

AbleOTUK -Newsletter

Support sessions 2025

We hold monthly networking/support sessions on the first Wednesday of each month. These sessions are open to all UK-based occupational therapists/students who identify as disabled or have a long-term health condition.

We respectfully ask that allies do not attend these sessions to allow a safe space for all participants.

Date for 2025

Wednesday 12th Feb

Wednesday 12th March

Wednesday 9th April

Wednesday 14th May

Wednesday 11th June

Wednesday 9th July

Wednesday 13th Aug

Wednesday 10th Sept

Wednesday 8th Oct

Wednesday 12th Nov

Wednesday 10th Dec

[Book on eventbrite here](#)



AbleOTUK Objectives for 2025

As we look forward to 2025, AbleOTUK is excited to announce our key objectives for the coming year. These goals build on our mission to support occupational therapists and students with lived experiences of disabilities and/or long-term health conditions while fostering positive change in the profession.

1. Developing a Resource for Positive Disclosure

One of our primary aims is to create a practical and supportive resource for occupational therapists and students who may wish to disclose their lived experiences of disabilities and/or long-term health conditions. We recognise that sharing these experiences can be empowering and lead to more inclusive workplace environments, but it can also be daunting. Our resource will offer guidance, tools, and strategies to enable occupational therapists to approach disclosure in a way that feels safe, authentic, and positive.

2. Collaborating with RCOT to Improve Student Placement Experiences

Alongside this, we have approached the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) to collaborate on raising awareness and understanding of reasonable adjustments for students on clinical placements.

Recommended Reading

The January 2025 issue of OT News features an article, "Getting My Life Back," by Cate Chapman, an OT student. Cate reflects on her journey through disability, how occupational therapy transformed her life, and her path to pursuing the profession. This narrative highlights resilience, adaptive interventions' power, and equity's importance in education and healthcare.

<https://viewer.joomag.com/otnews-january-2025/0049506001736764478/p32?short=>

"Exploring ableism and occupational therapy: Occupational therapy students' perspectives", published in the January 2025 *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* (BJOT), is a must-read. It delves into how occupational therapy students perceive ableism and highlights the need for deeper understanding and critical reflection on this issue. The findings call for embedding anti-ableism education into training to better equip future practitioners to challenge discrimination and promote inclusion. If you're a member of the Royal College of Occupational Therapists, you can access this insightful article for free via the RCOT website.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/03080226241309469>

Evidence shows that students with disabilities often face challenges during placements, which can impact their learning and overall experience. We aim to work with RCOT to develop resources and guidance for educators, placement providers, and universities.

Our ultimate goal is to influence universities nationwide to adopt consistent and equitable practices, ensuring that all students—regardless of their health condition or disability—have the support they need to succeed.

Clarification on RCOT Student Membership and Unison Representation

A recent question arose during one of our AbleOTUK support group meetings regarding **RCOT student membership and the inclusion of Unison representation**. To provide clarity and ensure we offer accurate advice to our members, we reached out to the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT). Here's the response we received, which may be helpful to anyone navigating similar queries:

RCOT Student Members and Unison Representation: RCOT student members do have Unison membership included, but this does not extend to industrial relations (union) support. However, students in the RCOT Associate Apprentice membership category have Unison representation, including industrial relations support.



February 2025: Awareness Days Reflecting Disability and Long-Term Health Conditions

February brings important awareness days highlighting the experiences and needs of individuals with disabilities and long-term health conditions. These dates are opportunities to reflect on our shared commitment to inclusion, equity, and dignity:

1st February - Dignity Action Day

6th February - Time to Talk Day

10th February - International Epilepsy Day

28th February - Rare Disease Day

Contact us

Do you have something you would like to share with the AbleOTUK community?

Email AbleOTUK@gmail.com

Instagram [@AbleOTs](https://www.instagram.com/AbleOTs)

Website <https://affinot.co.uk/ableotuk/>

Newsletter put together by Rachel Booth-Gardiner.

Support for Students Facing Challenges:

If a student member experiences difficulties with their needs being accommodated (e.g., reasonable adjustments for a disability or health condition), RCOT's **Professional Advisory Service** and **Education Team** provide support by:

- Offering advice, signposting, and linking students to appropriate resources.
- Reaching out to the student directly to explore support options.

Advice for Students:

RCOT recommends that students with concerns:

1. Speak with their course tutor as the first point of contact.
2. Follow the university's concerns/complaints process.
3. Engage with their university's Students' Union for additional support.

Non-RCOT Members:

While RCOT cannot offer the same level of support to non-members, they advise these students to consider seeking legal support if necessary.

Programme Accreditation and Standards:

RCOT also accredits pre-registration programmes and sets learning and development standards. If concerns are raised about a programme meeting these standards (e.g., around supporting students' needs), RCOT engages with the learner and, with their consent, raises the issue with the programme provider.

We hope this information helps our members understand the resources available to them and the steps they can take to address any challenges they face during their education. If you have further questions or concerns, don't hesitate to reach out to RCOT's **Professional Advisory Service** (professional.advisoryservice@rcot.co.uk) or **Education Team** (education@rcot.co.uk)