REPORT ON THE OPEN SPACE SESSION
The College of Occupational Therapists (COT) held a summit in London on the 10th December 2009. It aimed to encourage participants to think about the role and contribution of occupational therapy in the future. While the morning session provided expert perspectives, debate and thoughts about the changing context, the afternoon enabled participants to relate these inputs to their own experience.

Using a process called open space, [www.openspaceworld.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org), the conference facilitator Linda Mitchell invited participants to develop their own agenda for the afternoon around the core question: What might OT also be in 2015?

Participants were invited to post topics for conversations that were important to them and to think about how they might develop new ways of working and a new future for occupational therapy. Each topic was given a number and breakout space and the conversations began. Topic hosts were asked to stay with their group and make a record of the visions, images and recommendations that arose. Participants were encouraged to use ‘the law of two feet’ and move about from group to group if they felt they were not connected to the topic under discussion.

In total 11 workshop sessions were held:

- How does the OT community support the development of an evidence base?
- How do we promote OT to senior management and chief executives?
- How can COT with members help the Klingons become Captain Kirks and boldly go
- How do we promote OT to senior management and chief executives?
- How can OTs develop presence and how will it change their practice?
- Developing a resource of case stories demonstrating collection critique and use of EB to develop OT services
- With the personalisation agenda, how are we going to ensure we protect the most vulnerable?
- How do we prevent duplication of such scarce resources?
• In my area, traditional structures have been dismantled: How do we maintain individuality and creativity and prevent ourselves from being pigeonholed?
• Maintaining confidence in our professional identity
• Individual budgets
The followings are the reports from each workshop group. The smiley faces represent the amount of support each theme received from the whole conference:

### Session Name:

**How does the OT community support the development of an evidence base?**

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**Who came:** Carol Mytton, Louise Davies, Nichola Howarth, Noel Naughton, Jan Jensen.

**Vision statement or image:**

Reclaiming the power of occupation and spread the word in relation to policy. Higher confidence – language.

Fired up OTs.

Managers develop culture of research related activities.

Identifying resources – demand.

Multi-stranded approaches.

**Recommendation (Who for?):**

Remove the fear – Be brave

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ROAR!!
Session Name:
How do we promote OT to senior management and chief executives?
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Who came: Rosemary, Sara, Beccy, Naomi, Odeth, Lauren, Gary, Denise.

Vision statement or image:
I am an OT

Recommendation (Who for?):
Balance outcomes with the promotion of our core skills.
Session Name:
How can COT with members help the Klingons become Captain Kirks and boldly go.

Who came: Alison Kerr, Stephanie Morrison, Julia Skelton

Vision statement or image:
Possibilities working in diverse environments.
Nurturing the student eaglets and maintaining their enthusiasm when qualified.
Publicising the successes.
Advertising materials need to change.
Good materials To promote OT. OT as a brand.
Localised events. Country-based making members feel valued.
Using placement educations as ambassador of profession.
Recovery events. Big events. Need to be localised.

Recommendation (Who for?):

OT Enterprise ———— Boldly Go

Masters of our own destiny

Embracing new possibilities and challenges with new partners

New perimeters

Enable

Ignition ———— Enrich

Audacious

Vision: All practitioners will take responsibility to explore new opportunities and possibilities through learning from staff and our service users now and in the future to promote occupational therapy in a diverse and innovative way.
Session Title:

How can OTs develop presence and how will it change their practice?

Who came: Zoe Parker, Ruth Crowder, Ann Lawson Porter, Janet Kelly, Sandra Morgan, Andrew Lyon

Vision statement or image:

Presence is embedded in the practice of occupational therapy: OT as gardening, enabling people to grow rather than telling them how to grow, thus providing evidence/stories of measurable difference to policy makers.

Recommendation (who for?): For humans in all walks of life. Collect and use patient stories to highlight the impact our work makes.
Session Title:
Developing a resource of case stories demonstrating collection critique and use of evidence base to develop OT services

Who came: Mish Ahmed Landeryou

Vision statement or image:
To inform and provide examples to educators, managers and all occupational therapists on how to search, discriminate, critique and select evidence-based literature to develop, enhance, confirm or justify the existence or need for OT services (or OTs) within an organisation. Demonstrating processes and outcomes from real OT services who have involved themselves in this type of activity.

