

Occupational therapy assessment and early intervention for people experiencing difficulties with employment or education

Occupational Therapists recognise that appropriate work is good for health and can support recovery from ill health. As well as improving an individual's socioeconomic status, good work provides a productive routine, benefits self-esteem and enhances social inclusion.

Lack of meaningful employment and/ or education is well recognised as a factor which can negatively impact health and wellbeing. (Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027).



Job retention and return to work are therefore desirable goals to maintain or enhance quality of life and well-being.



HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU REFER YOUR PATIENTS TO THE PRIMARY CARE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICE.

SUSTAINING EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

People who are employed and at work use less healthcare services than those who are off sick. Preventing sickness absence by offering support to people when they first present is important. Occupational therapists assess the impact of a person's health and wellbeing on their engagement with work and identify solutions to enable the individual to sustain their employment. These may include interventions to support the individual to self-manage their health and wellbeing at work, recommendation of changes to tasks or environment (reasonable adjustments) which make work manageable, or communication with employers.



RETURNING TO WORK AND EDUCATION

Prevention of long-term sickness absence is a priority for Occupational Therapists. When absence becomes long term (4 weeks or longer) the likelihood of an employee returning to work diminishes rapidly. Barriers to work increase and 1 in 5 people will not return to work. (Health at Work, 2011)

Occupational Therapists assess an individual's health and social barriers to work including domestic, financial, travel and carer needs. Utilising the AHP Health and Work Report, Occupational Therapists recommend reasonable adjustments to reduce or remove barriers to work. This report can be shared with managers to facilitate return to work discussions and prevent future sickness absence. Occupational Therapists can also liaise with employers or Occupational Health if requested.



DEVELOPING WORK READINESS

Occupational Therapists carry out a holistic assessment, considering strengths, needs and work aspirations. Intervention focuses on development of self management strategies, improving tolerance to work-related activity using roles and routines, development of self-esteem and confidence through skill building opportunities and exploration of work potential in conjunction with employability partners.



FOR THE FOLLOWING NEEDS PRIMARY CARE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MAY NOT BE THE BEST SERVICE:

❖ For patients who wish to find work and do not experience health barriers to work please signpost to our employability partners for careers advice and job search support:



❖ For advice in relation to Employment Disputes:



'Occupational therapy provides practical support to empower people to facilitate recovery and overcome barriers preventing them from doing the activities (or occupations) that matter to them.' RCOT

Occupational Therapy in primary care:
a LOT to offer