



# HIT THE ROAD!

There's a lot of organisation that goes on behind the scenes to ensure that each Occupational Therapy Adaptation Conference (OTAC) event runs smoothly for both delegates and exhibitors!

**Occupational Therapist Stuart Barrow, as well as running his company Promoting Independence Ltd. meticulously plans each of his OTAC roadshows.**

So what's involved in the setting up of an OTAC event? Following a very successful conference at Newcastle on Wednesday 1st May, we managed to get Stuart in a rare quiet moment to find out...



## WHAT ARE THE FINAL STAGES OF ORGANISATION?

The preparation for running OTAC involves meticulous planning and coordination. It's a big list:

- We finalise the theme and target audience and ensure we have reached out to all our audiences the week before and every day during the event week.
- The logistical arrangements with the courier are finalised.



- Promotional materials, delegate bags and banner delivery dates are finalised with relevant agencies.

- Marketing efforts intensify closer to the event, with social media campaigns, email newsletters, and press releases.

- Collaborations with industry partners are checked and we ensure visibility.

- As the date approaches within the last couple of weeks final touches are made to our OTAC stand, table cloths, the merchandise we will be giving away, and the printing of name badges, certificates, etc. are done.

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE SHOW?**

8.30am is my favourite part of the show, as it's when all of the exhibitors are ready and the show opens with a line of delegates waiting to come in... it's a terrific feeling!

**WHAT WOULD YOU SAY WAS THE TRICKIEST BIT ABOUT SETTING UP AN OTAC?**

This is definitely where everything is in place and then the venue we are using advises

**“WHEN ALL OF THE EXHIBITORS ARE READY AND THE SHOW OPENS WITH A LINE OF DELEGATES WAITING TO COME IN... IT'S A TERRIFIC FEELING!”**

**STUART BARROW**

**Main pic:** OTAC delegates ready for a day of networking and seminars **Top:** The evening networking event is an informal chance to wind down and chat **Above:** Stuart Barrow, Director of Promoting Independence, started the OTAC events in 2017

us that the member of staff who was managing the event has moved on and no longer works there. Sometimes there is a decent handover, but usually it's as if you're starting from scratch.

**TELL US ABOUT TRAVELLING TO NEWCASTLE AND SETTING UP THE ROOM**

This was different from last year as Sarah our Operational Manager travelled up a day early with our events assistant Jakub to ensure everything was ready a day before set up day. This meant I could arrive by train after meeting the courier to load the van and work on the train and enjoy the journey.

Setting the room up is usually okay with a venue like Newcastle as we have run the event there before and they know what we need and like.

**DO YOU GET ANY TIME TO RELAX?**

The networking event we hold in the evening is relaxing and fun!

From my perspective it's a chance to wind down, talk, have some good food with good company, and enjoy the feeling of set up being complete and look forward to the next day.





**"EXCELLENT VENUE,  
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**Left:** *Stuart works with every exhibitor to ensure they are happy with their stand and prepared for their presentation*

**WHAT ABOUT LIAISING WITH EXHIBITORS?**

I ensure I speak to every exhibitor during set up and on the day to ensure they are in the right location, happy with their stand, logistics, and plan for set up and the actual end.

**HOW ABOUT WHEN YOU FINALLY OPEN THE DOOR TO DELEGATES?**

I absolutely love meeting and greeting the delegates as they arrive. I talk to them throughout the day about where they are from, how they travelled to OTAC, what are they enjoying and what they may feel is missing.

Being a fellow OT is great as we share experiences and challenges of being clinicians.

**WHAT ABOUT THE PACKING UP AFTERWARDS?**

We've mastered this as the courier arrives and the team have a routine to pack down the stands.

I leave after the last exhibitor and our courier to ensure no one or nothing is left behind! If it is, we ship it back and all is good.

Quite often we will then head for food or to the bar for a drink before travelling home with the staff and some exhibitors who are awaiting flights, trains, and taxis.

**HOW DO YOU TRAVEL TO EVENTS?**

This depends on where in the country the event has been. Within a two hour radius I drive and usually I am home early evening. Further than that I either drive, fly,

**Below:** *Gino Farruggio, Trade Sales Director, Stiltz Homelifts*



**WHAT THE SPONSORS THOUGHT**

**Gino Farruggio** Trade Sales Director, Stiltz Homelifts

**What was your general experience of the Newcastle show?**

As one of the more established exhibitors, we believe OTAC is a must-attend event for healthcare and housing professionals responsible for accessible equipment provision. Over the years, our experience at OTAC has been engaging, rewarding and has exceeded expectations in terms of generating interest and awareness. This reflects the continued growth in demand for our homelifts and an increased familiarity with the category.

**And your favourite part of it?**

Well, aside from the delicious lunches of course, and the opportunity for networking, my favourite part of the OTAC events is delivering our presentations. I have found they generate insightful discussions with delegates keen to understand more about the occupational benefits of homelifts. Feedback from delegates is consistently positive too which is a great starting point for conversations. These seminars continue to combine CPD with practical guidance and the latest legislation so OTs can enhance their everyday practice.

**What products did you take to the show?**

As stand space and height are limited at OTAC, we are unable to physically demonstrate our homelifts. So, we focus more on education, advice and of course goodie bags! During the events we encourage visitors to book free client home assessments or group CPD sessions where our Trusted Assessors carry out a more bespoke visit. Delegates are also always more than welcome to visit our showrooms and offices.



**Above:** Ryan Wilkes, National Sales Manager, Abacus Specialist Bathrooms Solutions

**WHAT THE SPONSORS THOUGHT**

**Ryan Wilkes** National Sales Manager, Abacus Specialist Bathrooms Solutions

**So how did the Newcastle show go?**

The Abacus team and I regard exhibiting at OTAC as an invaluable opportunity to meet new and existing contacts within healthcare equipment provision. It helps us expand our presence across the UK and has been beneficial in cultivating new collaborations with many occupational therapists, local authorities and housing professionals.

**What was your favourite part of it?**

On a personal level, my OTAC highlights tend to focus on the new knowledge I gain and discovering more about all the outstanding DFGs that are being fulfilled across the UK.

**What product did you take to the show?**

We tend to not demonstrate our specialist baths now as we have a fleet of educational vehicles that can be booked free of charge from the stand. Our OTAC showcase instead gives delegates one-to-one advice, free literature including DFG guides and case studies, and is regularly supported by one of our associate occupational therapists.




**Above:** Hilton Newcastle Gateshead was the venue for the recent OTAC event on 1st May



**“EXCELLENT NETWORKING EVENT AND RANGE OF SEMINARS. LUNCH WAS OUTSTANDING”**

or use the train, and then stay overnight so that in the evening I can spend time with exhibitors. This avoid rushing and the team and I can feed back to one another, go through feedback forms from exhibitors and delegates, and jot down notes for our next meeting.

**SO THEN IT’S ON TO SETTING UP THE NEXT ONE?**

We always have a chat about what went well set-up wise and pack down, and what we can do better. This is then fed back to one another and the venue and we take the learnings into the next event. 

**MORE INFORMATION**

You can get a taste of the day in Newcastle with this video at <https://otac.org.uk/newcastle2024/>



Stuart is now arranging OTAC events at the Molineux Stadium in Wolverhampton, West Midlands on Thursday 27th June, The Halliwell Centre in Carmarthen, West Wales on Friday 12th July, and others around the country - there'll be one near you so check it out!

**Get the next Occupational Therapy Adaptation Conference dates in your diary! Visit <https://otac.org.uk/> now.**