



ROYAL COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY HIGHLIGHTS THE DEHUMANISING EFFECT OF SOME SOCIAL CARE SERVICES.

A report released today by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists calls for a shift from a ‘high volume, low cost’ approach to care to one which sees the whole person’s overall wellbeing. Its publication is accompanied by a moving film showing the stark reality of being dependent on social care faced by many older and vulnerable people.

In its report: ‘Living Not Existing: Putting Prevention at the Heart of care for older people’ the Royal College of Occupational Therapists seeks to show how doing the right thing for individuals can actually reduce their need for expensive care long-term. It calls for an end to the inequality of access to occupational therapy which is a barrier to people in need receiving high quality, person centred care that enables people to stay as active, independent and safe as possible.

Occupational therapists are trained to work with the whole person. Their approach is unique. They work with people to establish what matters to them and to set goals to help them maintain or regain their ability to do those things. This may mean a period of intense support or home adaptation in the short term but once goals are met, the need diminishes and support can be safely reduced or even withdrawn. The older person retains their right to self-determination, independence and self-esteem whilst the tax payer gets a saving in the long term.

In its report, the royal college, which represents 32,000 occupational therapists working across the health and social care sector in the UK, makes three recommendations:

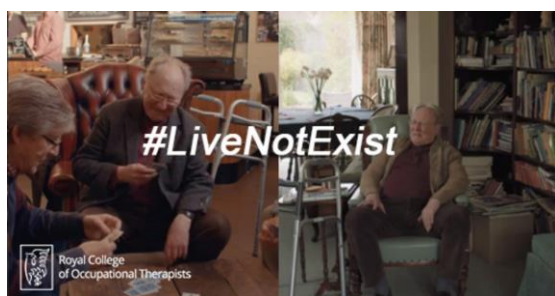
- An end to the inequality of access to occupational therapy. There are pockets of best practice but too many people miss out on high quality proactive social care that promotes independence and self-determination.
- More occupational therapists employed within primary care proactively helping older people adapt to aging, increasing frailty and health problems. This can delay, reduce or prevent the need for expensive care and support.
- Occupational therapists to be employed to lead on the development of person and community centred services that care for older people’s overall health and wellbeing to ensure they can live active independent lives in their communities for as long as possible.

Julia Scot, CEO of the Royal College of Occupational Therapists said: “Too often, rather than seeing a whole person, social care services simply see a set of care needs which need to be addressed. Because of

their unique set of skills, occupational therapists are perfectly placed to change this. In our report we set out clear, evidenced based recommendations that will deliver better care for service users that is more cost effective for taxpayers. For too long, we have collectively wrung our hands and exclaimed that something has to be done to “fix” the social care system. Now is that time.”

The film which has been released today alongside the report allows viewers to ‘toggle’ between different realities of care. One reality shows what life can be like for many older people, as simply passive recipient of care. The other shows how occupational therapist involvement can result in the best, most person centred care that empowers the older person.

ENDS



Best Practice Case Study: Kent Enablement at Home Teams

Kent county Council are happy to facilitate filming opportunities and have service user case studies available for interview. [Read the full case study by clicking here.](#)

Relying on social care services can be expensive and disabling, and often it is money that doesn't need to be spent. So, Kent County Council provides a programme of enablement free of charge as part of the needs assessment to help people to be more independent, placing emphasis on supporting people to build on their strengths and abilities, and not focus on activities they find difficult to do. This approach allows people to determine what activities are most important to them to achieve, offers short term support that aims to encourage and enable people to lead as independent and fulfilling a life as possible, in the way and in the place they want to live.

The service often helps with things such as:

- Improving confidence after a fall
- Giving guidance in preparing meals following a change in circumstances
- Reconnecting with social activities
- Identifying equipment that could help with independent living
- Helping people to return or remain at home and feel safe and happy.

Other case studies showing what RCOT believe the future of social care services should look like are available for filming and interview in the following locations:

- Aberdeen
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Birmingham
- London, Tower Hamlets
- Kent
- Devon