the Annual Review Meeting (ARM) (November). The core strategic aims are as follows:

- **Build up** (to **sustain** the organisation)
We will build up our Specialist Section - through effective business management and financial budgeting, and using member feedback and other appropriate data to drive priorities and targets - to be dynamic, high performing and values-led in the achievement of our aims.
- **Lift up** (to **support** members)
We will lift up our members - through the provision of networking and learning opportunities, and resources - to support them to be the best they can be in the start-up, running and development of their businesses.
- **Open up** (to **collaborate** with relevant parties)
We will open up new opportunities and networks - through RID opportunities, the forming of alliances and the adding of value to member benefits - to enable the sharing of up-to-date resources and business solutions with our members.
- **Rise up** (to **promote** members and the profession)
We will rise up to be bold and progressive champions and advocates - through raising our profile and voice - to promote best practice and increase awareness and appreciation of the power of independent occupational therapy as a solution to client needs.

The NEC is structured according to three strategic posts that are underpinned by a number of lead posts - in line with our range of member activities and resources, and to provide a strong steer and bring together individuals/working groups to assist when necessary. In addition, a number of contractors are funded to provide support.

- **Strategic**
Chair
Vice-Chair
Finance Lead
- **Leads**
Regional Network Lead, MLF Lead, Communications Lead
Events & CPD Lead, SUAS Lead, Webinars Lead
RID Lead, EDB Lead, Website Lead,
Committee Member (<2 posts, without portfolio)
- **Support**
Coordinator
SUAS trainers
Project workers (as required)
Netnak Ltd (website/IT support)

Role / name	Role description and email
Chair Mary McCarron	Lead the Specialist Section and NEC, ensuring the execution of core business and responsibilities in line with RCOT governance. Work collaboratively with the NEC in the achievement of the strategic aims. chair@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Vice Chair vacant	Support the Chair and NEC, ensuring the execution of core business and responsibilities in line with RCOT governance. Responsibility for the NEC in the absence of the Chair. Work collaboratively with the NEC in the achievement of the strategic aims. vice-chair@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Finance Lead Jenny Carey	Ensure the Specialist Section financial affairs are managed in compliance with the current RCOT Standing Financial Instructions and Financial Guidelines; contact for related enquiries. finance@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Regional Network Lead Bridget Churchill	Link between the regions and the NEC. Provide an overview of and support regional activities (communication, networking and learning). bridget.churchill@lifeforliving.org
Medico-Legal Forum Lead Justine Fawcett	Link between the Medico-Legal Forum (MLF) and the NEC. Provide an overview of and support member activities (communication, networking and learning) within the MLF. MLF@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Communications Lead Heather Bushell	Lead in the set up and use of social media platforms to improve member engagement and communication with regular postings to maintain an active social media profile. communications@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Events and CPD Lead Monica Iofciu	Lead, facilitate and support all Specialist Section events (n.b. annual conference) and CPD activities. eventsCPD@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Start Up and Succeed Lead Jennie Alexander	Lead, oversee and support the SUAS course. SUAS@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Webinars Lead Rikha Wilmot	Lead, organise and support Specialist Section webinars. webinars@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Research, Innovation and Development Lead Rachael Eckford	Lead, develop and support Research, Innovation and Development (RID) within the Specialist Section; contact for related enquiries. Assist members with the recruitment of research participants; lead in the organisation and delivery of the Innovation Awards (i.e. advertising, selection, monitoring and dissemination). RID@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Equality, Diversity and Belonging Lead Mapule Masemola	Lead, develop and support Specialist Section EDB policy and activities. EDB@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Website Lead vacant	Responsibility for the SSIP website and webpages on the RCOT website. website@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Coordinator (paid post) Sophie Lederer	Contact for member enquiries. Work closely with the Chair and undertake specific tasks as required. Support the management and effective working of the NEC in the execution of core business and strategic aims. coordinator@rcotss-ip.org.uk

Regional Network

Our regional network is led by the Regional Network Lead and comprises 11 regions across the UK - each with a regional contact role. Together, the role of the Regional Network Lead and regional contacts is essentially:

- To be the contact for regional members and facilitate communication with the NEC.
- To develop and deliver regional activities (communication, networking and learning).

