

Occupational Therapy Workforce Data: How to use data to influence demand

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Introduction: The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) is a UK-wide organisation that comprises of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Each country has a mechanism for collecting workforce data on occupational therapists employed in health and social care services. RCOT has used this data to inform workforce planning consultations to influence the numbers of occupational therapists within the workforce.

Objectives: This presentation will provide: a guide on how to source workforce data on occupational therapists; demonstrate data to best effect; the relationship between supply and demand; and the role of the national association to influence the contribution and value of the occupational therapy workforce to the health and wellbeing of the population in today's climate of financial restraint.

Approach: A range of mechanisms has been used to understand and source workforce data; this data has then been used to influence through workforce consultations; articulating the representative numbers of the profession, and developing campaigns in areas where there maybe shortages.

Practice Implications: National priorities for health and social care are key levers to influencing growth in workforce numbers but there is also an increasing imperative to demonstrate value for money. Influencing demand in different domains of occupational therapy practice can create new opportunities but this needs to be balanced by the numbers of occupational therapy students and practice placements.

Conclusion: National occupational therapy associations need to understand their workforce numbers to: influence, secure new opportunities for employment; and for the population to benefit from engagement with occupational therapy.