Recommendation (Who for?):
COT to have a member accessible folder that is populated and updated – the information is gained from clinicians and managers in current practice.
A pro forma to standardise presentations/delivery of information will be helpful.

Session Title:
With the personalisation agenda, how are we going to ensure we protect the most vulnerable?
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Who came: Sarah Ellis, Rachael Richardson Wright, Paula Vyze

Vision statement or image:
To ensure that the most vulnerable have the same choice and control.

Recommendation (Who for?): The profession and COT.
Clear policies and procedures to mitigate low risks.
Risk enablement process for staff and board to protect staff.
Support for people to purchase packages.
Use of mental capacity act.
Use of local user organisations.
**Session Title:**
How do we prevent duplication of such scarce resources?

**Who came:** Celia Talamo, Dawn Stretch, Julie Peart, Cressida Travis, Angela Wilson, Diana Skelton, Rachel Atiyah

**Vision statement or image:**
Remove duplication of services and demonstrate our unique holistic practice – upskill others to undertake certain tasks.

**Recommendation (Who for?):** The profession and COT
Integrated IT system (access to medical information etc).
Use single point of access: one database, single access process, cleaner pathways.
Key worker, case coordination.
Re skill community practitioners.
One integrated single employer.

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**Session Title:**
In my area, traditional structures have been dismantled: How do we maintain individuality and creativity and prevent ourselves from being pigeonholed?

**Who came:** Ann Christie, Claire Needham, Charles Neave, Laura Mckeown, Liz McNabney

**Vision statement or image:**
We see the move to integrated teams as positive though challenging, providing the profession with leadership to ensure professional supervision, governance, CPD. OTs take ownership of their development and professional responsibilities.

**Recommendation (Who for?):**
Challenge, embrace progress!
Be aware of key skills and sell them.
Session Title:
Maintaining confidence in our professional identity

Who came: Layla Jones, Noel Naughton, Jan Worledge, Maggie Pitts, Monika Samuels, Ann Lawson Porter, Jennifer Caldwell, Justine Mahoney, Janet Harker, Catherine Wells

Vision statement or image:
The healthcare environment is changing towards a personalised agenda coupled with evidence base. Occupational therapists will need to embrace that change and creatively use their particular skills of empathy (love) problem solving, functional assessment skills within an occupational focused context, leaving behind the medical environment and carving a fresh identity in the public health sector.

Recommendation (Who for?):
Invest in the 3rd sector and beyond.
HEI’s investing in the 3rd sector and beyond.

Session Title:
Individual budgets

Who came: Joan Gavigan, Debbie Towley Moss, Jenny Langan, Wendy Decker, Gill Rumford, Lucy Paul

Vision statement or image:
OT assessment is vital before support plan in place
Too many budgets involved for OT (DFGs)

Recommendation (Who for?):
More flexibility around DFGs if individual budgets applied to OT.
Concern that benefits will become part of individual budgets.
Less bureaucracy around direct payments.
Would like forum with examples of where it works (on the web?).
Risk of misuse – audit processes.
ACTIONS AND COMMITMENTS

Linda thanked people for their hard work in creating some new images for occupational therapy in the future. She invited people to read all the feedback forms from the open space groups and to mark with a sticky dot the ones they felt were most impactful or the ones that were making points that they personally supported (smiley faces above).

Linda reminded participants of Naomi’s mantra that *vision without action is hallucination*, so she invited everyone to think about an action they were now ready and committed to take having attended today’s conference session. People wrote their action down on postcards. Some of these were taken away, others were left behind to be posted back to participants in a couple of months, to act as a reminder of commitments for action.
Back in the large circle Linda then invited people to share their thoughts about the whole day, what were they taking away with them, what the enduring images and hopes for the future of OT were and to share any commitments or actions. The following comments were made:

We need to be brave, I need to be brave. I think maybe I’ve let challenges slip by and maybe allowed things I shouldn’t have, now it’s time to be brave.

