

Solihull Adult Social Care Principal Occupational Therapist Annual Report 2025/26



This report highlights the role of Solihull's Adult Principal Occupational Therapist (POT), details the impact made throughout 2025/26, and outlines the key priority areas of work for 2026/27

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 2025/26

Better Care at Home Project

Work continued in 2025/26 on the "Better Care at Home" initiative, building on previous successful trials within Adult Social Care. Recruitment for permanent OTs to lead this as best practice is ongoing, and part of their role will be to assist all teams to understand and work using this approach for all residents.

The aim is to ensure that people can live as independently as possible, and that care is optimised, 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.

Home Improvement Agency (HIA)

The HIA has continued to progress their partnership working with ASC, and there is now closer working with the Housing ATM who started in April (previously this was a Senior OT post only), which is developing a better understanding on both ASC and SCH sides as to what is required. This is working well in conjunction with the Aids and Adaptation Manager. SILS is also now working with ASC as a partner to deliver the Technology Enabled Care (TEC) offer from SMBC, and joint work with Occupational Therapy and the Digital Lead is supporting this transition. It has been identified that there are areas of practice and processes that can be improved, and this work has started with a revamp of the Housing Needs Assessment (for homeless and rehousing requests) that is completed by the Housing OT based in SCH. An action plan of work includes a review of referral processes, involvement with the tender processes for lift and ceiling track hoists, and improving the trusted assessor approach within Solihull Independent Living Service (SILS), with additional training and refresher sessions for staff completed by the Housing ATM.

Sensory Impairment Integration in Adult Social Care

October 2025 saw the sensory impairment workers return to work within adult social care rather than being based with an external partner. This has seen two vision impairment (VI) specialists join the OT team, and an Information and Advice officer join the SW Duty team where all referrals are triaged and any requests for CVIs (registered sight loss) are completed.

The VI specialists have embedded well into the team and are continuing to support people in the community with visual loss or blindness. They are continuing to work in partnership with community groups and charities to make sure that people are aware of the move to SMBC, and how to contact us if they require any support. They are also available to support teams where sensory loss might be a consideration for someone's care and support.

Performance Management

In line with wider Directorate work post CQC, OT is continuing to focus on how we can support people who require OT interventions more effectively and efficiently.

The number of residents who are referred to OT over this last year has increased, and this demand is impacting on waiting times. Work to review how we can reach residents sooner using different methods – virtual assessment, clinic appointments and trusted assessor approaches – is continuing to be investigated to support this. The OT team have work to do to meet the ASC target of assessment within 28 days of referral for residents, which is a key focus for the POT this year.

The team continues to focus on case allocations, throughput and managing risks for those awaiting service and will continue to build on this work through 2026/27, using the new waiting list strategy. The review of OT processes will also enhance performance and assist with meeting these demands.

In terms of practice, case audits and surveys for OT have shown that people are positive about their interaction with the team and the outcomes that we achieve with them, assisting them to lead their best lives and be as independent as possible. They show that work is undertaken in a person-centred way, taking the person and their carers' needs into consideration and keeping them central to the decision-making.

Children's Occupational Therapy

Building on the work already undertaken with the Memorandum of Understanding with Children's Services, the OT team has continued to work collaboratively with our colleagues in the Children's Directorate, as well as our health colleagues and schools, to deliver support and services to children and families in SMBC.

Work is planned for 2026/27 to extend the liaison with our children's health colleagues to develop clearer pathways for equipment so that this supports families' understanding of services and responsibilities, and aids their navigation of the multiple services available.

Home Adaptations

Work continued in 2025/26 against a picture of increased demand and increasing building costs. Processes have been improved to ensure that people receive timely adaptations, in accordance with the risk involved. The Housing OT team are continuing, in conjunction with the POT and SILS, to look at further improvements to reduce waiting times and risk mitigation for residents.

Practice development work took place in OT around ensuring clear, justifiable, reasoned and defensible recommendations for proportionate adaptations, and further work on better understanding of DFG principles and eligibility is planned for 2026/27, along with a review of all documentation completed for rehousing and homeless assessments.

Digital, Recording and Outcomes

OT continues to champion the use of technology and digital ways of working, with our two digital champions supporting via trials of new systems, piloting changes to ways of working, and always keen to get others involved. If staff are not confident in digital use, they will support this development within the team, which allows for greater uptake and understanding.

