

WM-ADASS Social Care Occupational Therapy

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1. Executive Summary

This is the 4th update of the original report [ahp-project-report-jun-24-final.pdf](#)

Occupational Therapy (OT) is now recognised—both nationally and regionally—as core infrastructure for sustainable adult social care, rather than a peripheral service. Evidence across councils shows that when OTs are embedded strategically, systems achieve:

- Stronger prevention and early intervention;
- Reduced waiting times, backlogs, and crisis escalation;
- Significant financial return on investment (3:1 ROI);
- High rates of independence post-reablement ($\approx 76\%$ requiring no ongoing care);
- Improved CQC assurance performance.

Simultaneously, the IMPACT OT Demonstrator Project has accelerated research engagement, culture change, and evidence-informed practice across 14 West Midlands local authorities. This is complemented by the POT network Data Insight and Impact programme, which strengthens outcome measurement, KPI frameworks, and data literacy across OT leadership.

Together, these initiatives provide a coherent regional roadmap for strengthening OT capacity, leadership, evidence use, and measurable impact in adult social care.

2. Strategic Context: Why OT Matters More Than Ever

2.1 OT as the Backbone of Prevention

The WM-ADASS reports highlight OT as the “infrastructure of prevention” due to its central role in keeping people independent, reducing crises, avoiding admissions, and enabling timely discharge.

2.2 Research & Evidence as Drivers of Quality

The IMPACT Demonstrator shows that OTs want:

- confidence in using evidence;
- opportunities for research engagement;
- supportive leadership, culture change, and structured career pathways.

2.3 Data and Outcomes as Assurance Imperatives

The Data Insight programme foregrounds:

- consistent outcome measurement;
- OT-specific KPIs;
- live dashboards;
- mixed-methods evaluation (quantitative + qualitative).

This aligns with increasing CQC scrutiny on prevention, independence, timeliness, assurance evidence, and workforce models.

3. Core Themes

3.1 Leadership, Governance and System Architecture

Strong OT leadership is repeatedly linked to:

- better CQC outcomes;
- clearer strategic direction;
- more effective cross-sector integration;
- stronger research culture;
- more sophisticated use of data.

Emerging leadership priorities include:

- elevating Principal OT (POT) roles;
- embedding OTs as professional leads alongside PSWs & Chief Nurses;
- creating governance frameworks for research and data engagement.

4. Strengthening Workforce Capacity

4.1 Workforce Pressures & Transformation Needs

We continue to highlight the lack of POT roles and the variability of OT staffing across the Midlands, with growing but inconsistent strategic recognition. However, there has been a step change in this matter following 25/26 CQC inspections and reports.

4.2 Workforce Expansion Models

Shared solutions include:

- Trusted Assessors & OT Assistants to release registered OT capacity;
- Clearer triage and prioritisation (RAG systems);
- Enhanced training and specialisms (e.g., sensory integration).

4.3 Research-Active Workforce

The IMPACT project evidences:

- the desire for skills in evidence appraisal, outcome use, and research involvement;
- cultural and organisational barriers to research participation;
- the need for senior management buy-in and protected development space.

5. Improvements in Practice Models

The following models are shown to deliver high impact, and are in progress across the WMPOT Councils:

5.1 Front Door OT & Early Intervention

- Embedding OTs at first contact reduces unnecessary referrals, accelerates support.

5.2 Reablement & Discharge-to-Assess

- High-frequency OT review;
- Goal-driven pathways;
- 76% success with no ongoing support.

5.3 Falls Prevention & Digital Monitoring

- Tools such as HelpFall, Doc@Home;
- Savings of £109,733 and 1,196 staff hours in one case study.

5.4 Housing, Adaptations & Assistive Technology

- “Adaptations Without Delay” approaches;
- Strategic housing roles for OTs;
- Faster pathways for DFGs and equipment.

6. Data, Insight and Outcome Measurement

The framework for robust OT performance management, includes:

6.1 Why Data Matters

- Storytelling impact to leaders and commissioners;
- Meeting CQC assurance expectations;
- Demonstrating prevention, independence and efficiency.

6.2 What to Measure

Examples include:

- assessment waiting times (routine 28 days; urgent 48 hours);
- equipment and DFG delivery timelines;
- outcome measures (TOMS, COPM, goal attainment);
- customer satisfaction;
- stories of impact.

6.3 Building Data Literacy and Insight Capacity

Principal OTs should:

- partner with data insight teams;
- develop/refine OT dashboards;
- embed mixed-methods evaluation.

7. The IMPACT OT Demonstrator Research Project

The report will be published in early 2026/2027. Key achievements include:

7.1 Regional Research Engagement

- 250 OTs (200 WTE) across 14 councils;
- Variable but improving engagement.

7.2 Activities Driving Research Culture

- Research “hack” workshops;
- Focus groups;
- OT Show events;
- Research skill development resources.

7.3 Strategic Levers

- Access to evidence (RCOT, CAHPR, NIHR);
- Academic partnerships;
- Career pathways into hybrid clinician-research roles.

The Demonstrator project provides a strong foundation for long-term transformation of OT culture and capability. An OT Research Engagement Lead has been appointed, along with a further two colleagues; social worker and expert with lived experience respectively, to begin the next iterations of building research capacity in social care across the West Midlands.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Leadership & Governance

- Elevate POT roles to parity with PSW roles and integrate into ICS governance;
- Formalise OT leadership within CQC assurance structures.

8.2 Workforce Capacity

- Scale Trusted Assessor models and community-based OT models;
- Invest in postgraduate training and specialisms;
- Create structured research & data development pathways.

8.3 Practice Redesign

- Embed OTs at the “front door” system-wide;
- Expand falls and digital monitoring programmes;
- Create fast-track adaptation pathways across all councils.

8.4 Data & Insight Development

- Establish live OT dashboards in every authority;
- Standardise outcome measures regionally;
- Integrate qualitative “stories of impact” alongside quantitative KPIs.

8.5 Research Engagement

- Sustain the IMPACT model beyond 2026;
- Build academic partnerships into business-as-usual.

9. Conclusions

Across the WM-ADASS network and beyond, evidence is unequivocal: Occupational Therapy is a high-impact, financially beneficial, prevention-focused asset that transforms outcomes for people and systems.

By integrating:

- the strategic insights of the WM-ADASS OT Update;
- the research leadership of the IMPACT Demonstrator and;
- the measurement frameworks of the Data Insight programme.

the region can deliver a coherent, future-proofed OT strategy that strengthens prevention, independence, and assurance, while positioning OTs as key system leaders across health, housing and social care.

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