

Solihull Adult Social Care Principal Occupational Therapist Annual Report 2024-2025



This report highlights the role of Solihull's Adult Principal Occupational Therapist (POT), details the impact made throughout year and outlines the key priority areas of work for 2025-26

The role of Principal OT (POT) is intended to:

- Provide a clear strategic direction for OT services and professional leadership, support and advice for registered and non-registered OT staff and managers of OT staff.
- Ensure OT staff have the necessary skills and support to enable them to provide high quality care and support; to make explicit the skills required, and work with managers to ensure that regular supervision, training and development occurs.
- Take a leadership role in partnership working with other agencies as we develop an integrated approach to service developments which will deliver improved outcomes for people

Achievements in 2024-2025

Better Care at Home Project

Work continued in 2024/25 on the "Better Care at Home" initiative. This is intended to ensure that people can live as independently as possible, and that care is right-sized, for example by provision of equipment and support of one carer rather than two.

There were significant positive outcomes, with individuals supported to undertake personal care activities safely with suitable equipment and reduced levels of care.

Occupational Therapy staff were provided with specialist training, and next steps are being agreed to mainstream this support for people living in Solihull.

Home Improvement Agency (HIA)

A Business Case to propose the creation of a Solihull HIA was developed. This is essentially a single, trusted service that helps residents, particularly older and disabled people (including children), to live safely and independently at home. This includes things like home adaptations, minor repairs, telecare, and signposting to energy efficiency support.

At the moment, these services are delivered by different teams across Solihull Community Housing and Adult Social Care, with separate management and referral routes. The HIA would bring these together into one coordinated service with a single point of access, clearer oversight, and better performance monitoring.

We explored whether outsourcing would be more cost-effective, but the market is extremely limited. Other councils have found that in-house or housing-led delivery is more sustainable and effective. Our business case reflects this learning. We will be moving forward with implementation in 2025/26

OT and the Front Door

Work was undertaken to understand and analyse benefits (which some other Local Authorities adopt) to better utilise Occupational Therapy skills and outcomes. It was developed that use of Occupational Therapy could be more effective at first contact, and work is underway during 2025/26 to implement this.

Performance Management

In line with wider Directorate work, OT worked hard to continue to bring down it's waiting list of residents awaiting assessment for service, with very positive results and reductions in average wait for Solihull residents.

The team focused on performance, case allocations and throughput and managing risks for those awaiting service, and will continue to build on this work through 2025/26.

In terms of practice, preparation for CQC inspection continued, with staff attending mock interviews, receiving briefings and continuing to be appraised of directorate plans. Additionally, casefiles continued to be submitted for CQC inspection and casefile audits continued, showing a consistent level of practice was evident.

Children's Occupational Therapy

A memorandum of understanding was drafted and signed, with a commitment to working closely together to delivery support and services for children and families.

This work will continue in 2025/26, including determining a funding pathway where proposed home adaptations exceed mandatory disabled facilities grants (DFG), but support is required to enable families and care providers to continue to provide safe, proportionate care.

Home Adaptations

Work continued in 2024/25 against a picture of increased demand and increasing building costs. Processes were improved in order to ensure that people receive timely adaptations, in accordance with risk involved.

Practice development work took place in OT around ensuring clear, justifiable, reasoned and defensible recommendations for proportionate adaptations.

Further work on waiting lists and risk management for those awaiting adaptations is also underway during 2025/26.

Digital, recording and outcomes

OT has played a key and prominent role in embracing and employing digital solutions. OT participated in the Magic Notes Artificial Intelligence pilot, embracing and advocating for this new technology, clearly demonstrating the benefits this can bring. This system helps write up notes from assessment and review meetings, ensuring that individuals receive a service as quickly as possible. Other successful examples of digital enhancements have been in referrals for Technology Enabled Care (TEC) for residents.

Occupational Therapy Staff Feedback – Employer Standards Healthcheck

Occupational Therapy participated in the annual Local Government Association 'Employer Standards Health Check Survey for Social Care.' Despite being a small part of the social care workforce, SMBC's Occupational Therapy response ranked in the top quartile nationally, demonstrating high standards across all sections. A detailed analysis of these survey results will be completed in 2025.

