

What can we learn from viewing unpaid caregivers through an occupational lens?

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Introduction:

This new and innovative pathway was established in response to the growing number of people in an unpaid caregiving role in East Lothian, recognising the potentially detrimental impact of caregiving can have on a person's health and wellbeing. The service provided occupational therapy assessment and interventions to address occupation-focused challenges over the course of their caregiving journey, in the life areas that were most important to them. Caregivers reported feeling seen and heard as individuals beyond their caregiving role. This enabled them to set and achieve personally meaningful goals, improve their occupational balance and become more resilient in their caregiving role.

Aim: To maximise the health and wellbeing of those in a caregiving role by addressing challenges in occupational performance and participation.

CARERS
WHAT MAKES YOU, YOU?

COOKING

REST

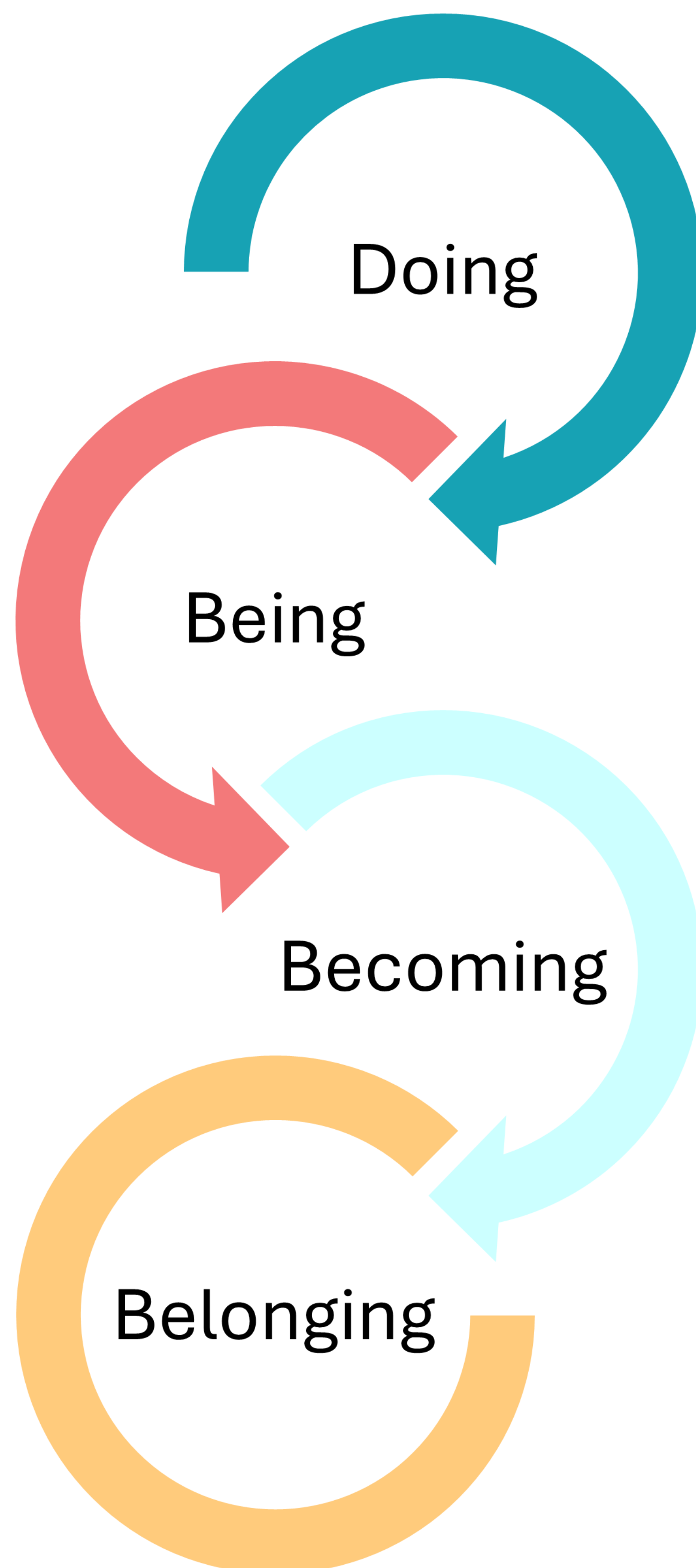
READING

Don't lose who **YOU** are, make sure you create time for you

FITNESS

WORKING

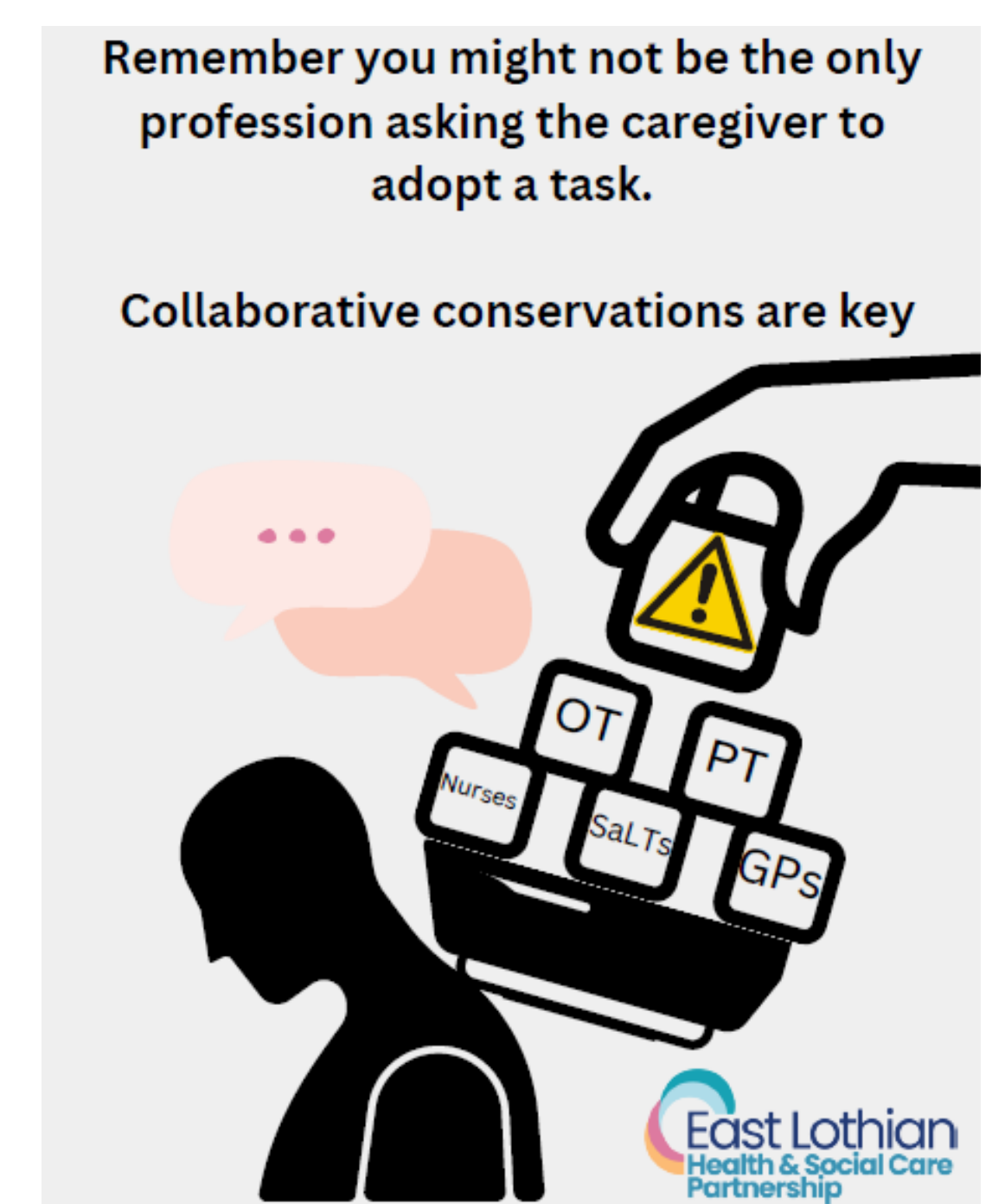
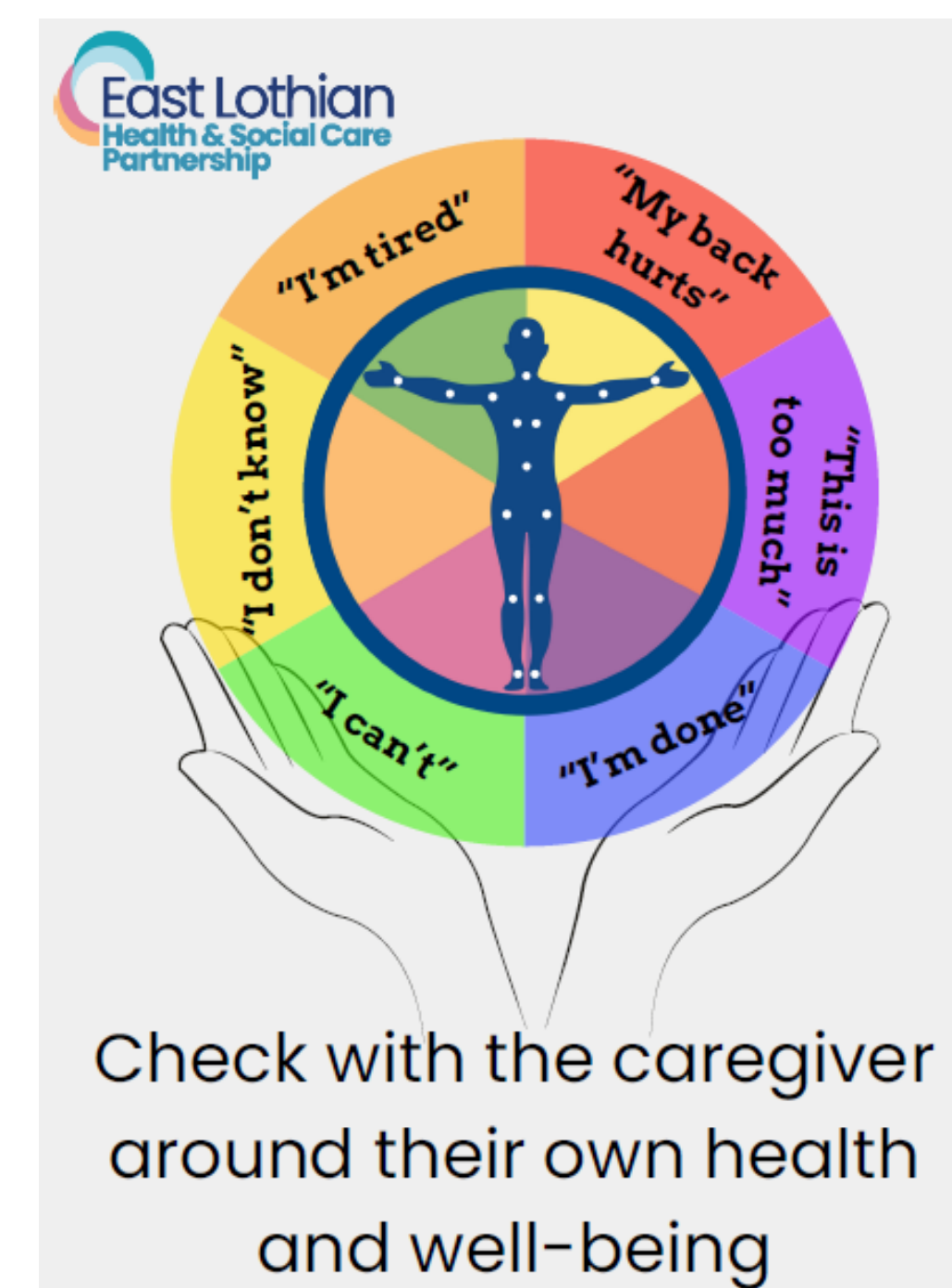
SOCIAL



