



ROYAL COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY WARN SCOTTISH NHS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ‘MIND THE GAP’ BETWEEN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE.

A report released today by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists is calling on the NHS and Local Authorities in Scotland to refocus how health and social care services. They warn that unless there is a shift from a ‘high volume, low cost’ approach to care to one which sees the whole person’s overall wellbeing services will struggle to meet future demands.

In its report: ‘Living Not Existing: Putting Prevention at the Heart of Care for Older People in Scotland’ 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 post code lottery in 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.

Whilst it supports the Scottish Government’s 2020 vision, the report makes clear that it will take time to achieve and that there is a unique role for occupational therapy to help bridge the current gap between health and care services.

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home adaptation in the short term but once goals are met, the need diminishes and support can be safely reduced or even withdrawn. This means a saving to the tax payer in the long term.

A film has also been released, alongside the report, allow 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 person.



In its report, the royal college, which represents 3,000 occupational therapists in Scotland and over 32,000 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 Scottish taxpayers.

For too long, we have collectively wrung our hands and exclaimed that something has to be done to prepare the social care system for the future. With up to 12,000 hours of social care going unmet each week across Scotland, now is the time.”

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