Learning and Development

Work was undertaken with People and Organisational Development team to refresh the development offer for Occupational Therapists, and this included moving and handling training, "hands on" practice methods, uptake of ad hoc specific training requirements in addition to the "standard offer" available for all OTs. Better Care at Home training was also facilitated. OT representation contributed to the 2024 Learning Fortnight and shaping it as the successful venture. Work has continued to support staff in ensuring that residents are protected from abuse and neglect. The mandatory training programme equips Occupational Therapists (OTs) with the essential knowledge and skills required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents. Apprenticeships for OT have also continued to be supported, with 2 staff qualifying in 2024, and another due in 2025, and a new apprentice has also started her qualification training in early 2025. Students have continued to be supported on placement within ASC OT.

Partnerships

Throughout 2024/25, OTs have actively engaged with other professional OT and therapy teams within the Integrated Care System (ICS) and Health partners. Collaborative efforts with University Hospitals Birmingham therapy team leadership have focused on understanding discharge and community support therapy services. Together, they have identified areas for improvement to enhance performance and outcomes for residents.

Examples of Compliments received by Occupational Therapy in 2024/25

"I'm writing to say a big thank you to XY from Community OT.

We are delighted with the service from XY. She is highly professional, knowledgeable and thorough whilst also being so patient, compassionate and friendly. My Mom received a comprehensive needs assessment from XY and the equipment she needs to help with daily living. Everything was done promptly and efficiently but in a way that we as family didn't feel rushed. Thank you XY: keep up the great work!"

"I am very happy with OT Assessment and equipment that ZZ had ordered/ It has all been "great" and the team were brilliant. 😊"

"Can I take the opportunity to thank you and YY for your support and quick action regarding the adaptation on the bungalow. I can't express enough my gratitude.

Best wishes"

"You put so much effort , compassion and warmth into trying to make this gentlemen's life so much better"

"You must love your job; you get to change people's lives like you have changed mine"

"Mrs ABC said she is very grateful and stated that she is now able to access the shower and the community independently, she no longer has to rely on her husband who was carrying her over the step into the porch and then again down a further step from the front door."

"Mrs X confirmed that the shower seat is now in place and said that "he has done a lovely job". She said "thanks so much for your help I have tried it out this morning and it is fantastic"

"I wanted to thank you for all your hard work to help our family to try and keep us all together, so we can look after my mom in our own home, in the space she requires due to her disabilities."

"Dear (OT) - I have read the Plan through with interest.

I respond now to let you know that the Dove carers tonight were genuinely happy to find her more relaxed and in much less pain with the hoist than pulling herself up as previously required. I originally regarded this pair as tough guys and it is a real eye opener to realise how much they had shared her pain. So, including her and me, you have already made five people happier.

With very kind regards"

Priorities for 2025-2026

The OT development project is ongoing and identified several opportunities for the next financial year have been identified. These include:

- Developing proposals for the Duty OT team to further prevent, reduce, and delay care needs, and more effectively complement social work functions.
- Establishing Better Care at Home as business as usual, to provide dignified care outcomes and improved care pathways, while contributing to ICS workstreams and collaborating with Health colleagues.
- Continuing to raise the profile of social care OT and its contributions to the Adult Social Care Directorate, Children's Social Care Directorate, safeguarding residents, and Better Care Fund (BCF) outcomes,
- Advocating for OT services at public and internal events, and creating written resources for GP surgeries, community hubs, libraries, and other access points.
- Enhancing service remit information, access to services, and resident pathways for partners, referrers, and professionals.
- Maintaining good performance management, further reducing waiting times for OT services, and further minimising risks for those waiting.
- Advancing OT professional development, training, preceptorship, and apprenticeship support with POD and Solihull Social Care Academy.
- Playing a key role in the rollout of the HIA and TEC.
- Providing OT services for children in line with the Memorandum of Understanding with the Children's Social Care Directorate, including agreeing funding pathways for non-mandatory home adaptations.