

**\*UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL MONDAY MAY 14<sup>TH</sup> 2018\***

## **Prioritise prevention and early intervention in mental health services, says new Royal College of Occupational Therapists' report**

Against a backdrop of increasing pressures on mental health services in England, a new report from the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) highlights the importance of prevention and early intervention in tackling mental health issues.

Current statistics show that 85% of people first disclose mental health problems to their GP – yet less than 5% of mental health professionals such as occupational therapists work in GP services. **This means that the majority of people with mental health problems have to reach crisis before they can access any kind of help.**

*'Getting My Life Back: Occupational therapy promoting mental health and wellbeing in England'*, the latest report from the RCOT's *Improving Lives, Saving Money* Campaign, reveals a range of innovative occupational therapy services that focus on prevention and early intervention in mental health services. The report shows that occupational therapy has life-changing effects on people with mental health conditions; from stress and anxiety to depression, psychosis and self-harm.

The RCOT recommend occupational therapy as one of the lead professions in designing and delivering services for the future, in four key areas:

1. Occupational therapists should be routinely helping young people with mental health problems to achieve their full educational potential
2. Occupational therapists should be supporting people with mental health issues into employment
3. Occupational therapists should be involved in plans to improve the physical health of people with serious mental health problems, incorporating and promoting healthy occupations
4. Occupational therapists should lead innovative service delivery that improves access to mental health support in primary care.

Quotes:

### **RCOT Chief Executive Julia Scott**

"The evidence is clear, we can no longer afford to delay addressing people's mental health issues, and it is increasingly obvious that current services are woefully inadequate. What we propose is a refocusing of the way mental health services are delivered, focusing on prevention and early intervention, rather than waiting for people to reach crisis point. We must enable patients to live well and independently with mental health problems and ensure they can take part in the healthy occupations that are vital to wellbeing."

### **MP and former Health Minister Norman Lamb**

"Occupational therapists have an essential role to play in supporting people with mental ill health—helping them to engage in work and study and empowering them to lead active and fulfilling lives. This important report underlines the need for occupational therapy to be effectively incorporated into mental health services, which should be treated as a priority by government and the NHS."

**Luciana Berger MP, President of the Labour Campaign for Mental Health**

“Mental ill health presents itself in many guises and what this report draws out is the effectiveness of occupational therapy in addressing the variety of problems people of all ages can face. The more individuals we can reach earlier, the better for them, their families, their friends and their colleagues and employers, and the recommendations in this report show how by using occupational therapists innovatively, this can be achieved.”

**Sir Michael Marmot, Director, Institute of Health Equity**

“Education, employment, and income are key social determinants that affect mental health. This report from the Royal College of Occupational Therapists focuses on increasing people’s chances to do well in education and employment and highlights the importance of creating opportunities to engage in healthy behaviours. To improve the mental health of the nation, these social determinants must be addressed and healthcare delivery should be rebalanced to help achieve this end. The Royal College puts forward recommendations to highlight the role of occupational therapists in this important sea change. It is a most welcome report.”

~ENDS~

**For more information:**

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Notes to editors:

**About the Royal College of Occupational Therapists**

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists is the professional body for occupational therapy representing over 32,000 occupational therapists across the UK. Occupational therapists provide life changing support to people managing illness, injuries and a wide range of physical and mental health conditions. Uniquely, they enable people to carry out daily activities ('occupations') which are essential for health and happiness. This vital care helps people recover and build new skills to enjoy a full and independent life.

**About occupational therapy and mental health support**

\*Occupational therapy builds mental health support around what really matters to the person, such as being able to complete their education, cook a family meal, go to work, or play sport. The RCOT has found that overcoming barriers to these activities is often the key to supporting early onset or short-term mental health issues, or achieving better quality of life for those with more serious, long-term conditions.

**About *Improving Lives Saving Money***

*Getting My Life Back* is the latest report from the RCOT's *Improving Lives, Saving Money* Campaign which has highlighted the value of occupational therapy in a number of public services including hospitals, social care, fire and rescue services, prison services and GP practices. *Improving Lives, Saving Money* draws attention not only to the effectiveness of occupational therapy but also the cost saving and value for money occupational therapy brings to services.