

Getting the best out of the learning and development framework

Guidance for employers and managers of occupational therapists in social care



In association with

Royal College of
Occupational
Therapists



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The scope of practice for occupational therapists in social care across the UK is wide and varied, it differs from employer to employer and is governed by different legislation within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Central to the occupational therapy role is supporting people to do the things they want and need to do (RCOT 2019a) by focusing on their strengths, balancing choice and risk, facilitating their connections with their families, friends and communities and enabling them to keep healthy and well (RCOT 2019b). As such, the learning and development framework for occupational therapists has been written to provide profession specific support and guidance for newly qualified and registered occupational therapists, and those new or coming back to work in social care across the UK. The regulatory body for occupational therapists in the UK is the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

Occupational therapists can use this framework to provide evidence of their learning and development for induction, employment retention and appraisal processes. Manager's current timescales and requirements for evidence for midpoint reviews and final outcomes can also be included. Where you chose to provide integrated support and programmes for practitioners in their first year, the framework can be used to provide an occupational therapy specific input. It is important that this framework focuses on the needs of the occupational therapy profession rather than as an adjunct to provision for other professions.

The framework is based on four pillars of practice ([RCOT 2017](#)); Professional Practice, Facilitation of Learning, Leadership and Evidence, Research and Development, which are widely used by Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) working in a variety of sectors to guide their career, learning and development. The knowledge and skills gained across the four pillars of practice provide occupational therapists with evidence which is transferable across and between employers.

The pillars of practice	
Professional practice (P)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain occupation at the centre of practice ▪ Deliver safe, effective, person-centred and ethical practice ▪ Use professional judgement, reasoning and decision-making
Facilitation of learning (F)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teach, mentor, supervise and/or assess others ▪ Facilitate placement learning ▪ Create and evaluate learning environments, tools and materials
Leadership (L)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify, monitor and enhance own knowledge and skills ▪ Guide, direct and/or facilitate teamwork

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design, implement and manage professional and/or organisational change
Evidence, research and development (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Influence broader socio-economic and political agendas ▪ Create, use and/or translate evidence to inform practice ▪ Design, implement, evaluate and disseminate research

The four interacting pillars each divide into career levels 1-9 from school leavers (level 1) through newly qualified and registered (level 5) to the most advanced occupational therapists (level 9).

This framework concentrates on career levels 5 and 6. Whilst these are not educational or qualification levels, the range provides employers with a structure to develop occupational therapy job descriptions, role specifications and requirements, plan induction processes, probation periods and aid succession and workforce planning.

As an employer of HCPC regulated occupational therapists, you have a responsibility to ensure they are safe and up-to-date with current practices to meet the needs of people who access occupational therapy services. To do this you have a responsibility to ensure that professional standards set by the regulator and requirements for continuing professional development can be met through access to:

- occupational therapy profession specific supervision and support
- regular mandatory/statutory and job specific training
- resources such as technology and time
- learning and development opportunities across all four pillars of practice.

The framework is designed to support learning and development and is not a formal approach to competence or performance management. It is to be used alongside occupational therapy regulatory and professional standards and has been co-designed in response to a need identified by employers, managers and practitioners to provide support and guidance for employees.

Benefits

The learning and development framework for occupational therapists new or coming back to work in social care benefits employees, employers, people who access occupational therapy services and funders/commissioners. Employees have a responsibility to make sure their practice is up-to-date, informed by evidence and effective.

Active engagement in learning and development has multiple benefits: it improves the quality of care and outcomes for people, provides greater job satisfaction and aids staff retention and efficiencies for employers.

Benefits for employers

Using the framework:

- provides a structure to map and/or adapt guidance already in use to ensure it is appropriate for occupational therapists, their roles, language and professional expertise
- fosters, encourages and facilitates a culture where learning and development are valued, supporting occupational therapists to learn from positive experiences as well as from those which have not gone as well as expected
- identifies and supports learning, education and training needs across the four pillars of practice
- supports the development of job descriptions, role specifications and requirements
- aids succession and workforce planning by identifying skills within and across teams
- demonstrates how occupational therapists' knowledge and skills can be developed and utilised to improve and meet future service delivery
- assures occupational therapists are up-to-date, effective and safe to practice
- encourages recruitment and retention of skilled occupational therapists
- supports workforce development and integration across services.

Benefits for employees

Using the framework:

- provides a structure for engagement in learning and development as an occupational therapist across all four pillars of practice
- prompts reflective practice
- helps staff to identify, articulate and record their learning and development needs
- provides a framework to guide discussions with others and to gain constructive feedback within supervision and appraisal/review processes
- provides a means to monitor progress, measure and evidence development
- contributes to lifelong learning and CPD
- helps to raise the profile of the occupational therapy profession.

Benefits for the people who access occupational therapy services

Reviewing the framework provides people who access occupational therapy services with evidence to help them trust that their occupational therapist's practice is up-to-date, informed by evidence and effective to ensure the best outcomes for them.

Benefits for the wider systems

For the funders or commissioners of occupational therapy services, the framework alongside the wider range of toolkits available:

- supports the development of effective and efficient skill mix to meet service demands (RCOT 2017)
- creates and promotes opportunities for integrated learning and development across teams/organisations as part of the integration agenda to build better communities, improve the journey and benefits for people who access occupational therapy services.

Aligning the framework

The framework aligns with the HCPC Standards for CPD (HCPC 2017) and the Principles for CPD and Lifelong Learning which place responsibility for learning and development with occupational therapists, supported by their employer and the wider system (Broughton and Harris 2019).

HCPC Standards for CPD (HCPC 2017)	
Standard 1	Maintain a continuous, up-to-date and accurate record of your CPD activities.
Standard 2	Demonstrate that your CPD activities are a mixture of learning activities relevant to current or future practice.
Standard 3	Seek to ensure that your CPD has contributed to the quality of your practice and service delivery.
Standard 4	Seek to ensure that your CPD benefits your service users.
Standard 5	Upon request, present a written profile (which must be your own work and supported by evidence) explaining how you have met the Standards for CPD.

Principles for CPD and Lifelong Learning (Broughton and Harris 2019)	
CPD and lifelong learning should:	
Principle 1	Be each person's responsibility and be made possible and supported by your employer.
Principle 2	Benefit service users.
Principle 3	Improve the quality of service delivery.
Principle 4	Be balanced and relevant to each person's area of practice or employment.
Principle 5	Be recorded and show the effect on each person's area of practice.

For specific details on how to use the learning and development framework see the main framework document.