

Welcome to your Wales region newsletter!

In this edition of our regional newsletter you can read about [Welsh policy updates](#) written by Dai Davies, catch up with the [Annual Regional Meeting](#) and the recent [careers fair](#) at Cardiff University.

We also have information on our [upcoming events](#) 'EDB in line with our new standards' taking place in North and South Wales; and a "[meet your committee members](#)" section.

## Our member features

### Annual Review Meeting (ARM) Reflection

The virtual ARM was held at lunch time on 7 February to provide insight into the RCOT Wales (Cymru) Regional Committee as a whole, the roles held by committee members, a retrospective expenditure for the last business year and a business plan for the coming year. We looked back and celebrated 2023 events as well as looking forward to the events planned for 2024.

The session was well attended by RCOT members who shared wellbeing ideas and the importance of maintaining our wellbeing in the workplace. Members were encouraged to discuss freely their thoughts and feelings about events and what they would like to see in the future and a Jamboard was also provided for those who preferred to write these rather than speak. The session was concluded with an enjoyable guided imagery relaxation led by Katie Williams Member Activity Lead to demonstrate the importance of self-care during a busy working day.

We heard from members on the day that some individuals are not receiving this newsletter. It was suggested that if you are reading this you could mention it to your colleagues which would raise awareness that it is regularly published (quarterly). The newsletter is freely available to RCOT members and helps you to stay abreast of what's happening in our region. If they don't yet receive a copy please direct them to the RCOT website where they may need to change their preferences in order to get connected.

Please follow these steps to register your preferences:

1. Log into RCOT on their main webpage
2. Click on the green banner in the top right hand corner where it says 'Hello, NAME'
3. Click on 'My Preferences' from the menu on the left hand side

Our newsletters are also available on our [region webpage](#) so if you've missed an edition, why not catch up now.

Written by Helen Harris and Katie Williams Member Activity Leads RCOT Wales (Cymru) Region

## Cardiff University Careers fair and Steve Ford Visit

On Monday 22 January, the Occupational Therapy teaching team at Cardiff University held their annual careers fair. This was an opportunity for third year students to meet local employers including health boards and local authorities. Throughout the day, occupational therapy teams from a range of organisations presented what they could offer new graduates in the lecture theatre, and students then also got to meet these representatives at their prospective stands. There were plenty of opportunities to ask questions and find out about the wide range of occupational therapy roles available to graduates in Wales.

Dr Alison Seymour, Professional Head of Occupational Therapy at Cardiff University stated that the *"Careers Fair for final year students at Cardiff University was a resounding success. It brought together students and potential employers from the NHS Wales, Local Authorities and the Independent sector with a range of talks and information stands. It was inspiring to see so many Cardiff University alumni meeting current students and enthusiastically sharing experiences of their first posts."*



Photo (left to right) RCOT Wales (Cymru) Region members Saru, Thomas and Rachel with Steve Ford, CE, RCOT

The RCOT Wales (Cymru) Region Committee also manned a stand throughout the day. Rachel Rowlands (Chair of the RCOT Wales (Cymru) Region Committee and Lecturer in Occupational Therapy at Cardiff University), Saru Macheva (Social Media Lead and Cardiff County Council Social Services) and Thomas Williams (Equity, Belonging and Diversity Representative and Swansea Bay University Health Board) met students throughout the day and explained the benefits of being a member of RCOT. Key topics discussed included the Equity, Diversity and Belonging Strategy, the new CPDme platform and union membership. Rachel explained *"it was an honour to be accompanied by Saru and Thomas so that students could gain a new graduates perspective of what being an RCOT member could offer them, and I know a number of students confirmed that they were going to explore signing up before graduation so that they could start using the resources available"*.