Region / regional contact	Areas included within the region and email
Eastern vacant	St Albans, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Colchester, Hemel Hempstead, Ipswich, Luton, Norwich, Peterborough, Stevenage, Southend-on-Sea, Watford
London Meera Vitarana	Bromley, Croydon, Enfield, Harrow, Ilford, Kingston, Romford, Twickenham, Uxbridge, Central London, and outer London London@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Northern Ireland vacant	All of Northern Ireland
Northwest Danni Harrison	Blackburn, Bolton, Chester, Crewe, Blackpool, Isle of Man, Liverpool, Lancaster, Manchester, Oldham, Preston, Stockport, Warrington, Wigan NorthWest@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Northern & Yorkshire Kate Makin	Bradford, Carlisle, Durham, Darlington, Huddersfield, Harrogate, Hull, Halifax, Leeds, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sunderland, Cleveland, Wakefield, York NorthernYorkshire@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Scotland (East, West and North) vacant	Edinburgh, Falkirk, Kirkcaldy, Glad shields, Dumfries, Glasgow, Kilmarnock, Motherwell, Paisley, Aberdeen, Dundee, Outer Hebrides, Inverness, Kirkwall, Perth, Lerwick
Southwest Ros Curson	Bath, Bournemouth, Bristol, Dorchester, Exeter, Gloucester, Plymouth, Swindon, Salisbury, Taunton, Torquay, Truro SouthWest@rcotss-ip.org.uk
South East Bridget Churchill	Brighton, Canterbury, Dartford, Guildford, Rochester, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Oxford, Portsmouth, Reading, Redhill, Slough, Southampton, Tunbridge Wells SouthEast@rcotss-ip.org.uk
Trent vacant	Derby, Doncaster, Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Sheffield
Wales Dora Weston	Cardiff, Llandrindod Wells, Llandudno, Newport, Swansea, Shrewsbury Wales@rcotss-ip.org.uk
West Midlands Amy Gibbs	Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Hereford, Stoke-on-Trent, Telford, Worcester, Walsall, Wolverhampton WestMidlands@rcotss-ip.org.uk

Clinical forum

Specialist Section clinical forums bring together occupational therapists with a common specialist interest and provide networking and learning activities - with the sharing of business/practice expertise and resources. We have one clinical forum - the MLF - which as a member you are welcome to join (free).

Medico-Legal Forum

The MLF aims to support members interested/working in the medico-legal field (case managers, expert witnesses and treating therapists), and to promote best practice and the profession.

The MLF is led by our MLF Lead; and operates on the basis of quarterly online sessions (December/March/June/September) to provide networking and learning opportunities - with the sharing of business/practice expertise and resources. These sessions focus on a specific topic - with presentations (5/10 mins each) from the three different fields/perspectives (case manager, expert witness and treating therapist), followed by Q&As.

Research, innovation and development

Recruitment of research participants

We can assist members with their research and development projects. In line with GDPR regulations, we are not able to share member details, but we may be able to include a request for research participants in our newsletter and across other forums (e.g. social media).

If you are considering proceeding in this way, we advise against using this strategy as your primary means of recruiting research participants as it could leave your project vulnerable; and that you be mindful of the following potential limitations:

- Recruitment timescales may not fit with our newsletter copy deadlines.
- Response rates can't be accurately predicted as this is an opportunistic sampling method.
- Requests are discretionary and acceptance can't be guaranteed.

Innovation Award

We provide funding to support projects in the field of independent practice - such as an innovative or developmental project; or activity likely to have a positive impact on service users, the individual practitioner/business and the profession. This funding takes the form of two annual awards (£5k each) that are open to those who have been a member for a year, and run as follows:

- Call for applications end January
(announced in/on SSIP newsletter, website and social media platforms; and RCOT OTnews)
- Closing date for applications end April.
- Announcement of winners end July.
- Start of projects beginning October (finish end September).
- Dissemination via newsletter / webinar presentation / conference presentation.

Member activities and resources

As a member, you will benefit from a range of activities (communication, networking and learning) and resources to support you in the start-up, running and development of your business.

Specialist Section website and RCOT website

We currently operate from two websites, as follows:

- **SSIP website**
See our members area - with your member activities and resources.
See our TeamUp events calendar - with dates/details for all our scheduled activities.

