

Video transcript Andrea Gronow, Chair, WM-ADASS OT Network

Recruitment and retention is a really big challenge. It's very, very difficult for us to get therapists full time, and even on the locum basis, these days.

It's quite difficult, really, to identify the exact reasons. We do feel that sometimes higher education institutes are promoting more of the NHS roles. It doesn't always look, through the media, for social care to be desirable to work with, and I think there's the impact as well of the people rethinking their priorities.

Future-proofing the OT profession, it's really key that we commit to taking students as a region. We're working with one higher education institute at the moment to promote some student placements.

Another challenge: we don't all have a Principal OT, and that can really impact on how we grow our profession, and how we make sure the OT voice is heard at senior management level. We really welcome the Royal College's guidance on principal occupational therapists.

It really important that we get parity with our social work colleagues and that we do have OTs in leadership and management roles. If you've got an OT that's the most senior OT in the organisation that's also got a heavy caseload, it's really difficult for them to have the opportunity to join in with strategic work. We can find, due to the varying nature of OT roles within the region, that people struggle to have the time to contribute.

To gain parity with our social work colleagues, we really need to focus on having a peer review across the region. The initial piece of work is a pilot really, looking at some mental capacity assessments, do a small-scale audit of that. We're then going to work with our social work colleagues to get some advice and support as to how we progress at a larger scale.

The joint Principal Social Worker and OT conference, we're committed to do that again next year. We work together with the DOLS lead, the Principal Social Workers' Network and the Childrens' Principal Social Workers' Network to deliver the LPS conference recently. We'd like to continue regional conference work with the other networks and make sure that the OT contribution is there, at that level.

We have a couple of sub-working groups. One group that we have at the moment is [about] having a regional approach to cross-boundary equipment, to streamline services for our customers across the region, if they move. That's a key piece of work that we are doing. The second sub-group that we have is a regional approach to training and policies. We're working collaboratively so we can have a consistent approach across the West Midlands when it comes to OT training and some of the procedures, wherever possible.

I think there's a real appetite for digital improvement. Everyone would agree that we progressed perhaps 10 years in the first three months of the Covid pandemic. We've seen more opportunity to network together, to share best practice, to complete digital assessments, and to engage in the technology. It can improve outcomes, some of the clients

we see prefer that digital interaction, and I think there's a real appetite for further digital improvement, both in terms of the ways we work, and what can be offered for the people that use our services.