The RCOT Wales stand was also visited by Steve Ford CE at RCOT, who made his debut visit to Cardiff University on the day of the Careers Fair. This visit enabled Steve to meet students, lecturers and practitioners, and gain a perspective of occupational therapy education, and the scope of professional practice in Wales. Dr Alison Seymour added that as well as being asked some interesting questions from students, Steve noted that he was pleased to *'have an opportunity to speak with OTs at the careers fair. Impressive too to hear your former students so passionate and engaged in their new roles.'*

A huge thank you to all of the organisations who attended this year's fair. We had practitioners from North, South, East and West Wales, representing the wide geographical area that our region covers. Soon, the planning will begin to do it all again next year.

Written by Rachel Rowlands, Chair, RCOT Wales (Cymru) Region

## Welsh Word of the Week with Gwawr Parker, Cynrychiolydd yr Iaith Gymraeg / Welsh Language Representative



I joined the RCOT Wales (Cymru) Region Committee in October 2023, with the focus to promote the Welsh Language within our profession. Please [contact us](#) for any ideas you may have to contribute. We have already included promotion and use of the Welsh Language into our plans for the upcoming RCOT events. Images here are from our Welsh word of the week that appears on our [Facebook page](#).

In July 2017, Welsh Government (WG) published the Welsh Language Strategy, Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers. It was reported that in December 2022 the number and percentage of Welsh speakers aged 3 years or over fell from 562,000 (19.0%) in 2011 to 538,300 (17.8%) in 2021. Research by Bangor University highlighted that one of the reasons for this decline was the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, school data celebrates that there are more children than ever in Welsh-medium education.

The WG's priorities include working towards achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050, and doubling the numbers who use Welsh every day.

Wrexham University has emphasised to students the importance of the Welsh language in healthcare, and the benefits of using the language for both staff and patients.

With WeCare focusing on the theme that if Health and Social Care professionals actively offer Welsh language services, it ensures that people's needs are understood and met and that those who access care services can rely on being treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. This highlights that if we do not actively offer Welsh language services, this may result in people's dignity and respect being compromised.



Sources:

Welsh Government, WeCare, Bangor University, Wrexham University

## Meet The Committee

The RCOT Wales (Cymru) Region Committee is part of your local OT community here to help our members find support, networking, development, learning and funding opportunities. The committee is made up of volunteers from across Wales from a range of diverse backgrounds, lived experiences, interests and localities.

Our committee has 7 core roles including Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Regional Communications Lead, Social Media Lead and Member Activity Lead. Additionally, there are also co-opted members who represent views from different membership groups such as new graduates, areas of the profession like higher education institutions, or local groups. Our current co-opted members represent Welsh Language and Equity, Diversity and Belonging.

To help you understand how we can support our members we wanted to introduce ourselves over the coming newsletters. Melanie and Stephanie have introduced themselves in this newsletter.

## Melanie Porter-Jones – Secretary



Hi, I'm Mel, I am the secretary for the RCOT Wales Region Committee. I have been working as an Occupational Therapist for 32 years. Most of my career has been based within Social Services with a special interest in home adaptations. I currently work with Conwy Council assessing individuals whose homes no longer meet their needs and support with rehousing to a more suitable property enabling them to engage in meaningful activities and lead a better quality of life.

I have been a member of the committee since 2017. I have found my role very rewarding. It has allowed me to connect with members throughout Wales, keeps me updated with developments within RCOT and also what is going on within the wider OT community.

I have seen the committee grow and develop over the years; we are enthusiastic and committed to providing networking, learning and development opportunities for our members throughout the year. Hopefully we will see some of you at our next events.

## Stephanie Christian – Regional Communication Lead



I am a newly qualified OT having graduated from the Post Graduate Diploma Programme in August 2023. I live in Cardiff with my husband, 2 daughters and our 2 cats (Dexter and Sebastian). I have recently started on the Band 5 rotation programme for CTM UHB where I am working in the community.

Before studying Occupational Therapy, I worked as a rebound therapist for 4 years at a specialist trampoline centre in Cardiff. I loved this role because I have been involved in trampolining for many years, but I felt I had more to offer and I was keen to return to studying.

