



Occupational therapy and **SOCIAL HOUSING**

Occupational therapy
Helping people to live life their way



Occupational therapists can support social housing providers

Occupational therapists can support housing associations and social landlords to provide efficient and cost effective housing solutions for their older, disabled and vulnerable tenants. The unique skills of an occupational therapist can help housing associations to:

- Identify appropriate alterations to enable tenants to remain in their home
- Select suitable tenants for an empty adapted property
- Ensure that adaptations will be appropriate for a tenant's long term needs

Assuring a good match for a property

Finding the right tenant for an existing adapted property can be a challenge. An occupational therapist can help by using their clinical expertise to match a tenant's current and long term needs to an adapted property. An in-house occupational therapist's unique insight of the needs of your tenants and knowledge of the available housing stock will ensure the adapted property is allocated effectively.

“At Teign Housing, our allocation of property is more efficient because we have an occupational therapist working alongside and advising us”

Clare Beach, Neighbourhood Services Manager
Teign Housing

Supporting tenants to remain in their homes for longer

There is evidence which states that installing the right equipment and fitting the appropriate adaptations can enable vulnerable tenants to remain in their homes for up to five years longer.* An occupational therapist can assess a tenant's ability to manage everyday activities and, if necessary, will recommend solutions to enable the tenant to continue to remain there by providing advice, which could include door ways being widened, or installing ramps for easier access. The occupational therapist will also liaise with the appropriate agencies to help secure funding for any adaptations and specialist equipment, should this be needed.

**Adaptations Working Group, Final Report (November 2012), Scottish Government*

Working with architects and builders

Occupational therapists work with architects and builders to support and instigate inclusive design, particularly in new-build properties. An in-house occupational therapist can work with your development team to optimise interior design and build for mainstream accommodation to meet the requirements of tenants who have a range of complex needs and disabilities. Designs that include the advice and expertise of an occupational therapist may avoid the need for further property adaptations later on.

Addressing the complex needs of tenants

Occupational therapists possess the clinical knowledge to assess and anticipate both the current and potential future needs of tenants. They can assess applicants with a wide range of medical conditions and identify how accommodation can be adapted to meet their ongoing long term needs.

Occupational therapists will also make safeguarding suggestions and identify preventative measures, for example, recommending bariatric equipment or telecare aids, to enable tenants to retain their dignity, their independence, and making them feel safe in their own home.

Making a positive contribution to your organisation

Occupational therapists can enhance the services you offer to your tenants and can improve the economic viability of your business. They have the clinical skills to assess your tenants' needs and possess the appropriate knowledge to advise on your building programmes.

They can help your tenants to apply for funding, and enable your business to make the best use of your housing stock. Employing an occupational therapist will contribute to cost effective and efficient housing solutions enabling your organisation to retain tenants and avoid the inconvenience and expense of having void properties in your portfolio.

“Having our own occupational therapist in Westward has led to a more efficient and cost effective service to our tenants”

Nigel Barnard, Director of Operations
Westward Housing Group

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Accessing occupational therapy services

Your tenant can be assessed by an occupational therapist by asking their local social care department for a referral. Tenants can also arrange for an occupational therapy assessment via their GP, nurse or social worker.

Employing an occupational therapist

You will benefit from employing an occupational therapist or entering into a secondment arrangement with local community occupational therapy services. According to the Chartered Institute of Housing*, organisations who have employed occupational therapists have reported more effective and appropriate use of their adapted housing stock. Occupational therapists have also made a valuable contribution to supporting these organisations when planning future housing developments.

**How to... make effective use of adapted properties, Chartered Institute of Housing, January 2014*

If you are considering employing an occupational therapist, you will find a sample job description and person specification at www.haffot.org.uk. HAFFOT is a group of occupational therapists working for or on behalf of housing associations.

For more information about how occupational therapy can support housing associations visit:

[COT.org.uk/housing associations](http://COT.org.uk/housing%20associations)

To find an independent occupational therapist, visit the College of Occupational Therapists website:

COT.org.uk/find-otfind-occupational-therapist

For leisure, learning, living or working
Occupational therapy
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For more information about occupational therapy, visit the College of Occupational Therapists website

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