

Occupational Therapy Service Statement

This statement has been coproduced (created together) with the Parent Carer Forums across Bedfordshire and Luton.

What is Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapy improves health and well-being by enabling people to participate in activities of daily living that are important to them. Various factors can make it difficult for people to engage in activities that others manage easily. How people manage daily activities (occupational performance) is a result of the interaction between:-

- **personal** factors (such as their strength, coordination, sensory needs, motivation),
- the **activity** (e.g. getting dressed, brushing teeth) and
- the **environment** (physical, sensory, cultural, institutional).

Occupational therapy interventions can focus on any or all of these three elements. Developed from the *World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) 2012*, www.wfot.org/about/about-occupational-therapy).

What can Occupational Therapists do to support my child?

The Luton and Bedfordshire Paediatric Occupational Therapist service support children and young people to engage and participate as fully as possible in childhood occupations (activities) such as:

- Play
- Eating
- Self-care e.g. washing, cleaning your teeth, toileting
- Dressing
- School and life skills e.g. writing and alternatives to recording information and using scissors.
- Managing at school e.g. getting around the class / school, supportive seating, specialist toilet seats
- Hobbies and leisure activities.

The following resources are available to everyone (universal advice) which is being updated and reviewed regularly, in the 'What we do' section of our website www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/services/occupational-therapy

- **'You make the difference'** video clip targeted as children 5 and under, to promote use of their hands, independence skills such as eating and dressing and their speech and language and social skills.
- **The Developmental Skills Package** which includes strategies to develop functional everyday activities such as cutlery skills, dressing skills, ball skills and pencil skills.
- **Sensory Processing Awareness Training (video and planning wheel)** which includes strategies and resources

We see children and young people:

- Aged up to 18 years old or 19 for a child with SEND if in fulltime education
- With a Luton or Bedfordshire GP
- Present with functional difficulties that are not in line with their overall developmental abilities (this includes academic attainment levels).

Regarding sensory differences our service follows the guidance from the The Royal college of Occupational Therapy:

Sensory experiences and preferences are considered within an Occupational therapy assessment where these experiences impact on the daily lives and activities of children.

Our approach is based on supporting parents/carers and schools to be aware of sensory processing difficulties and how to adapt the things around the child, such as the environment, the child's activities and our expectations and responses. We cannot change the sensory experiences of children but would aim to increase participation and help you manage the impact of these at home and in the classroom.

Before referring children in to the OT service we would ask that you complete our [universal offer resources](#) which can be accessed on our public website. If concerns remain after you have implemented universal strategies our referral form is attached.

We offer the following service to meet the needs of children with sensory differences

- Online Sensory Processing Awareness information
- Resource Pack with strategies and resources to support sensory differences in everyday activities and situations

What is Sensory Processing?

This is the ability to feel, understand, tell the difference between and respond appropriately, both physically and emotionally to sensory input from our bodies and the environment. This includes noise, vision, taste, smell, texture and touch.

We receive a great deal of information from our senses. We use this information in many ways to help us understand our body, understand the environment, and successfully interact in the world.

Some children are over responsive or under responsive to sensory inputs, and this can impact on their daily activities. A child can be over responsive in one sensory area and under responsive in another. There are many contributing factors.

Sensory processing difficulties

Some children have sensory processing difficulties. Children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder can have sensory processing difficulties associated with their diagnosis.

Children with sensory processing difficulties can be very sensitive to certain sensations such as noise, smell, texture or touch. They might try to avoid these sensations through certain behaviours. Other children are not very sensitive to certain sensations such as food

around their mouth, movement or body position. They might actively seek sensations through behaviours such as chewing non-food items, fidgeting or being generally on the go.

This can really vary from one day to another, and can look very different for different children. When children have difficulty processing sensory information it can make every day activities challenging.

Sensory integration therapy

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Integrated Care System recently completed an evidence review for sensory processing to understand effectiveness and impact of interventions to support children with sensory processing needs. The recommendations concluded that we will not currently offer sensory integration therapy in BLMK as it is not an approach that is recommended by the Royal College of Occupational Therapy, or by **The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence** (health and social care evidence-based guidance).

Our evidence based approach in BLMK is centred on changing the things around the child, such as the environment, the child's activities and their personal factors, such as parent/carer knowledge and understanding (through parent/carer and education information and training programmes).

Where can I go for more information?

Bedfordshire Community Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service have created a 25 minute online presentation titled Sensory Processing Awareness to give more details on Sensory Processing Difficulties and what strategies could be used to help children with managing these difficulties. You can view the training and resources by **on** the link below.

www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/services/occupational-therapy

Parents have found the following **'top tips'** information useful. This has been produced by Sheffield Children's Hospital NHS Trust.

If you think your child has sensory processing difficulties you can talk to any health or education professionals working with your child. They will help you unpick your child's behaviours, and whether or not they are sensory, or have another cause. For example it can be that children with high levels of anxiety display higher levels of sensory sensitivity, or children who are struggling to communicate can use sensory behaviours to gain attention.

References for whole document

Based on information from:

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