

Welcome to your April 2024 Scottish Eastern region newsletter!

As we move into spring from a long and stormy winter, your region has an exciting CPD event to offer members. Our event "[Digital Technology in Occupational Therapy](#)" will take place on 15 May. This event's programme is full of great speakers, interactive sessions and workshops to help kick start your CPD in 2024!

We have inspiring articles submitted by our members in this newsletter edition. Read about a recent transnational knowledge exchange between Scotland and South Africa led by lecturers at Queen Margaret University, our regional vice chair representing occupational therapy at Holyrood, and reflections from our region's student representative on attending the RCOT annual conference in 2023.

Our member features

Transnational knowledge exchange: Every day's a school day!

Lecturers at Queen Margaret University (QMU) were fortunate enough to secure funding from the Scottish Government for their project entitled, 'Every day's a school day: A transnational knowledge exchange programme to promote a whole school approach to health wellbeing and participation'.

The project team comprising; Linda Renton, Elvin Williams and Janine Hackett travelled to South Africa to establish a long-term educational partnership with the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The aims of the project were to:

- Investigate public health and whole school approaches to promote health, well-being, and equal opportunities for participation.
- Explore contextually relevant factors in relation to contexts influencing current occupational therapy practices with, children, and your people, which promote long term health and occupational outcomes for healthy communities.

The team were warmly welcomed to South Africa by staff and students at UWC, and also people in the wider community. The trip involved a packed schedule of visits to communities, schools, and a homeless shelter, which provided an insight into life for many of South Africa's marginalised groups. The visits were extremely thought provoking and uplifting demonstrating the power of community, hope, love, and occupation in the face of adversity.

The visit offered an interesting learning opportunity and provoked many reflections on how occupational therapists can best promote the health and wellbeing of our children and young people in Scotland, many of whom may be growing up in poverty or with other adverse experiences. The power of positive role models and community assets was witnessed, and inspired the team to reflect on how to capitalise on these opportunities in Scotland for more sustainable solutions for some of the pressing issues faced by children and young people today.

An additional goal of the bid was to build an ongoing partnership with UWC with an ambition to develop cross cultural learning events, as well as future staff and student exchanges. There was great enthusiasm for this from both sides, so watch this space! The trip finished with a teaching session delivered to a very

engaged 3rd year occupational therapy student cohort, at the University of the Western Cape. You will be pleased to learn the trip finished on a high by bringing a taste of Scotland to each learner, in the shape of a Tunnocks caramel wafer!

The team are hoping to publish a more comprehensive account of our South African Knowledge Exchange trip in OT news in the coming months, so please look out for this!

by Linda Renton, Elvin Williams and Janine Hackett, Lecturers at Queen Margaret University

Reflecting on RCOT annual conference 2023

I attended the RCOT Conference in June 2023 as a guest of SERCOT. It was a virtual event which allowed me to participate in discussions, listen to guest speakers and increase my knowledge on current topics. The programme included interactive sessions, informative meetings, demonstrations, posters and networking sessions. During each session the chat function was split into two, one for general chat and the other was dedicated to questions for the speaker(s), this ensured that no question was lost in the general chat, which was rather busy.

I attended a range of talks by experts in their areas, with a focus on growing occupational therapy in primary care, stress management for practitioners, workplace diversity, how to support neurodivergent students, and embedding public health into clinical settings. The breadth of topics covered resulted in me attending sessions that I was not familiar with and getting a taste of what they were about. I appreciated the accessibility of the event being online as I would not have been able to travel and stay away for the two events. When watching the sessions there was an option of having captions on too.

If you are planning on attending this year's conference, I would recommend familiarising yourself with the event platform beforehand and looking at the programme to create your own schedule. However, as each session is recorded and available for six months afterwards, you don't have to attend everything on the day, or have to choose between sessions if there is a clash in the timetable.

I thoroughly enjoyed the conference and would definitely recommend attending.

by Orla Irwin, student representative on the RCOT Scottish Eastern region committee

Our news

Representing occupational therapy at Holyrood

As a current RCOT Board – Scotland member, I was pleased to represent our profession at a Health, Social Care and Sport Committee meeting at Holyrood on 5 December 2023.

Appearing as “a witness” and giving evidence to a parliamentary committee is not something that I have ever done before. I will confess that I was definitely quite nervous about doing so. I wasn't quite sure what to expect but I saw it as a great opportunity to highlight and promote occupational therapy to a very influential forum. This included highlighting to the committee the uniquely holistic approach of occupational therapy and the valuable contribution that we make to Primary Care, Mental Health, Housing and Social Care.

The committee meeting also provided the opportunity for me to highlight the uniqueness of occupational therapy as the only profession that spans both sides of the Health and Social Care partnership, which some committee members found surprising. I also discussed current pressures on our workforce and on equipment adaptations budgets. I was active in promoting occupational therapy as a preventative service, that requires investment, not disinvestment. I was also able to promote the need for OT apprenticeship, or “earn as you learn” opportunities as a potential solution to the recruitment difficulties that most Health Boards and local authorities are now facing.

On reflecting upon my appearance as a witness in front of the parliamentary committee, I hope that I represented our profession effectively and promoted the immense value and unique offering of

occupational therapy.

by Neil Carnegie, Vice Chair RCOT Scottish Eastern region committee

Our events

Digital Technology in Occupational Therapy

15 May 2024, 9.30am – 4pm

The National Robotarium, Heriot Watt, Edinburgh

Come along and learn about what the future may look like with the help of technology and robotics, with a talk and tour of the National Robotarium. There will also be a talk on The Life Curve and how this can be used to keep people as fit and independent at home as possible.

This event is open to members in the Scottish Eastern region that are interested in the development of technology in health and care. Refreshments and lunch will be provided throughout the day.

[Register now](#)

News from across RCOT

Strengthening our governance to safeguard our future

We have big ambitions for the profession, and to be able to deliver on them, we need our governance to be fit for purpose and future-proof. Council is reviewing our governance, looking at the rules and systems that guide how we're run, to ensure we follow good practice, are legally compliant and best placed to make informed business decisions.

[Read about it on our new governance hub](#) or meet Council members at a drop-in and they'll talk you through it and answer your questions.

Together, let's make a bigger impact

We launched our first ever [Workforce Strategy](#) in March. It creates a path towards our vision for an expanded occupational therapy workforce – positioned to have maximum impact in improving people's health and quality of life by 2035. Through our strategy, we'll equip you with the skills and resources to be a leader, embrace innovation and champion health equity for all.

Read the [strategy](#) today and get involved.

Annual Conference 2024 tickets are open

Our two-day online event – #RCOT2024 – will take place on **Wednesday 12–Thursday 13 June 2024**. You'll hear strong opinions, get into the debates that matter and discover high-level unique knowledge, perspectives and vision. It's a showcase for occupational therapy, bringing together members and non-members from across the profession.

Snap up your ticket to our Annual Conference at our best price – before our express discount ends on 16 May 2024. [Find out more and book your ticket.](#)

Stay in touch

You can stay up to date with us on social media – follow us on [Facebook](#) and [X](#). You can also contact us by email at rcot.scotlande@rcot.co.uk.