

# BRINGING THERAPY HOME:



# Parents' experiences of telehealth for children with Developmental Coordination Disorder

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# 1.Background

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Barriers to service accessibility presented significant challenges for parents of children with DCD in Ireland. The absence of services resulted in children with DCD slipping through the cracks of service provision, leaving parents in the dark and helpless surrounding their child's needs. Telehealth was adopted by parents along this journey to ensure continuity of care and an enhanced understanding of how to support their child.

**Gap in Literature**: Many benefits to the use of telehealth have been identified in the literature, yet there is a dearth of published evidence available on the experiences of parents of children with DCD on this service delivery model.



### 2. Research Question

What are parents' experiences of implementing a telehealth programme for their child with Developmental Coordination Disorder?

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### 3. Research Design

- Methodology: Qualitative descriptive approach
- **Recruitment:** 8 Participants (Parents of 8 children with DCD aged 5–9 years) through a gatekeeper (private paediatric occupational therapist)
- Data Generation: Semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely on Microsoft Teams
- Data Analysis: Thematic analysis (3 main themes, 10 sub-themes)
- Trustworthiness: Audit trail, member checking, researcher reflexivity
- Context for the study: Telehealth motor-skills programme "Octobox" was used

# 4. Findings

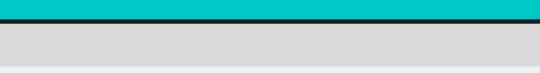
# Chaos in the Absence of Services

"my son is 10. We have been on a waiting list since he was four. He has never seen an occupational therapist in the public system" (Deirdre)



# Lacking Understanding

"you just drop them at the door and then you would get a report. So, I kind of didn't really know. When she would come out like she wouldn't say to me, we did this and I struggled with that" (Jane)



- 2. TELEHEALTH IN THE FAMILY
- 3. TELEHEALTH: WHAT

**SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE** 

# Empowerment



"I could kind of see like wow she is kind of behind in those different areas that I didn't realise before" (Jane)

# Blurring the Roles



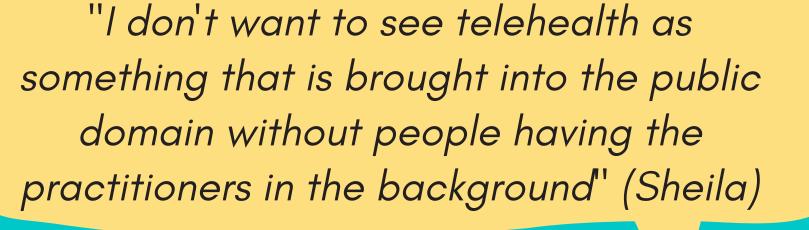
"...it changes my relationship with my child.
I'm not just his mom anymore. I have
assumed this role of a person who makes
you do these things to help you better and
grow" (Nicole)

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# The Fabric of Family Life

"I just love when I can literally just sit at home and turn on the computer. I don't have to drive half an hour to meet somebody" (Sheila)

# A Future of Blended Therapy



### 5. Discussion

- Telehealth is more **convenient** for families in terms of cost, time & travel.
- Primary school children in Ireland are significantly delayed in motor skill acquisition (Gaul & Issartel, 2016)- parents unaware of child's level of motor skills.
- Parental empowerment requires building parents culminative skills and experiences.
- Telehealth as a solution to deliver intervention to rural communities and those experiencing delayed access to services.
- A **blended approach to therapy** is favoured by parents.

# 6. Implications for Occupational Therapy

To capitilise on the unique benefits of telehealth therapists need to:

- Reflect on their own digital fluency, skills &knowledge.
- Examine **elements of their own practice** that may be augmented by a remote method of service delivery.
- Address how the therapeutic use of self can be translated virtually.
- Listen to parental preferences for service delivery.
- Refocus OT intervention to place a stronger emphasis on parental education & coaching.



