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Supporting People with Chronic Conditions

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About us

We're RCOT, the Royal College of Occupational Therapists. We've championed the profession and the people behind it for over 80 years; and today, we are thriving with over 35,000 members. Then and now, we're here to help achieve life-changing breakthroughs for our members, for the people they support and for society as a whole.

Occupational therapy helps you live your best life at home, at work – and everywhere else. It's about being able to do the things you want and have to do. That could mean helping you overcome challenges learning at school, going to work, playing sport or simply doing the dishes. Everything is focused on increasing independence and wellbeing.

It's science-based, health and social care profession that's regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council.

An occupational therapist helps people of all ages overcome challenges completing everyday tasks or activities – what we call 'occupations'. Occupational therapists see beyond diagnoses and limitations to hopes and aspirations. They look at relationships between the activities you do every day – your occupations – alongside the challenges you face and your environment.

Then, they create a plan of goals and adjustments targeted at achieving a specific set of activities. The plan is practical, realistic and personal to you as an individual, to help you achieve the breakthroughs you need to elevate your everyday life.

This support can give people a renewed sense of purpose. It can also open up new opportunities and change the way people feel about the future.

Our response

Thank you for the opportunity to suggest areas the committee could focus on for into supporting people with chronic conditions inquiry. RCOT suggests the committee focuses on the below areas, we have embedded documents for reference.

Prevention, early intervention and self-management

- It's better to prevent a condition occurring/worsening, but most health services focus on reactive treatment, rather than proactive prevention and self-management. A Healthier Wales the long-term plan for Health & Social Care and other recent Welsh policy all states the need to move services to a more preventive focus but the operational reality is yet to catch up.
- Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) play an important role in providing early intervention to babies and children. Children/young people are presenting with more complex physical, learning and mental health needs, in part due to delayed support/recognition and missed opportunities during the pandemic. Without appropriate help, there is a risk that difficulties

will escalate, affecting children's mental health, academic achievement, and employment prospects, and placing additional pressure on stretched health, education and social services.

- Young people with SEND were disproportionately affected by the pandemic [Children and young people with SEND disproportionately affected by pandemic - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and have poorer outcomes such as increased risk of mental health difficulties, lower educational attainment and difficulties forming healthy relationships [Disability and additional learning needs – RCPCH – State of Child Health](#)
- There are [social factors](#) that impact people's ability to engage in prevention / self-management activities, leading to health inequalities
- Occupational therapists can intervene with people who experience barriers engaging in prevention activities such as exercise and physical activity. Sport for Confidence have developed and evaluated a [Prevention and Enablement Model](#) which improves the physical activity levels of participants living with disabilities and long-term conditions, and generates £58.71 of social value for every £1 invested.

Multi-morbidity

- People from deprived populations are [more likely to have multiple long-term conditions](#)
- 17% of the UK population is expected to have four or more chronic conditions by 2035 (Pearson-Stuttard, J, Ezzati M, Gregg EW (2019) *Multimorbidity – a defining challenge for health systems*. The Lancet, 4(12), E599-E600)
- Existing care pathways are typically focused on single conditions, meaning that people with multiple conditions have a fractured and incomplete experience of care that isn't person centered.
- Our rehab key messages include several points and references about multiple long term conditions that are relevant: [📄 Rehab one pager.docx](#)

Access to rehabilitation

- People with chronic conditions need to be able to access rehabilitation support on a recurring basis, to prevent and manage changing needs. This support should encompass all of a person's needs, rather than being condition focused. The Community Rehabilitation Alliance has produced [best practice guidance](#) on structuring and delivering community rehabilitation services.
- Mental health needs should be considered and addressed with the same priority as physical health needs. Access to rehabilitation support for mental health needs is especially lacking, and RCOT has produced an Informed View on the [role of OTs in improving access to mental health rehabilitation](#).