

# Role of Occupational Therapy in health and wellbeing at work

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# Work as an occupation offers

Financial security

Self worth

Purpose and Achievement

Identity

Routine and structure

Belonging and social contact



# Why is work so important now?

Improving population health and wellbeing is vital to the health and economic sustainability of the UK.

Without proactively improving how we manage our health, policies and initiatives to extend working lives are likely to fail.

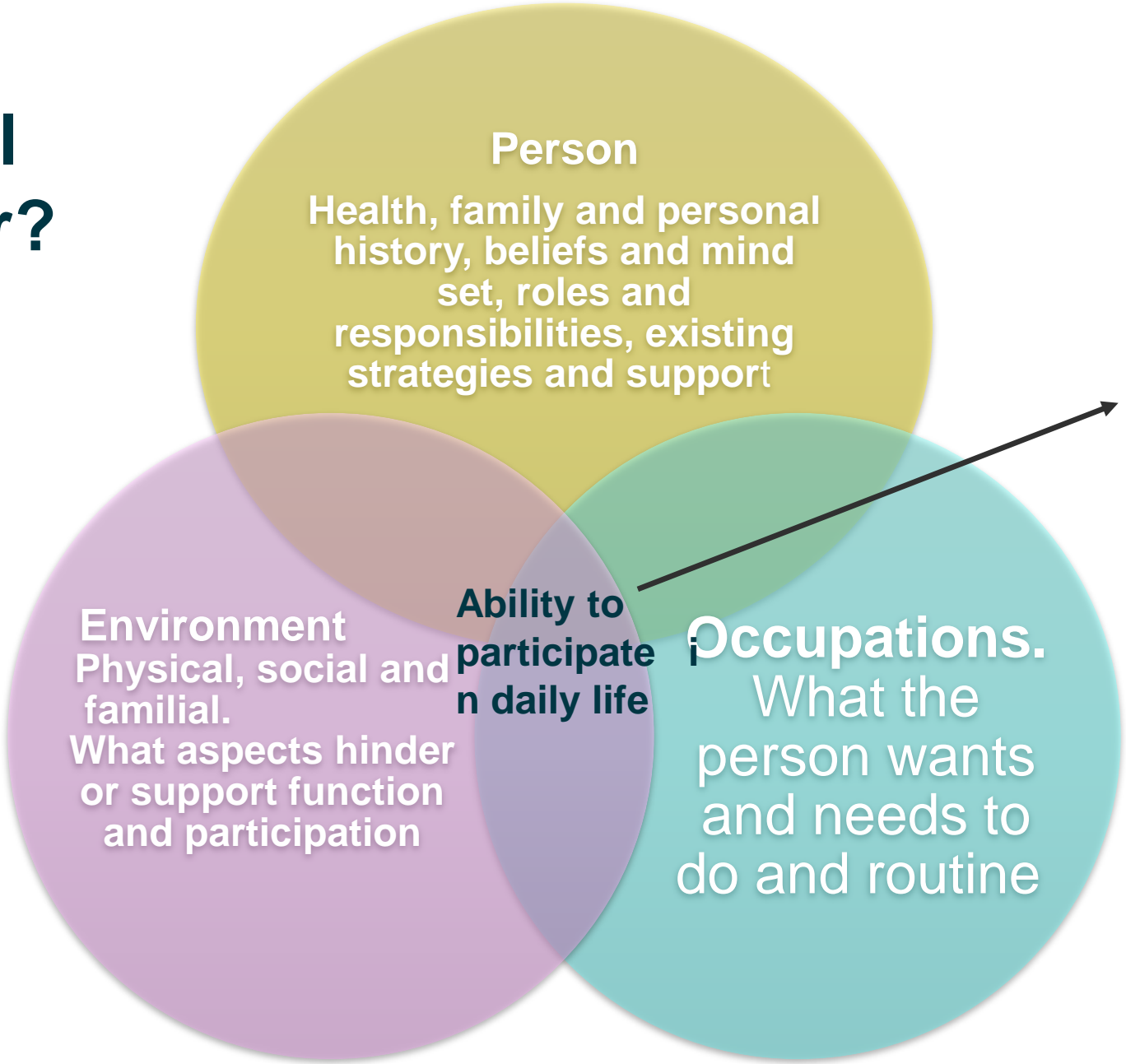
We need to improve access to advice and expertise to make sure people can continue to contribute to society and fulfil their roles and responsibilities while managing their health and well being.