I was asked to join the committee in my final term at university. I really wanted to be a part of the committee and continue to push myself to develop my professional skills. I am looking forward to the summer events and meeting OTs from across Wales.

## Our news

### Welsh Policy update from Dai Davies

It's been a busy few months at Cardiff Bay, influencing with our Welsh based RCOT members to promote our great profession. I want to highlight the two occasions we have been asked to give evidence to the Health & Social Care and Childrens & Young People Committee in the Senedd. The Committees are powerful groups that scrutinize Welsh Government and offer recommendations to improve services. They are formed by a cross party selection of politicians.

In the first session, I gave evidence to the committee on Disabled Children Access to schools. We suggested that every school should have access to an occupational therapist to help them embed positive physical and mental health opportunities into children and young people's daily routines, so they can realise their potential. We highlighted the concerns from members around long waiting times, lack of resources and problems with the new ALN Act. Most importantly we highlighted fantastic Occupational Therapy services throughout Wales as a positive solution.

The second session was on supporting people with chronic conditions. We argued that supporting individuals with chronic conditions requires a proactive and holistic approach, yet many health services often focus on reactive treatment rather than preventive strategies. There is a recognised need to shift towards preventive care, as outlined in policies like A Healthier Wales, but operational implementation lags behind. Rehabilitation services must encompass all aspects of a person's needs, with equal consideration given to mental health needs alongside physical health needs. Again, we highlighted the fantastic work our members have completed to supporting this agenda.

I couldn't give the evidence without the support of Welsh Based RCOT members being so open with their time and giving me the right information. Our close relationship is a super power and is an envy of the other nations. So, as I've said previously please contact me or invite me to come and see you. I'm here for you as a member of RCOT.

## Our events

### EDB in line with our new standards

15 May 2024, 12-5pm at Rhyl Rugby Club

19 June 2024, 12-5pm at University of South Wales

Our summer region events will focus, in part at least, on the new [RCOT EDB strategy](#) which was released in November 2023. We know our members will be keen to learn how to use the strategy to shape their



practice and be reflective of the policies. These events will give you the opportunity to discuss what the strategy means for your setting. We really hope that there will be a chance for interaction and stimulating but respectful discussion.

We'd love to hear from our members over the coming weeks, with ideas which will help us shape the above events to best meet member needs. Please [get in touch](#) if you have specific questions or ideas relating to the new EDB policy and how we might present or discuss these topics at the regional events in the summer. We will also be providing lunch and time to network at both events, and having a small celebration for 60 years of occupational therapy education in Wales.

Are you learning Welsh? At these events, we're also providing Welsh language opportunities. We're hoping to create a space for Welsh language enthusiasts to chat with one another and support learners to build confidence in using the Welsh language in their practice. Even if you're not currently learning Welsh, please feel free to pop along and listen to the conversations, perhaps you'll feel inspired to take up the challenge? Read about the [Welsh language standards in primary care online](#).

**Register now:**

**[North Wales event on 15 May 2024](#)**

**[South Wales event on 19 June 2024](#)**

## News from across RCOT

### Be a leader in the OT community – join our Council

Nominations are open for six positions on the BAOT/RCOT Council – Chair, Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Industrial Relations and International Affairs (WFOT).

**[Find out more](#)**

### Book your space at our Elizabeth Casson Memorial Lecture

Take inspiration and ideas from a leader in our profession. Join Professor Katrina Bannigan online from 6.30pm, Wednesday 24 April 2024 and engage in the Q&A afterwards.

A perfect chance to add to your CPD portfolio.

**[Register for free](#)**

## Stay in touch

You can stay up to date with us on social media – follow us on

Facebook: RCOT Wales Region and X: @RCOTWalesRegion.

You can also contact us at [RCOT.Wales@rcot.co.uk](mailto:RCOT.Wales@rcot.co.uk).