



## COT/ BAOT Briefings

### Occupational therapists as facilitators of telecare

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**Country Relevance:** England, Scotland and Wales

#### Introduction

The White Paper *Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services* (DH 2006) directs organisations towards providing better preventative services, earlier intervention and more support for people with long term needs. It strongly promotes a whole-system approach to care that enables people to live more independently in their own homes.

Telecare is 'the delivery of health and social care services to people in their own homes using a combination of sensor and information and communication technologies' (Curry 2006). It fulfils the direction given in *Our health, our care, our say* by providing support to people in their own homes. It can be used responsively, when client-activated or automatically activated, for example when the gas is left on. It may also become a preventative system, when collected information can identify behaviour patterns that indicate risk or potential harm will occur if not prevented.

This briefing should be read in conjunction with *COT/BAOT Briefing 83 Telecare/Preventative technology grant* (2007).

#### Occupational therapists as facilitators of telecare

Telecare offers new opportunities and new ways of working, especially when combined with more traditional care. Although telecare has the potential to reduce risk and enable some people to stay at home, it does not substitute for the human contact that face-to-face care provides. If telecare reduces the demand for face-to-face intervention, it also creates the need for the development and supply of 24 hour/seven day contact and response services.

Occupational therapists may be involved at any stage of the use of telecare. In order to make it a successful option, occupational therapists need to consider the ability of the service user, their carer/s and the local healthcare community to accept, adapt to and manage new technology. Practitioners need to know and understand the technology themselves; the range of products and suppliers; the supply and procurement process; the maintenance and upkeep requirements; and the planning and consumer requirements. There is potential for change to staff roles and skill mix to deliver more effective services using telecare. This may mean that occupational therapists will need to develop their knowledge and skills in new areas, such as design, architecture and technology. All relevant staff will need some level of training, to have sufficient knowledge and information to undertake assessments and to arrange the provision of appropriate equipment and services.

Consideration also needs to be given to ethical issues surrounding the use of assistive technology, especially where the service user themselves may not have the capacity to provide consent. Woolham (2006) suggests that this issue needs careful judgement, but can be



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managed through a process that optimises the autonomy of the individual, seeks to find the best solution by considering alternatives, and also considers the views of others concerned.

Woolham (2006) describes the Safe at Home project, which uses assistive technology to support people with dementia. This research shows that assistive technology can support carers; is very cost effective in terms of reducing demand for hospital and residential care; and can be used in a way that meets service user preferences. It could also predict the occurrence of risky activities.

### **Conclusion**

In 2006 the College of Occupational Therapists organised a number of study days on telecare. It was highlighted that 'occupational therapists are uniquely positioned to offer person-environment-occupation assessment to inform the use of telecare and assistive technology, to meet the needs of individuals, of groups/communities and carers.' (Fowler Davis 2006)

The College encourages its members to be aware of national developments in telecare and assistive technology, and to become involved in local telecare projects when and where relevant. Information on the Preventative Technology Grant is provided in the *COT/BAOT Briefing 83 Telecare/preventative technology grant* (2007). Local authority occupational therapists may gain further information from the College of Occupational Therapists' social services email network. Please contact the Professional Practice Department via [practice.administrator@cot.co.uk](mailto:practice.administrator@cot.co.uk) to gain access to the network. A telecare email network is also to be set up in due course.



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## Resources

### England

In England £80 million was allocated through the Preventative Technologies Grant for two years from April 2006. Detailed implementation guidance and supporting materials have been developed by the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP). All are available at:

[www.cat.csip.org.uk/index.cfm?pid=219](http://www.cat.csip.org.uk/index.cfm?pid=219)

(Accessed 12/02/2007)

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) has developed a National Framework Agreement for the procurement of telecare equipment (including installation and maintenance) and response services (including control centres, monitoring and response). More information about the framework and the list of approved suppliers, can be found at:

<http://www.pasa.nhs.uk/PASAWeb>

(Accessed 26/02/2007)

### Scotland

Malcolm Chisholm, Minister for Communities, launched a two-year capital funding programme in 2006, which has a fund of £8 million for telecare developments, of which £7.25 million is available to health, social care and housing partnerships across Scotland. Further information is available on the Scottish Joint Improvement Team web site:

[www.jitscotland.org.uk/action-areas/themes/telecare.html](http://www.jitscotland.org.uk/action-areas/themes/telecare.html)

(Accessed 26/02/2007)

### Wales

Wales has a £8.92m Telecare Capital Grant, the objective of which is to equip 10,000 homes in Wales with Telecare sensors and equipment. The Welsh Assembly Government has issued guidance for organisations involved in the commissioning, procurement and implementation of telecare and related services under the terms and conditions of the Telecare Capital Grant. This is available on the Social Services Improvement Agency web site :

[www.ssiacymru.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1924](http://www.ssiacymru.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1924)

(Accessed 26/02/2007)

## References

Care Services Improvement Partnership (2005) *Telecare implementation guide*. Manchester: ICES.

College of Occupational Therapists (2007) *COT/BAOT Briefing 83 Telecare/Preventative technology grant*. London: COT.

Curry R (2006) Introducing telecare: College of Occupational Therapists *Occupational therapists; the facilitators of telecare in local communities. 29-30 March 2006, York, UK*. London: COT. [Unpublished]

Department of Health (2005) *Building telecare in England*. London: DH.

This document provides local authorities and their partners with guidance in developing telecare services for their communities.

Department of Health (2006) *Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services*. London: DH.

Fowler Davis S (2006) Telecare and the person centred environment in: College of Occupational Therapists *Occupational therapists; the facilitators of telecare in local communities. 29-30 March 2006, York, UK*. London: COT. [Unpublished]

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