# What occupational therapist can do

- Asses a person's physical and psychological wellbeing to find solutions
- Analyse job demands and match abilities to tasks
- Educate on condition management and prevention
- Implement reasonable adjustments and return to work plans
- Provide sickness certification and advice
- Rehabilitation – practice tasks and behaviours
- Ergonomic assessments
- Advise on career redirection, planning and job matching

# What does occupational therapy offer?



**Occupational therapy**  
Improves a person's capabilities and resilience



**Person**  
Health, beliefs and mind set,  
roles and responsibilities

**Occupational therapy**  
makes adjustments to support performance.



**Environment**  
The workspace,  
physical as well as  
social.

**Ability to work**



**Occupations**  
Work tasks and  
working patterns,  
other daily and  
weekly activities that  
impact on work



**Occupational therapy** teaches strategies and techniques.

# Universal offer

Outcome: Advice on self-management is readily available

## Prevention and early intervention

### *Primary Care*

- Completion of the Fit Note.
- Early intervention and advice, such as strategies to manage symptoms from a health condition(s) and the demands of work.
- Working closely with social prescribers to sign post and refer to local resources.

### *Asking the work question*

- All healthcare staff should be confident to ask people of working age about their employment status and be able to signpost for advice and services if needed. Occupational therapists can and have been training and supporting NHS and social care staff to manage these conversations appropriately and with confidence.



# Targeted

Outcome: People with health conditions are able to self-manage in the workplace

## Vocational focused interventions

- Occupational therapy embedded within existing health and care services, supports people with health conditions and disabilities to better self-manage in the workplace.
- Occupational therapists support people and employment services to understand the relationship between a person's health and the work activities that they carry out in the work environment.





# Specialist/Tailored

Outcome: People with disabilities and long-term conditions are supported by employers to enter and remain in employment

## Occupational health and vocational rehabilitation



### Occupational therapists

- offer accurate assessment of the work ability of individuals, advising on strategies to manage symptoms e.g. pain, energy, stress and anxiety;
- adapt the environment to support people's ability to function;
- not just in the workplace but at home as home life impacts on people's ability to work.

# Vocational rehabilitation

Whatever helps someone with a health problem to stay at, return to and remain in work: it is an idea and an approach as much as an intervention or a service.

Waddell et al (2008) Vocational rehabilitation – what works, for whom, and when?

Schools and colleges  
Higher education  
Primary care  
Work places  
NHS  
DWP contracts  
Charities  
Legal and insurance firms

# Case Study- 23 year old man in his first professional job role.

Cost of occupational therapy  
= £1,600.00

Outcome: Employee remains in work  
and has had a promotion and  
successfully managing his mental  
health.



# Service example- MSK

## Vocational rehabilitation service

- The team assess fitness for work in the department and within peoples' workplace. They provide the employers with comprehensive reports on their individuals' capacity to work and use the fit note.
- Work related activities are simulated within the department.
- At 12 weeks post discharge 97% have returned to work, with 78% completing full hours and duties

60 people a day

**OT** is already embedded within health and social care supporting people to stay and get into work

### **We need to:**

- move more of this expertise into primary care and occupational health to get that advice and support earlier.
- improve routes to OT and VR
- ensure Work coaches in Job Centre plus can access wider advice from OTs on addressing the obstacles to work, such as housing, transport, and fluctuating symptoms.

### **Why?**

- Focus on what individuals **can do** rather than imposing one-size-fits-all conditions approach, taking into account the individual's capabilities and health conditions.
- Advise on strategies and modifications at home to enable a person to work

# Thank you!

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