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CUTTING COSTS AND KEEPING OLDER PEOPLE INDEPENDENT: HOW OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IS MEETING THE 21st CENTURY SOCIAL CARE CONUNDRUM

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists has launched its second substantive report, 'Living, Not Existing: Putting prevention at the heart of care for older people in Wales', as part of its Improving Lives Saving Money campaign to tackle the unprecedented pressure on health and social care services.

In its report, the Royal College, that has 32,000 members across the UK and 1,600 in Wales, calls for improved access to occupational therapy services in Wales which can give older people back their dignity and help NHS primary and social care services to work better together and be more efficient.

Centre-stage in the report are a series of recommendations that would ensure implementation of the Primary Care Plan for Wales and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, calling for the Regional Partnership Boards to **identify a named person to action and report on outcomes in three key areas:**

1. Regional Partnership Boards, Primary Care Clusters and GPs, Executive Directors of Therapies and Health Sciences and Executive Directors of Primary Care must design services to make sure occupational therapists are based *within* primary care to delay or prevent the need for care and support.
 - *Occupational therapists should be based within GP practices or community resource teams so that primary care patients have timely, direct access to occupational therapy*
 - *Care coordination roles should be open to occupational therapists*
2. Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, Public Service Boards and Regional Partnership Boards must work together to ensure that person-centred approaches are developed in social and community care using occupational therapists to ensure all older people live independently for as long as possible in their communities.
 - *Occupational therapists should be able to take on leadership roles to provide expertise and mentoring to community providers and the range of staff they employ*
 - *Community groups and providers must work together to improve accessibility for those with complex needs to existing resources, ensuring they have the equipment and adaptations required for them to remain independent.*
3. Partnership agreements should be formally developed across local housing, health and social care sectors to ensure all older people, irrespective of their social-economic conditions and location, have access to occupational therapy.
 - *Resourcing occupational therapy services sufficiently so that they can take referrals from all sections of society, including hard to reach groups*
 - *Providing access points to occupational therapy advice for community teams such as home care and reablement providers and providing public information on ageing well and adapting the home to meet changing needs*



Commenting, Ruth Crowder, Wales Policy Officer, Royal College of Occupational Therapists, said:

“Many older people talk about simply existing rather than truly living and this is a sad indictment of how we treat those that are most vulnerable in our society. ‘High volume, low cost’ approaches to the delivery of care have an isolating and dehumanising effect on older people and as occupational therapists, we want to do all we can to prevent this continuing.

“Across Wales there are some really innovative examples where the intelligent deployment of occupational therapy services has enhanced the lives of older people, not only doing this whilst balancing budgets but crucially delivering significant cost savings for the tax payer. These savings are achievable but rely on better designed and connected services in our communities.”

The evidence base for the report was taken from a series of case studies that demonstrate how, with the enhanced support of occupational therapists, older people can receive better, tailored support that saves money for the tax payer. Two case studies from the report include:

Case Study 1: Cardiff Council Occupational Therapy Care and Support Reviews 2015-16: Delivering better care and cost savings

Between April 2015 and March 2016 the occupational therapy team reviewed 227 packages of care and direct payment arrangements to ensure they met both health care needs and represent value for money. The team assessed peoples’ functional needs, provided and demonstrated equipment, and addressed moving and handling issues. The team also worked closely with care agencies, delivering training workshops to educate them on more complex equipment, such as standing hoists.

Cost savings achieved due to occupational therapy intervention:

This process achieved significant results including a £120,514 saving where an increase in care package costs had been prevented and a £274,765 saving where care package costs had been reduced. Through better training of carers and other staff and a thorough assessment of actual care needs, a total saving of £395,279 was achieved.

Case Study 2: The Bridgeway Service in Bridgend

The Bridgeway Service in Bridgend, is an occupational therapy-led, time-limited reablement home care domiciliary assessment service. Without occupational therapy intervention, Mr Evan’s cost for his annual care package, as determined by the hospital, would have been £45,760.

Cost savings achieved due to occupational therapy intervention:

Following an occupational therapist-led reablement programme the costs of Mr Evans care reduced to just £11,140. This intervention prevented Mr Evans’ admission to long-term residential care, enabled him to stay independently active in his community whilst delivering a cost saving of £34,620.



Notes to Editors

- 1) For more information please contact Ned Lamb on 02073401153, 07508743737 or ned@gkstrategy.com or ruth.crowder@rcot.co.uk or 07585606385
- 2) The Royal College's 'Living Not Existing: Putting prevention at the heart of care for older people in Wales' will be published on 13th July 2017 at <http://www.cotimprovinglives.com> as part of its Improving Lives, Saving Money Campaign.
- 3) The Royal College is the professional body and Trade Union for occupational therapy and represents over 1600 members in Wales and 32,000 occupational therapists across the UK. www.cot.co.uk
- 4) Occupational therapy improves health and wellbeing through participation in occupation. Drwy gymryd rhan mewn galwedigaeth, mae therapi galwedigaethol yn gwella iechyd a lles