Methods:

Occupational Therapy was provided through 1-1 and/or group sessions, in a person's own home or a local community setting. The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) was used to identify and explore a person's priorities and barriers to occupational participation. This led to the establishment of collaborative goals, with interventions including education and advice, task and environmental modification, and graded practice.

Key to success was changing and challenging perceptions of unpaid caregivers across the East Lothian Rehabilitation Service and wider Health and Social Care Partnership including third sector organisations, to generate referrals and enable the pathway to become embedded. The leaflets below were used to raise awareness of caregivers' needs amongst professionals.



Outcomes/results:

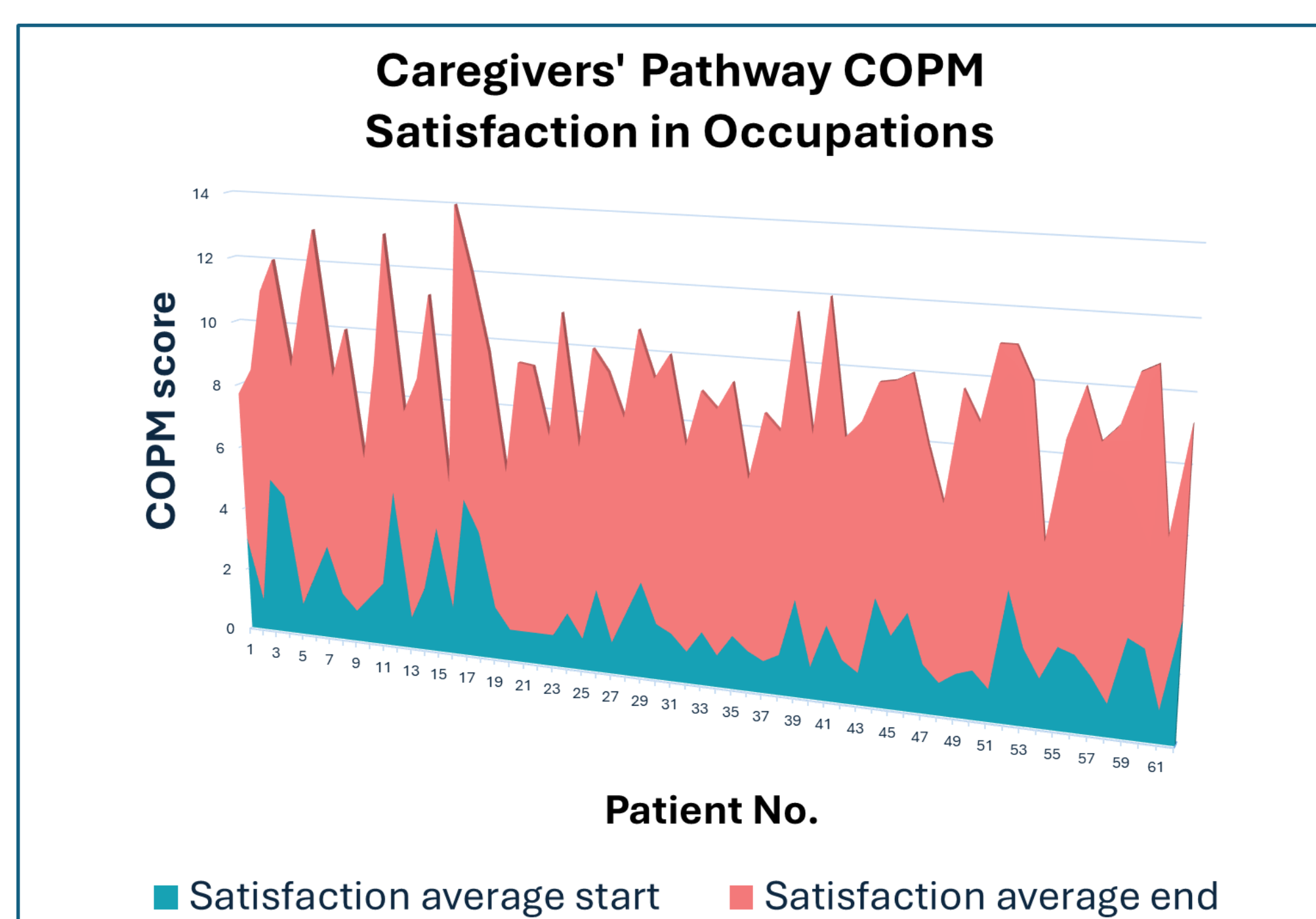
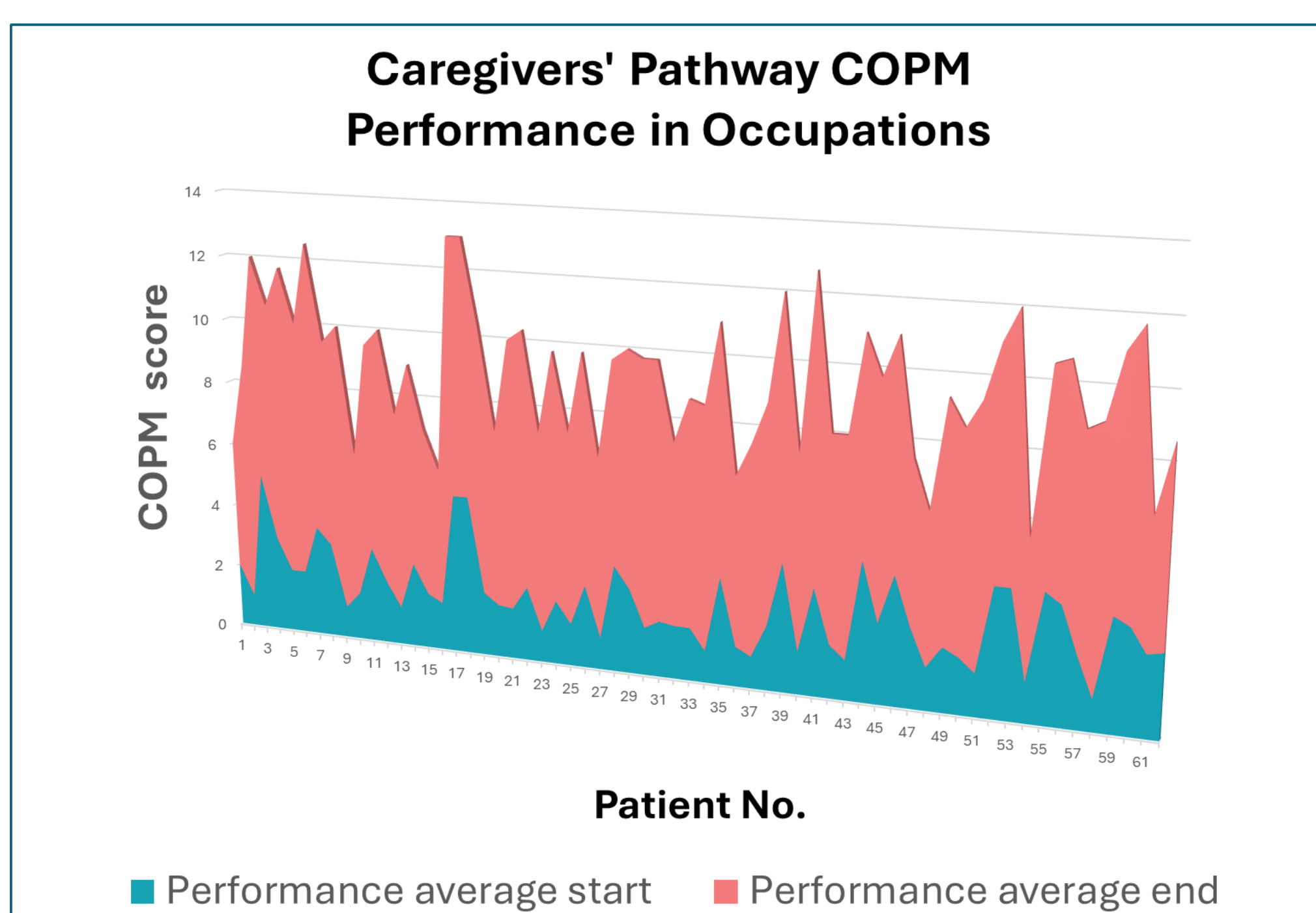
Reflections and feedback from clinicians and service users have continued to evolve both the delivery of the service, and the way unpaid caregivers are viewed.

- 288 referrals from GPs, inpatient & community AHPs, 3rd sector partners

Universal improvement in self-rated COPM scores:

- Average performance change: 4.5
- Average satisfaction change: 5.1

Positive service user and referrer feedback as highlighted in the quotes to the right.



"The input I received and the impact this had on my thinking went well beyond anything I might have expected".
(caregiver)

"Doing a joint visit with the OT allowed me to see the carer in their own right and from a different perspective".
(cared for person's OT)

"She (OT) gave me achievable goals and much needed advice on how to set boundaries. Reassurance that the confusion, dilemmas, distress, guilt and hopelessness that I felt was real, valid and understandable".
(caregiver)

Conclusions:

This pathway has demonstrated the positive impact occupational therapy can have for unpaid caregivers. By viewing the service user as a person first, and caregiver second, the opportunity was provided to focus on their health and wellbeing as a key to self management and the sustainability of the caregiving role. Referral partners have noticed the benefits of the pathway in focusing on the caregivers' own occupational identity, balance and performance. The next step is to encourage early recognition of someone in a caregiving role, expanding the opportunity for self-referrals and referrals at the earliest point in the caregiving journey.