How to login to the members area

[Coordinator](#) - please email to request access to be set up; and a free profile listing if wanted (please provide: full name, postcode, email, BAOT and HCPC numbers)

[SSIP website](#) - please go to
go to MEMBER LOGIN (top r/h corner)
input your email (as provided)
input your password (you can opt to change if forgotten)
click LOGIN

- **RCOT website**
Login to the My RCOT to manage your memberships (RCOT and Specialist Section).
See our dedicated SSIP webpages to access some member activities and resources.
[RCOT Membership Excellence Team](#) - please email for assistance and/or with any questions.

Newsletter

We circulate a newsletter during the third week of every second month. This will contain Specialist Section news, member features, upcoming events, resources/information, and RCOT news.

We encourage your involvement and value your contribution - please share your independent practice journey, write a book/course review, or a piece on an independent practice topic you are interested in. You can also share a query that the membership may be able to help with, and your feedback and any concerns.

[Coordinator](#) - please email with your contribution, request and/or feedback.

Social media

We have a range of social media platforms (incl. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp) to encourage and facilitate member engagement and communication.

[Communications Lead](#) - please email with any posts.

[National Facebook Group](#) (with access to our regional Facebook groups)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)

Webinars

We host a programme of monthly webinars (except August/September) on a range of business/practice topics.

[Webinar Lead](#) - please email with any speaker/topic suggestions.

[TeamUp](#) - please see our events calendar for dates/details.

[RCOT Events](#) - please register to attend.

Annual conference

We host an annual conference, with the aim of providing networking and learning opportunities; informing, inspiring and motivating members; and identifying future priorities. This event is open to members (at a reduced cost) and non-members. Conference details will be shared in our newsletter and on our SSIP website and webpages.

[Events & CPD Lead](#) - please email with any speaker/topic suggestions.

Communication, networking and learning

- **National communication**

You can join our national Facebook group - providing a platform for communication with fellow members across all regions (and access to the regional Facebook groups).

[National Facebook Group](#) - please join.

- **National networking and learning**

We deliver quarterly (October/January/April/July) online national sessions to provide networking and learning opportunities with fellow members across all regions - with the sharing of business/practice expertise and resources.

[TeamUp](#) - please see our events calendar for dates/details.

[RCOT Events](#) - please register to attend.

- **Regional communication**

You can join your regional WhatsApp group - providing a platform for communication with your fellow regional members - with the sharing of business/practice expertise and resources.

[Coordinator](#) - please email for your regional WhatsApp group link.

- **Regional networking and learning**

We deliver face-to-face regional events (3 p/region p/a) to provide networking and learning opportunities with fellow regional members - with the sharing of business/practice expertise and resources.

[TeamUp](#) - please see our events calendar for dates/details.

[RCOT Events](#) - please register to attend.

- **MLF networking and learning**

We deliver quarterly (December/March/June/September) online sessions to provide networking and learning opportunities for members interested/working in the medico-legal field (case managers, expert witnesses and treating therapists) - with the sharing of business/practice expertise and resources. These sessions focus on a specific topic - with presentations (5/10 mins each) from the three different fields/perspectives, followed by Q&As.

[MLF Lead](#) - please email with any speaker/topic suggestions.

[TeamUp](#) - please see our events calendar for dates/details.

[RCOT Events](#) - please register to attend.

Awards and recruitment of research participants

We offer two annual Innovation Awards (£5k each) - open to those who have been a member for a year. We can also assist members with their research and development projects with the inclusion of a request for research participants in our newsletter.

[RID Lead](#) - please email for more information and/or with any requests.

Find an Occupational Therapist directory listing

You can request a free profile listing in our online Find an Occupational Therapist directory (the only list of independent occupational therapists within RCOT) to advertise your occupational therapy

services to the public and other professionals; and/or your professional business services to other members. This can be listed under either your personal or business name.

[Coordinator](#) - please email to request a profile.

Start Up and Succeed (SUAS)

We host a one-day online SUAS training course (3 p/a) with an optional follow up session and WhatsApp group to facilitate ongoing networking and support - aimed at occupational therapists considering/new to independent practice. The course holds the RCOT Approved Learning Award; is delivered by trainers who are themselves independent practitioners; and is open to members (at a reduced cost) and non-members.

[Coordinator](#) - please email for more information and/or with any questions.

[TeamUp](#) - please see our events calendar for dates/details.

[RCOT Events](#) - please book to attend.

Opportunities to be part of your professional community

There are lots of ways to get involved with policy, practice, strategy, briefings, and the development of practice guidelines and leadership skills. We share these opportunities widely - within our newsletter, on social media and in dedicated communications.