Within our assessment work, OTs/OTAs are continuing to consider where TEC can be used to support someone's independence and safety, or where this can assist informal unpaid carers with their role. Our links with SILS, in conjunction with the Digital Lead, will enhance and support mutual learning and understanding.

Learning and Development

We currently have one OT apprentice completing their OT degree in January 2027 and have been able to offer another apprenticeship starting September 2026. This is great for the team and shows commitment to the profession and the workers that ASC are supporting in their progression to become registered OTs. We are also actively supporting other apprentices and students on placements within OT and Reablement so that they can understand the role and how we support people in the community.

A First Year in Practice approach to support newly qualified and return-to-work OTs has been approved by DLT, and the POT will be developing this in 2026/27.

The POT has worked with People and Organisational Development to review the OT training offer so that this is up to date, appropriate and enhances the work the team does with residents.

Areas of focus have been identified: Housing training – in relation to adaptations, specifications and principles of design, housing legislation and understanding of principles of DFG; OT-specific sessions – Mental Capacity, Deprivation of Liberty and risk assessment; and Children's OT-focused safeguarding training.

The Housing ATM has also supported and completed trusted assessor training with the Reablement Team OT staff to allow them to make recommendations for adaptations. This will save staff having to complete an onward referral to OT and the resident having to wait a second time for assessment. This is a positive step forward for the resident, providing a more joined-up approach and reducing delays in provision.

OT Processes and Pathways

The POT has been reviewing the current pathways and processes that are undertaken by the OT team since her arrival midway through the year and has identified areas where improvements can be made to assist the team to be more effective and efficient.

A change request has been made for OT workflow to be developed over 2026/27, and this is planned for progression with the LAS team, which will support the team to progress work, whilst also capturing the demand of OT for client-led data returns.

Examples of compliments received by Occupational Therapy in 2025/26:

'Positive, dependable, honest, available and supportive'

'Excellent, nice people — caring and empathetic. It's almost an unbelievable service that's being provided.'

'I was hesitant about getting any equipment in the home but I'm so glad I did, as it has made a really positive difference to me.'

'My overall experience has been wonderful. XX was brilliant. She explained things clearly and understood what was important to me in terms of maintaining my independence as much as possible. She's a fantastic asset to Solihull.'

'Everything was perfect. It made me feel at ease and look forward to an easier 2026.'

'We felt listened to. XX was lovely; she used to ring and check up on Dad, see how he was getting on.'

'Over the moon — couldn't do enough. Manner and attitude brilliant — got things done which had previously taken years. Top job.'

'The OT kept us updated regularly on progress. She was so easy to explain our situation to. She made us feel comfortable chatting. Nothing was too much trouble.'

'Greatly improved living for Mum since all adaptations required were put in place by our last Occupational Therapist.'

'The OT who came was very helpful and explained everything very clearly. She had a calming presence. I can't thank XX enough.'

'I found our last OT to be very good at acknowledging Mum's specific needs — not all of which I'd become aware of, but which were a godsend when delivered. She was so supportive.'

'I was treated with respect and consideration. The OT was professional in their attitude and approach to the assessment.'

'XX was brilliant, she did what she said she would do very quickly.'

Priorities for 2026/27

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

- Developing proposals for the Duty and Community OT teams to further prevent, reduce, and delay care needs, and more effectively complement social work functions, with new ways of working.
- 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 engagement events and supporting people's understanding of OT through Carers Week and OT Week, as well as the ASC Learning Fortnight.
- Reviewing current pathways and processes to make these more effective and efficient for staff to complete their OT interventions with residents in a timely manner, including development of a LAS workflow where possible.
- Maintaining good performance management, further reducing waiting times for OT services, and further minimising risks for those waiting.
- Advancing OT professional development, training, first year in practice, and apprenticeship support with POD and Solihull Social Care Academy.
- Playing a key role in the rollout of the HIA, SILS and TEC.
- Providing OT services for children in line with the legislation and Memorandum of Understanding, and developing stronger links with children's health services to holistically support the children and their families.
- Embedding sensory impairment workers into the team and developing the sensory offer for residents.