

Assistive Technology in community occupational therapy practice: Enabling participation and justice for children and young people with disabilities.

Jennifer McAnuff, Benita Powrie
NHS Leeds, West Yorkshire, United Kingdom

Many children and young people with physical disabilities use Assistive Technology to support occupational participation in their daily lives. Occupational therapists in a community service in the United Kingdom worked with practitioners from Health, Education and Social Care to create an innovative, occupation-focused process for assessment and provision of Assistive Technology. This presentation uses a reflective case study to relate clients' experiences and opinions of Assistive Technology and its influence on their participation in leisure and school, and throughout family and community life. These experiences are interpreted within an occupational justice framework.

The concept of occupational justice is concerned with the recognition of and provision for "the occupational needs of individuals and communities as part of a fair and empowering society" (Wilcock & Townsend, 2000). Occupational therapy has been described as a profession that exists to address occupational injustice by empowering people to participate in daily life (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004). Occupational justice is promoted through client-centred practice, which emphasises client choice, control and collaborative decision-making throughout the occupational therapy process.

This case study highlights how therapeutic processes of assessment and goal setting may be used as mechanisms for occupational justice. We consider the powerful role Assistive Technology has played in enabling meaningful and equitable experiences of doing, being, belonging and becoming amongst our clients (Hammell, 2004). We reflect on how this practice development has influenced our perspective and clinical reasoning when working with children and young people with physical disabilities. Finally, we describe the impact of different statutory organisations working together with families to create opportunities for occupational participation.

Hammell, K.W., (2004). Dimensions of meaning in the occupations of daily life. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71 (5), 296 - 305.

Townsend, E., & Wilcock, A., (2004). Occupational justice and client-centred practice: A dialogue in progress. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71 (2), 75-87.

Wilcock, A., & Townsend, E., (2000). Occupational terminology interactive dialogue. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 7 (2), 84-86.