

Meeting	Care Scrutiny Committee
Date	14th of January 2021
Title	Report on Occupational Therapy (OT) Service in Gwynedd Social Services.
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Member	Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member, Adult, Health and Wellbeing

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is provide an overview of the contribution of Occupational Therapists within Gwynedd Local Authority

2. Introduction

2.1 The purpose of the Community Resource Teams is to “Help Me Live My Life as I want to Live It”. Occupational Therapy has a very important role helping the citizens of Gwynedd to achieve their personal outcomes by promoting independence.

2.2 (OT) is the assessment and treatment of physical & psychiatric conditions using specific, purposeful activity to prevent disability and promote independent function in all aspects of daily life. OT is a client centred practise that places a premium on the progress towards the client’s goals. This is a fundamental aspect of The Social Services and Well-being Act 2014, which ultimately delivers “What Matter’s”. We work with clients of all age groups from birth to death and with all types of conditions and impairments.

3 Developments in the Service

3.1 Prior to February 2020 there was no OT within the Learning Disability Service with the generic OT’s within the Department supporting the service. It was identified that a dedicated OT was required within the service. An OT has been recruited into the Learning Disability service, and this has made a significant difference as this person is able to focus solely on the service and work closely with individuals who have complex care needs to achieve what matters to them. This post is temporary, as it is funded with short term monies. The Department is eager to ensure long term funding for the post and can demonstrate the effectiveness of having a specific OT in within the Learning Disability Service.

3.2 The service has also been successful in recruiting 0.5 post to the Children’s Department to support the 1 Paediatric OT for the whole of Gwynedd Local Authority. This will make a significant improvement in this area.

- 3.3 OT is one of the only professions - allied to Health; that are employed by both the Local Authority and also the Health Service. The roles between the two organisations at times can be confusing and blurred. It has been a priority to work in partnership with colleagues in Health to strengthen joint working, removing historical barriers and have a clearer understanding of the roles within the community, and how best we can work together moving forward. A new referral pathway has been developed jointly with health colleagues that identifies which organisation will be responsible for the various referrals. We have also helped cover gaps between services during the pandemic to ensure service users receive a service. There is more work to be done to work in partnership with the health service and develop an integrated OT service.
- 3.4 Recruiting OT's to Gwynedd has been a major challenge in the past. The OT service within Gwynedd Local Authority is now fully staffed and we have been successful in covering maternity leave. The service has been proactive in encouraging student placements in association with Glyndwr University, as this is not only good practise, but also helps with recruitment of qualified staff. We now have OT's interested in joining our team.
- 3.5 OT's currently make up approximately 3% of the overall Gwynedd Local Authority Social Care workforce. However the Local Authority OT's work with approximately 35-40% of all referrals into the local authority. (Royal College of OT's).
- 3.6 We are anticipating an increase of 15% in terms of referral rate for OT intervention from the local authority in 2021-2022. The main reason for this is a loss of confidence / mobility and deconditioning from vulnerable individuals that have been shielding and not exercising, walking to the shops and losing their independence. OT's will have a crucial role in supporting individuals with Post Covid 19* Recovery (Long COVID). There is a big driver from Welsh Government on everyone's Rights to Rehabilitation and Occupational Therapy provision and intervention will be at the forefront in making this happen.
- 3.7 OT interventions focus on adapting the environment, modifying the task, teaching new or alternative skills, educating clients / families and care staff in order to increase the participation & function in the performance of daily living activities. The OT service deal with a wide range of issues. This list is not exhaustive but provides an idea of the range of work.
- Provision of equipment to keep people safe and in their own homes and as independent as possible,
 - Make recommendations for the provision of suitable home adaptations,
 - Provide manual handling risk assessments, and provide training in the use of the equipment to families and care staff.
 - Safeguarding of vulnerable adults and service users.
 - Prevention of hospital admission,
 - Facilitating hospital discharge,
 - Supporting clients in residential care settings, providing support to home care staff.

- Assisting with rehabilitation.
- Learning Disabilities-
- Paediatrics

4 Next Steps

4.1 The vision is to continue with the work of OT's enabling individuals to live as independently as possible in the community and to develop a proactive service rather than reactive. This is challenging due to the limited numbers of OT staff.

4.2 There are a number of approaches that can be taken that will promote independence and achieve what matters to the residents of Gwynedd and at the same time reduce costs to the local authority moving forward. If we do nothing and stand still, it is anticipated that care costs will increase. Not only that, there is a risk that individuals will become more dependent.

4.3 Right Sized Care and Moving and Handling

Moving and Handling has been identified as an area that needs to be improved to support individuals and the people caring for them. The vision is to create moving and handling OT posts within the Community Resource Teams. This will enable a designated person to focus on Right Sized Care and Safer Moving and Handling. These cases are more complex and time consuming but when delivered effectively can have significant impact on the personal outcomes of individuals as well as savings on current care packages. Some recent cases in Gwynedd have demonstrated savings of up to £18,000 per annum in care costs on each care package (see case study in Annex 1). These posts can provide more effective training to care staff and informal carers and provide better links with nursing and residential care homes. They could also facilitate timely discharges from hospital by following individuals into hospital, organise the equipment and training for discharge and undertake a post discharge follow up. This will significantly reduce the numbers of failed hospital discharges.

4.4 Applications are currently being made for additional funding to trial this project.

4.5 Rehabilitation and Enablement

As stated previously, there is a big emphasis from Welsh Government on promoting people's Rights to Rehabilitation and we anticipate an increase in demand of 15-20% on the service this year.

4.6 The service will strive to focus more on the enabling and rehabilitation role of the OT's. During the next financial year. There are significant benefits in having therapy led enabling services where therapists work closely with individuals and care providers to set clear achievable goals and monitor outcomes. The OT service is currently working with one care agency to pilot this way of working and initial results are positive.

4.7 Prevention of Hospital Admission and facilitate timely discharges from hospital (discharge to assess)

Our aim is to keep people living independently and safely at home for longer. OT has a crucial role in achieving this aim and in working closely with hospitals to ensure that individuals can return home as soon as possible after a period of being unwell. We will also need access to rapid access to suitable equipment. A review of the provision of equipment across North Wales has been delayed due to the pandemic. In the interim, Gwynedd have worked closely with Byw Bywyd Company who install and hire equipment to ensure timely delivery of equipment to all parts of the county.

4.8 OT involvement has been integral in a pilot scheme in the North of Gwynedd during the pandemic, working closely with Ysbyty Gwynedd and Gofal Seibiant Care Agency to facilitate timely discharges from hospitals and providing short term enabling support to individuals.

4.9 The aim and ambition is to have an effective OT service to allow us to achieve our purpose for the benefit of the residents of Gwynedd.