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The purpose of this research was to integrate and extend knowledge of two contemporary areas of occupational therapy practice, those of role emerging practice and ‘green care’ horticultural activities (Fieldhouse & Sempik, 2014). The context was a new role emerging placement, in a horticultural community with no previous occupational therapy input. The study evaluated the effects of occupational therapy on one individual’s recovery and the wider contribution to the mental health facility.

A qualitative methodology using semi-structured, in-depth interviews of one service user and the volunteer coordinator was utilised via purposive sampling, providing phenomenological perspectives. Audio-recorded data were transcribed verbatim and member-checked for authenticity by participants (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Reflexivity through journal reflections, discussions and supervision further ensured trustworthiness. Data were analysed thematically, using a matrix framework involving a three-tier process – themes devised, tables collated and analysis repeated to ensure creditable outcomes.

The findings identified specific aspects of the programme effective in promoting the individual’s recovery and occupational engagement. Two main themes emerged: understanding occupation and a person-centred approach. The conclusions highlighted the contribution of a role-emerging placement to an existing facility, and how an occupational perspective and engagement in occupation enhanced existing practice.

This exploratory research contributes to applying occupational therapy theory to practice by emphasising the importance of an individual’s understanding of themselves as an occupational being, and the importance of individualised interventions. Further research into the importance of individuals’ understanding of themselves as occupational beings would be of value to occupational science and therapy evidence.

Ethical approval was given by the ethics committee of the University of Cumbria prior to the commencement of the research.

References

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Author Biographies
Rebecca Carr is a recently qualified occupational therapist working a newly established role in mental health. She has a great interest in the occupational therapy paradigm shift and in the promotion of role-emerging practice, with a passion for sharing the importance of occupation in regards to health and wellbeing.

Fiona Cole is an occupational therapist with a mental health background and senior lecturer at the University of Cumbria. She is interested in how occupational science can inform practice and in particular in exploring occupational engagement with physical activities and the influences on health and wellbeing.