

Occupational therapy support worker

Occupational therapy support workers help people who struggle with day-to-day activities to live a full and independent life.

Working life

Illness, injury, disability or ageing can make ordinary tasks harder for some people. Occupational therapy (OT) support workers work with occupational therapists to help these carry out these tasks.



This includes daily care (washing, dressing, eating), work or education and leisure. They help people find ways to continue with activities which are important to them. This might involve learning new ways to do things. Or it might mean changes to the environment to make things easier.

OT support workers work with people of all ages and situations with a range of conditions. For example, helping

- someone adapt to life after major surgery such as a hip replacement
- children with disabilities take part in school and play activities
- dementia sufferers develop strategies
- [stroke](#) ^[1] patients
- people suffering from mental illness get back into everyday activities such as work or volunteering
- elderly people stay in their own homes by providing adaptation such as level access showers or stairlifts

OT support workers may help people to use aids and equipment, including assistive technology. Assistive technology helps profoundly disabled people communicate, use IT, get about and control household services and equipment (lights, TV, etc).

OT support workers may also be known as



- OT assistants
- rehabilitation assistants
- technical instructors/OT technicians

OT support workers can be based in hospitals, clinics and GP practices. They may also visit patients in their homes or in residential or care homes.

Entry requirements

There are no set entry requirements for OT support workers. Employers expect good numeracy and literacy and some experience or qualifications in health or social care. Employers may ask for GCSEs in English and maths. They may ask for a BTEC or equivalent vocational qualifications in health and social care.

Employers often ask for relevant work experience. Even where this is not specified, it would be an advantage if you have worked in health or social care, either in paid employment or voluntary work. If you secure an apprenticeship ^[2] in healthcare/clinical support, this could enable you to apply for OT support worker vacancies in the future.

If you're applying for a role in the NHS, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work.

Skills and personal characteristics needed

As an OT support worker, you need to be

- able to motivate people
- accepting of other people's lifestyles
- willing to work with people from all walks of life
- happy to talk to and work with groups
- flexible
- willing to travel
- able to work in a team but use their own initiative
- able to follow procedures
- able to deal with people with challenging behaviour

You also need

You'll help people to use aids and equipment, including assistive technology.

- very good communication skills
- customer care skills
- organisational skills

Training and development

You will receive appropriate training in order to do the job, including an introduction to the department and its procedures and how to set up and use the equipment.

You may be offered the chance to study for qualifications such as

- the NCFE CACHE level 2 Certificate in Healthcare Support Services
- the NCFE CACHE level 3 Diploma in Healthcare Support

Some OT support workers join the British Association and College of Occupational Therapists ^[3] (BAOT/COT) as associate members. The BAOT/COT runs courses, conferences and seminars where OT support workers can update their skills and network with others doing similar work.

With experience, you could become a team leader supervising the work of other OT support workers. You could apply to train as an assistant practitioner or as an occupational therapist.

Pay and benefits

Your standard working week will be around 37.5 hours and may include a mix of shifts, such as nights, early starts, evenings and weekends. You'll be paid on the Agenda for Change (AFC [4]) pay system, typically starting on band 3.

You'll also have access to our generous pension scheme and health service discounts, as well as 27 days of annual leave, plus bank holidays, which increases the longer you're in service.

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Other roles that may interest you

- Healthcare assistant [5]
- Occupational therapist [6]
- Physiotherapy assistants/support workers [7]
- Experienced paramedic [8]

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/apprenticeships-traineeships-and-cadet-schemes>

[3] <http://www.cot.co.uk/>

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC>

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-support-worker/roles-healthcare-support-worker/healthcare-assistant>

[6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/occupational-therapist>

[7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-support-worker/roles-healthcare-support-worker/physiotherapy-assistantssupport-workers>

[8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ambulance-service-team/roles-ambulance-service/experienced-paramedic>