

Occupational Therapists & the assessment process

What do OTs working in Social Care and Housing do?

They:

- work with you in your own home
- advise you of different ways to carry out tasks that you find difficult
- give you equipment, if it is needed
- advise you on adaptations needed in your home or if you need to move home
- work with other professionals to help you, including architects, equipment providers, builders & housing organisations
- work using the Social Model of Disability which says that disabled people are disabled by society not their impairment

Occupational therapy looks at the whole person. This means they look at your physical and mental health. An Occupational Therapist (OT) might recommend giving you equipment or making adaptations to your house to help you live your life as well as you can.

Who employs my OT?

Your OT will probably be employed by your local authority

Do my local authority need to assess me?

Yes, if you request an assessment. Your local authority has legal obligations to arrange essential equipment and/or adaptations for your home.

Your OT will look at your case in 2 stages:

1. They will identify if you have a difficulty or challenge that needs addressed
2. They will identify one or more options that will help you

I don't understand. Can you give me an example?

A person lives in their home where they cannot access the internal stairs to their bathroom. They are unable to do this on their own or to do this safely.

There could be 3 options:

1. to install a stairlift
2. to create a ground floor bathroom
3. to move to a house without stairs

The OT will work with you to agree what options are suitable. Some of these may not be possible depending on your personal situation.

What about costs?

Costs do need to be taken into account when an OT is helping a client look at their available options. OTs must think about the cost of an option so they can help as many people as possible with limited funding. OTs will also help you to see what the availability is of your preferred option.

What will an OT do when they assess me?

They will:

- ask questions about you, your family and your carers
- observe you doing different activities
- make written notes
- may need to contact other people following the assessment eg. GPs, physiotherapists or psychologists

Assessments are a key part of what an OT will do. An OT will use their assessment skills to assess your needs. There are many different types of assessment carried out to help you with your housing and/or your need for equipment or an adaptation.

The OT will look at how you manage within your home environment and will suggest ways your home can be changed to meet your needs. The assessment will help you be as independent as you want to be. They will also listen to family and/or carers to help you, and them, be as safe and independent as possible.

The assessment focuses on 'Activities of Daily Living'. This is a phrase used to describe everything we do as human beings on a daily basis. One example is getting in and out of bed. Another example is making a cup of tea. The assessment will also look at other activities you are interested in and what help you need to take part. One example is a leisure activity like swimming. Another example is attending a local club.

What will an OT think about when they are assessing me?

An OT will think about any of these areas, if they are relevant to you.

1. Lifestyle and aspirations

This is the most important part of the assessment. The OT will ask you what is important to you in your life. They will help you to think about how you want to live your life, now, and in the future.

2. Functional ability

An OT will look at how you manage physically and mentally. One example of what they will look at is how mobile you are. Another example is how you prepare food. There is a broad range of things they will assess including other functions such as speech or hearing difficulties.

3. Your diagnosis

An OT needs to know about your medical condition or diagnosis. They need to know if you have more than one diagnosis. This helps them to understand what the impact is on you now and in the future. An OT has extensive training in lots of areas including medicine, mental health and surgery. Their training and the information you give them help them to assess your needs.

4. Your prognosis and treatment

An OT needs to take in to account how any condition or disability you have might change in the future. They will also take into account what changes will affect you as you get older.

5. Short and long term needs

An OT must recommend solutions that help in the short term and long term. This is important when helping you with your housing so your home is suitable for you now and in the future. An OT will take into account your changing needs and your family's changing needs.

6. Leisure & Work

As far as possible, an OT will take into account your leisure and work activities, both in terms of your needs within the home and your need to have access to facilities in the community.

7. Family/Carers needs

An OT will also look at the needs of your family and/or carers, and consider any of their changing needs over time.

8. Risk and Safety

An OT must think about your safety when they assess you. They also need to think about the safety of your family and/or carers. You might disagree with your OT when they make this assessment. You and your OT may need to compromise if you are unable to agree on something.

9. Your needs outside your home

An OT will look at your needs for getting in and out of your home independently and/or safely and for accessing local facilities.

I'm not happy with my assessment. What can I do?

- your local authority will have an appeal process where you can request a second assessment or opinion
- you can get help and support from an independent advocate to ensure that the full range of possible solutions is considered
- Housing Options Scotland may be able to provide support to access some additional OT input or to consider a second opinion from an independent OT

Your home may not be suitable for your long term needs. Your OT may say this to you because they assess that your equipment or any adaptations will be fine in the short term but not in the long term. Sometimes interim solutions need to be used while you look for a new home or a new home is being built. Or, it may be, that you prefer to stay in a home that is less suitable but in the right location. It is always possible to look at second options if you are unhappy with the outcome of your assessment and what this means for you.