My new vision is away from EPB towards personalisation with a focus on the individual and embracing love in the profession, we are good with love.

What doesn’t kill me makes me stronger; we need to weather the storm ahead- fly like the eagles.

Struck by what a strong profession we are, we are in a strong position for the next generation of OT professionals.

Lovely day, has shook up and strengthened my thinking today, thanks.

It’s down to us, it’s time to rebuild the profession and move us on to a new level of professionalism, not just doing the same old stuff.

Really loved Andrew’s session. The birds are coming out of the dinosaur. Change is happening and we need to be inside it, not outside it stopping it happening.

Feel really enthusiastic to make sure we fully engage with the transformational change agenda and that my voice and other voices get heard.

We need to help the practice to be braver. My question is what does transformation look like in Higher Education and Education, how can we work to help people to be brave?

We are all going through changes but struck today by how it’s the same changes and same issues. We are working to the same purpose and should do more together, more open discussions like this one today.
I want to sing, change begins with me and rubs off on my colleagues.

I recognise the fact that we need to embrace the new but not discard the old, not make the baby and bathwater mistake. Let’s retain what’s good and embrace the future.

Heard lots of voices today, strong voices, confident voices – no excuses for not going forward with our visions.

We need to change OT and be brave about talking responsibility for changing our skills.

Been good to share experiences and solutions about OT. It’s great that the college is there for us and gives good support and co ordination.

I’ve been inspired by the need to be more assertive about the power of occupational therapy.

The conversation re presence really inspired me and reminded me why I came into OT 26 years ago. I’m visual so I love the image of OT being gardeners, you don’t tell plants how to grow you simply nurture them.

Lots been said, don’t know what to add. Don’t want to undermine the legitimacy of time to just think. Our collective belief in ourselves is what sustains us. Thanks OT for being open to this sort of thing.

Last night I was in Aberdeen, I’ve got my political compass set right – we have a good focus for OT. Lucky us to be given the opportunity for thinking.

Been an inspiring day, taking back to Wales specific actions to support members.

Really enjoyed it, I’m an open space devotee now, but I was a bit worried about the bamboo canes. I’m taking away the Starship OT image and the first stop is an OT event in Scotland to promote the value of OT in the prison service.

A great opportunity to think creatively.

Good to get away from the pain of change in Norfolk, had a great benefit from talking to people in Essex about risks and personal budget.

Been thinking a lot about what Andrew said, New Horizons 2015 it’s been an uphill struggle till now, but I believe if we support one another we will get there.

Excellent day, coming from Essex and feeling tired, ready to bring in personalised budgets in February but now feeling re- energised and ready to motor.

I’m in higher education and feel very humbled by the practitioners I’ve met here today, listening to their motivation. It’s been very informative.

Good to spend time with colleagues who are passionate, thanks to all of you I’m going away reenergised.

Very informative and thanks COT, I’ll take back the inspiring image of the eaglets.

I’ve had a great time with the passion and good back up of all colleagues, its reenergised me to be with you all. I’m taking a deep breath as we grasp the opportunities. We need to turn our threats into challenges and stop being inward looking, we get embroiled when we do this, and we should strengthen our links and our networks and start looking outwards.

This day has helped me look beyond my world and integrate with a wider team.

Struck by the passion of the people here.

Others face the same challenges. Today made me see I’m not the only voice, that there is help and support and I’ve accessed it here today, along with lots of useful links.

The event, the workshops and the sessions have all rejuvenated me and made me think about getting people more involved in networks.

I’ve been inspired by OT - thank you (Andrews poem).
On the north side of Suilven

The three-inch-wide streamlet
Trickles over its own fingers
Down the sandstone slabs
Of my favourite mountain.

Like the Amazon it’ll reach the sea.
Like the Volga
It’ll forget its own language.

Its water goes down my throat
With a glassy coldness,
Like something suddenly remembered.

I drink
Its freezing vocabulary
And half understand the purity
Of all beginnings

Norman McCaig
1988