

Exploring the COT Briefing Paper on Sustainable Development

Sustainable development meets the current generation's needs without impacting on future generations capacity to meet theirs

"Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century"
(UCL-Lancet Commission 2009)

UK Climate Change Bill legally requires greenhouse gas emissions be reduced by at least 80% by 2050

WFOT (2012) called for occupational therapists to promote environmentally sustainable well-being

Reduce Carbon without Reducing Health

The National Health Service is the largest carbon emitter in Europe

Reduce Activity

Reduce Primary Drivers

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Exploring social, economic and environmental determinants of health is a preventative healthcare approach integral to occupational therapy practice, e.g. Lifestyle Redesign®.

The resulting health benefits and improved quality of life can lead to reduced hospital admissions and use of care services with people staying healthy and independent for longer. This has the potential to reduce costs and carbon emissions in a potentially win-win situation.

Service User Empowerment and Supported Self-Care

The Route Map for Sustainable Health (SDU 2011) described the 'Models of Care' that need to be established throughout the health system as being, "Where health is less a medical matter and more about us having control over our own well-being".

OTs work within such service user centred models of care, e.g. Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement. These could be reinterpreted to include global issues.

Lean and Efficient Pathways and Service Delivery

Revaluating decision-making and clinical reasoning could influence occupational therapy service delivery. Sustainable Action Planning focuses on changes frontline staff can make. For example:

Travel - NHS-related journeys account for 5% of all UK emissions from roads and alternatives can be considered.

Procurement - Understanding the principles of 'reduce, reuse, recycle' is a priority, e.g. in equipment provision.

Treatment Options with a Lower Environmental Impact

Occupational therapists can include sustainability issues in activity analysis, exploring the most sustainable and effective treatment options, e.g. in cooking and gardening: sourcing local ingredients, precycling, monitoring water and energy use, composting, recycling and eating mindfully. There is raising awareness of where OT equipment/materials come from and the impacts of this. Consideration is needed of the labour standards in supply chains.

Sustainable Estates

In 2010, 19% of NHS England's carbon emissions came from building and energy use (with 16% from travel and 65% from procurement).

Occupational therapy could be more involved in the planning and design of living environments, as a preventative outcome as well as environmental adaptation, e.g. the development of NHS Forest by the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare.

The pillars of sustainable occupational therapy practice are adapted from: *Principles of Sustainable Clinical Practice* (Mortimer 2010)

Sustainable Clinical Practice

If action is taken now some of the worst effects of climate change could be mitigated or prevented.

There also needs to be preparation and planning for the inevitable challenges to come.

Occupational therapy has an important role to play in sustainable health and social care at all levels and across all domains.

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Authors:

Ben Whittaker. Senior Occupational Therapist at Bluebell House Recovery Support Centre. Occupational Therapy Programme Lead at the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare. ben.whittaker@sustainablehealthcare.org.uk
Gill Gower. Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health and Social Care, Canterbury Christ Church University. gill.gower@canterbury.ac.uk