



Building Health into Homes

Transforming OT's Role in Housing:



Building Health into Homes: Practitioner Toolkit

How occupational therapy can unlock the connection between housing and health



RCOT
Royal College of
Occupational
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Building Health into Homes: Operational Toolkit

How occupational therapy can unlock the connection between housing and health



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Building Health into Homes: Strategic Report

How occupational therapy can unlock the connection between housing and health



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Strategic Report: Housing Is a Strategic Priority. Here's the Evidence

- Housing is a social determinant of health – where you live shapes how well you live
- Poor housing costs the NHS in England £1.1 billion every year (Finch et al, 2023)
- The full cost to society of poor housing in England is estimated at £18.5 billion per year (Garrett et al, 2021)
- 87% of homes in England don't meet basic accessibility criteria
- **Strategic Report: OTs sit at the intersection of housing, health and social care – uniquely placed to connect all three**



Operational Toolkit: We Went Looking for a Housing OT.

- We set out to define a single Housing OT role and write a toolkit describing it
- Interviews across the four nations revealed something more interesting
- OTs already contributing to housing in eight distinct ways – across social care, community, acute, and mental health settings
- The toolkit evolved to reflect this reality – eight roles, real case studies, practical guidance



8 Supporting Housing Roles



Eight Problems OTs can Help Housing With

The problem	The OT Role
New builds needing costly retrofitting	New Build Development & Design
Poor use of existing housing stock	Asset Management
Wrong homes allocated to wrong people	Housing Needs Assessment & Allocation
Beds blocked, delayed discharge	Hospital Discharge & Admission Avoidance
Tenancies failing, fire safety risks	Tenancy Sustainment & Fire Safety
Complex needs not met by standard solutions	Complex & Specialist Needs
Housing and health working in silos	Training & System Development
System not learning or improving	Future-Proofing & Strategic Policy

"OTs can help in developing housing that provides a good environment to thrive rather than just to survive."— Member of the HWD Steering Group

Some Local Authority Social Care OTs Are Already Doing It. But It's On Top of Their Day Job...

- In many local authorities, social care OTs are already contributing to housing outcomes
- But this sits above and beyond their statutory Care Act and Children's Act duties
- They're doing it alongside mounting social care waiting lists
- This isn't sustainable – and it's not fair on OTs or the people waiting for social care assessments
- Housing isn't an add-on to social care. It's at the heart of it



What is in the Operational Tool Kit

- The eight roles framework – defining where OTs can contribute across the full housing journey
- Implementation case studies for the 8 roles from across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland
- Business case templates for four OT-in-housing scenarios ready to adapt with local data:
 - Housing Association OT
 - Planning and Development OT
 - Adaptations Service OT
 - Housing Support OT
- Job Descriptions
- Guidance on gathering and measuring evidence
- You don't need to build this from scratch – the toolkit does the heavy lifting



Practitioner Toolkit: Housing Is Every OT's Business

Every OT works with someone who lives somewhere – the home environment is always relevant

An OT in end-of-life care, acute stroke, mental health, or learning disabilities can have an early housing conversation – without referring on

Housing conversations are not a referral to make. They are a conversation to have

The Practitioner Toolkit gives every OT the confidence and tools to start having them earlier

Housing is all OT responsibility – it's about challenging silos of practice and helping people see it's not someone else's job." —
RCOT Housing Without Delay



Different roles, many opportunities

All occupational therapists

- Assessing risk to identify how the built environment supports or limits participation.
- Taking opportunities to have early housing conversations with service users, and supporting multi-disciplinary colleagues to do the same.
- Supporting implementation of the *Adaptations without delay* framework (RCOT 2019) – including assistive technology and adaptations protocols.
- Signposting to partner organisations for housing assistance e.g. home repairs and maintenance; tenancy support; benefits advice.
- Acting as connectors across the health, housing and social care sectors to facilitate a shared understanding of housing needs and encourage integrated working.

Specialist housing OT

Inputting expertise across a range of housing functions – strategic planning; accessible design; asset management; assessment of housing needs; complex adaptations; rehousing support; advice and training for housing colleagues and other OTs.

Community-based OT

e.g. rehabilitation, re/enablement and social care

Supporting occupational participation at home – via rehabilitation interventions; provision of equipment; provision of tech-enabled care (TEC); recommendations for adaptations; completion of housing reports.

Connecting with colleagues in acute settings to establish integrated approaches that prevent hospital admissions and enable timely discharges.

All other practice settings

e.g. acute services, primary care, voluntary sector

Embedding early housing conversations into assessments and contacts. Encouraging forward-planning so that homes support health outcomes. Providing information and sign-posting to housing support.

The following sections provide practical guidance and conversation prompts for each level of the pyramid.

What is in the Practitioner Toolkit.

- A reframing of housing as every OT's business – not just social care or housing specialists
- Guidance on having early housing conversations – without needing to be a housing specialist
- A professional development roadmap for OTs wanting to develop housing expertise – Pen Portraits from Real OTs
- Training and education resources – Inc Glossary of Housing Terms, Legislation Information and Design Resources

