

**Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#)
ar y [gweithlu Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#)**

**This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care](#)
[Committee](#) consultation on [Health and Social Care Workforce](#)**

HSC 13

**Ymateb gan: | Response from: Coleg Brenhinoly Therapyddion
Galwedigaethol | Royal College of Occupational Therapists**





HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY WALES

The [Royal College of Occupational Therapists](https://www.rcot.org.uk) (RCOT) is the professional body for occupational therapy representing over 33,500 occupational therapists across the UK. Occupational therapists in Wales work in the NHS, Local Authority social care services, housing, schools, prisons, care homes, voluntary and independent sectors, and vocational and employment rehabilitation services.

Occupational therapists work with people of all ages, who are experiencing difficulties through injury, illness or disability or a major life change. Occupational therapists consider the relationship between what a **person** does every day (**occupations**), how illness or disability impacts upon the person and how a person's **environment** supports or hinders their activity (PEO Model). Using this approach, we help people to continue or re-engage with participating fully in daily life, including work, social activities and maintaining roles and responsibilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy. Please find below comments from RCOT.

1. The current model for workforce planning/ developing the future workforce

Streamlining

An issue that could have a considerable impact on recruitment of the occupational therapy workforce in Wales is the bursary system. RCOT have real concerns, that the present model for workforce planning/ developing the future workforce will not meet the general ambition of the strategy. The process of allocating available jobs to those graduates in receipt of the bursary is called “streamlining” and has been piloted over the last 2 years. There have been significant administrative issues and worry about the long-term impact of this system on recruiting into Wales from RCOT members. The system has been evaluated by HEIW; nevertheless, it should be scrutinised by an external body such as the committee. We would welcome the Committee looking into the Student Streamlining Scheme to consider if it is an appropriate solution to the challenges of AHP recruitment in Wales, and to investigate whether this one size fits all approach is damaging to particular professions and areas of practice.

Suggested Questions for the Committee

1. How does the streamlining system ensure the best and most diverse group of graduates are recruited into the Welsh NHS workforce, and how do non-Welsh bursary graduates access jobs in the Welsh workforce?
2. How do the streamlining and commissioning numbers for professions align and has streamlining resulted in an increase in recruitment of recent graduates and timely recruitment to Band 5 vacancies?
3. How does streamlining ensure students are able to access positions outside the NHS such as Occupational therapy positions in Social Care?



2 Enhanced and Advanced Practice

Action 12 of the strategy states is to develop a clear competence and capabilities framework for extended skills and advanced practice across professional groups. Its RCOT position that this is a crucial priority area for developing the workforce to meet the challenges of the future.

The Strategy should be Supporting the career pathways of registered occupational therapy personnel to:

- a) Recognise value of all professional levels and provide appropriate development opportunities to address changing nature of the profession and health and social care needs of communities served
- b) Provide the necessary support for development of specific levels of practice (e.g. Enhanced, Advanced and Consultant) and realise the full potential of occupational therapists in these roles in addressing population needs
- c) Optimise funding for and access to such career pathways to retain staff
- d) Ensure effective and profession specific roadmaps to ensure added value of enhanced and advanced level roles across services (eg First Contact Practitioners), in particular evolving areas of practice such as primary care, public health and prevention agenda and integrated services

Resources and skilled personnel will be required to support the developing workforce:

- to provide the workplace supervision to enhanced practitioners, advanced practitioners, consultants, and those progressing along specific roadmaps such as First Contact Practitioner
- formal education to support enhanced and advanced practice agenda will require an increase in the academic workforce within Higher Education Institutions to support postgraduate/post registration learners
- increase in education and training to support the registered workforce professional development which mirrors evolving service models which meet the complex needs of communities (eg digital technologies, prevention, health inequalities)
- recognition of the decline in uptake of academic studies (that are transactional, barriers such as time and money, lack of evidence of the translation of knowledge into practice); Greater emphasis on work-based learning opportunities that recognise the transformational effects of professional development opportunities provided by WBL at team/service level.
-

Suggested questions for the committee

1. What are HEIW's and Social Care Wales plans to ensure / commission more occupational therapists to receive training and advanced practice opportunities?
2. Is there a clear framework in place to support staff in identify and then accessing advance practice opportunities?



3 Support Worker Workforce and apprenticeships

A recent statement from Professional Bodies representing Allied Health Professions and Trade Union partners (*Optimising the contribution of the Allied Health Professions support workforce A statement from the following Professional Bodies and Trade Union Partners*) strongly argues for greater recognition of the value of the AHP support workforce and the essential role they play in delivering safe, effective and productive AHP services. Support workforce needs to grow, a career development framework put in place, and investment made in the development of the support workforce.

The implementation of the strategy should:

- increase the number of regulated AHP support workers and ensure that there is enough capacity to support those in the support workforce.
- recognition of the contribution of the AHP support worker workforce
- creation of roles (such as assistant practitioners) which meet service model needs
- an AHP support worker career development and progression framework across different settings
- learning and development provision that meets the specific needs of the AHP support workforce, including upskilling
- allow for progression along career pathways to beyond support worker roles to professional routes
- ensure sustainability, growth of AHP support workforce
- consideration of apprenticeship routes to address above

RCOT Supports the concept of 'Grow your Own' through the introduction of degree level apprenticeships leading to eligibility to apply for professional registration. This supports diversity and accessibility of training to those already in health and social care employment.

Suggested Questions for the Committee

- a) What are the plans to establish a degree level apprenticeship route leading to eligibility to apply for professional registration?
- b) How is HEIW and Social Care supporting the training and development of the support workforce

4. Collaboration with professional bodies

RCOT suggests there would be much to be achieved by closer working relationships between HEIW and professional bodies such as RCOT in relation to workforce planning, Staff development & training, Staff wellbeing and developing exciting new models of practice that meets the needs of the Welsh population etc. We suggested there is a marked contrast to the situation in England where there have been very regular conversations to share intelligence on the workforce trends etc with HEE.

Suggested questions for the Committee

- a) How are you working with professional bodies to support the implementation of the strategy?



References

[Optimising the contribution of the Allied Health Professions support workforce](#)

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (2021) Career Development Framework Available at <https://www.rcot.co.uk/publications/career-development-framework>

Contact

For further information on this submission please contact the following RCOT officers:

Professional Practice Lead - Wales

Tel: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]

www.rcot.co.uk