

# Rebuilding Lives: The Untapped Potential of Occupational Therapy in Ex-offender Reintegration: A Scoping Review Exploring Gaps and Opportunities

Exploring the role of occupational therapy in reintegrating ex- offenders into society

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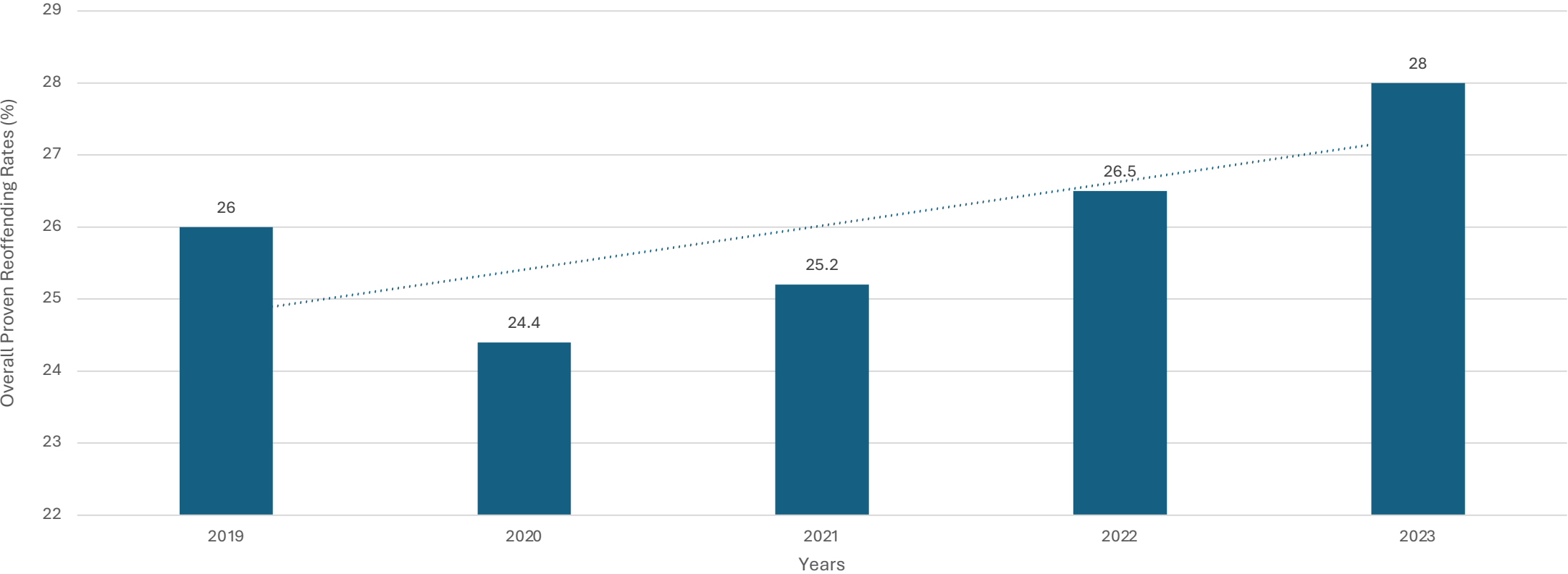
Event: WFOT Congress, Bangkok 2026

# From Older Adult Mental Health to Ex-offender Reintegration: Why This Matters

- My interest for this topic began during my MSc dissertation, where I explored the role of OT in offender rehabilitation and community reintegration.
- I now work in SOAMHS (West London NHS Trust) supporting individuals to re-engage with their communities, regain confidence, and discover purpose.

