

Guidelines for making a referral to Occupational Therapy

What is Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapy improves health and wellbeing 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 consequence 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*, <https://www.wfot.org/about/about-occupational-therapy>.

An occupational therapist can address the following areas:

The Luton and Bedfordshire Paediatric Occupational Therapy Service supports children and young people to engage and participate as fully as possible in childhood activities such as:

- Play
- Eating
- Self-care e.g. washing, cleaning your teeth, toileting
- Dressing
- School and life skills e.g. writing, alternatives for 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). They are updated and reviewed regularly. They can be found in the 'What we do' and the 'Additional Information' sections of our web page:

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/services/occupational-therapy>

- **'You make the difference' video clip** targeted at children aged 5 and under to promote use of hands and independence skills.
- **The Developmental Skills Package** 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
- **Activity advice sheets**

NB: Before considering a referral to occupational therapy please implement relevant strategies from our universal offer accessed from our web page above.

Please also note that when a referral is triaged you may be asked to implement strategies from the universal offer for 12 weeks and refer following this if concerns remain.

Who can refer?

Any professional who knows the child well, for example paediatrician, SENCo, teacher, GP, health visitor, physiotherapist, social worker, speech and language therapist.

We accept referrals for 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.
- Who present with functional difficulties that are not in line with their overall developmental abilities (this includes academic attainment levels). With evidence that pre-advice strategies/interventions (on our website – see below) have been followed in school and home.

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/Bedfordshire/services/occupational-therapy>

For children and young people whose difficulty could be expected to be resolved or improved with intervention from other service providers (e.g. specialist teaching service or educational psychologist) and the identified needs do not fall within our area of specialism and associated core offer, we will signpost on to the most appropriate service.

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 parents and school to manage the impact of these at home and in the classroom.

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

Regarding Ayres Sensory Integration Therapy

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Integrated Care System recently completed an evidence review for sensory processing to understand the 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).

When referring to our service, please ensure:

- The child or young person is registered with a GP in Bedfordshire or Luton.
- The referral form is completed by a professional familiar with the child, e.g. paediatrician, SENCo, Teacher, GP, health visitor, physiotherapist, social worker or speech and language therapist.
- The referral form is complete and includes all requested information.

Where to send the referral:

Bedfordshire and North Central Bedfordshire children: Community Paediatric Occupational Therapy Department Child Development Centre Hill Rise Kempston MK42 7EB T: 01234 310274 E: ccs.beds.childrens.cdc.ot@nhs.net	South Central Bedfordshire and Luton Children: Community Paediatric Occupational Therapy Department Redgrave Children & Young People's Centre Redgrave Gardens Luton LU3 3QN T: 01582 708141 E: ccs.beds.childrens.ot.redgrave@nhs.net
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