# Statistics: Reoffending Rates (UK)

Overall Proven Reoffending Rates in the UK (July to September Quarter) 2024



# Challenges of Reintegration

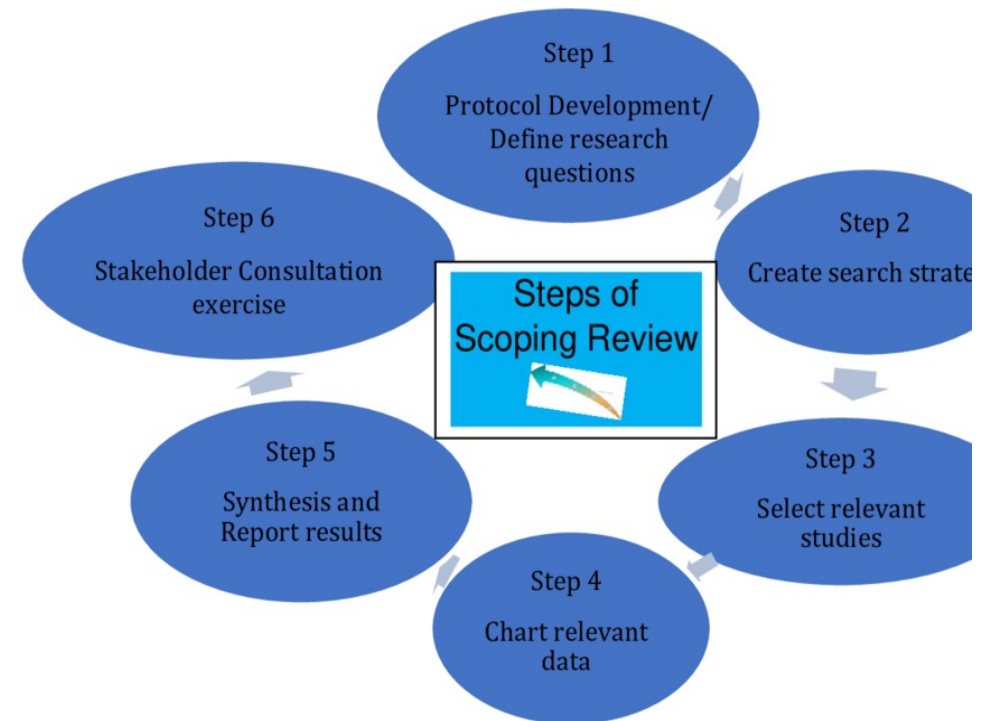
- Occupational Deprivation
- Stigma and social exclusion
- Housing issues
- Limited social support
- Employment Difficulties
- Mental health and substance abuse issues
- Communication skills deficits
- Poor Emotional Regulation



# Scoping Review Methods

A type of research that explores all the available information on a broad topic to understand what is known and where there are gaps in knowledge.

- Research Question
- Framework: PCC
- Databases Searched
- Scope: Literature from the past ten years
- Focused on primary studies
- Process mapped using PRISMA flow diagram



# Key Findings: The Role of Occupational Therapy in Ex-Offender Reintegration



Restoring daily functioning



Communication skills



Enhancing employability



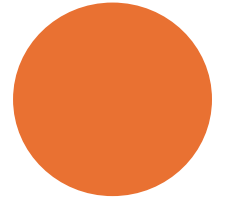
Creating a structured daily routine



Promoting social reintegration

# Gaps In Current Reintegration Programs

- Misunderstanding of OT's role
- Lack of practical occupation-based support
- Policy and practice don't match
- Poor continuity of care
- Limited research capturing lived experience
- Focus on one type of intervention
- Few OT roles in justice settings



# Limited Recognition of OT in the Criminal Justice System

- OT missing roles in policies; Uk policy gap: no mention of OT in offender reintegration strategies
- OT is under-utilised despite evidence of its potential value
- Limited awareness or understanding of OT
- More comprehensive research is needed
- Current evidence remains limited



# Recommendations and Global Call to Action

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- Policy Recognition
- Research and Evidence
- Education and Training
- Multi Agency Collaboration
- Global Advocacy



# Conclusion

- Occupational Therapy has the power to rebuild lives, helping people regain skills, restore mental health, and reconnect with their communities. Yet its role remains largely invisible in justice policies worldwide. To truly reduce reoffending and promote inclusion, we must raise global awareness and advocate for occupational therapy as a vital part of reintegration.

*True freedom is not just leaving prison; it is finding the occupations that give life meaning.*

# ELIZABETH CASSON TRUST



## Thank You

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- I would also like to acknowledge my team leads, whose guidance and support ensured these slides were written well.

# References

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