



BRINGING THERAPY HOME:

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

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1. Background

**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.

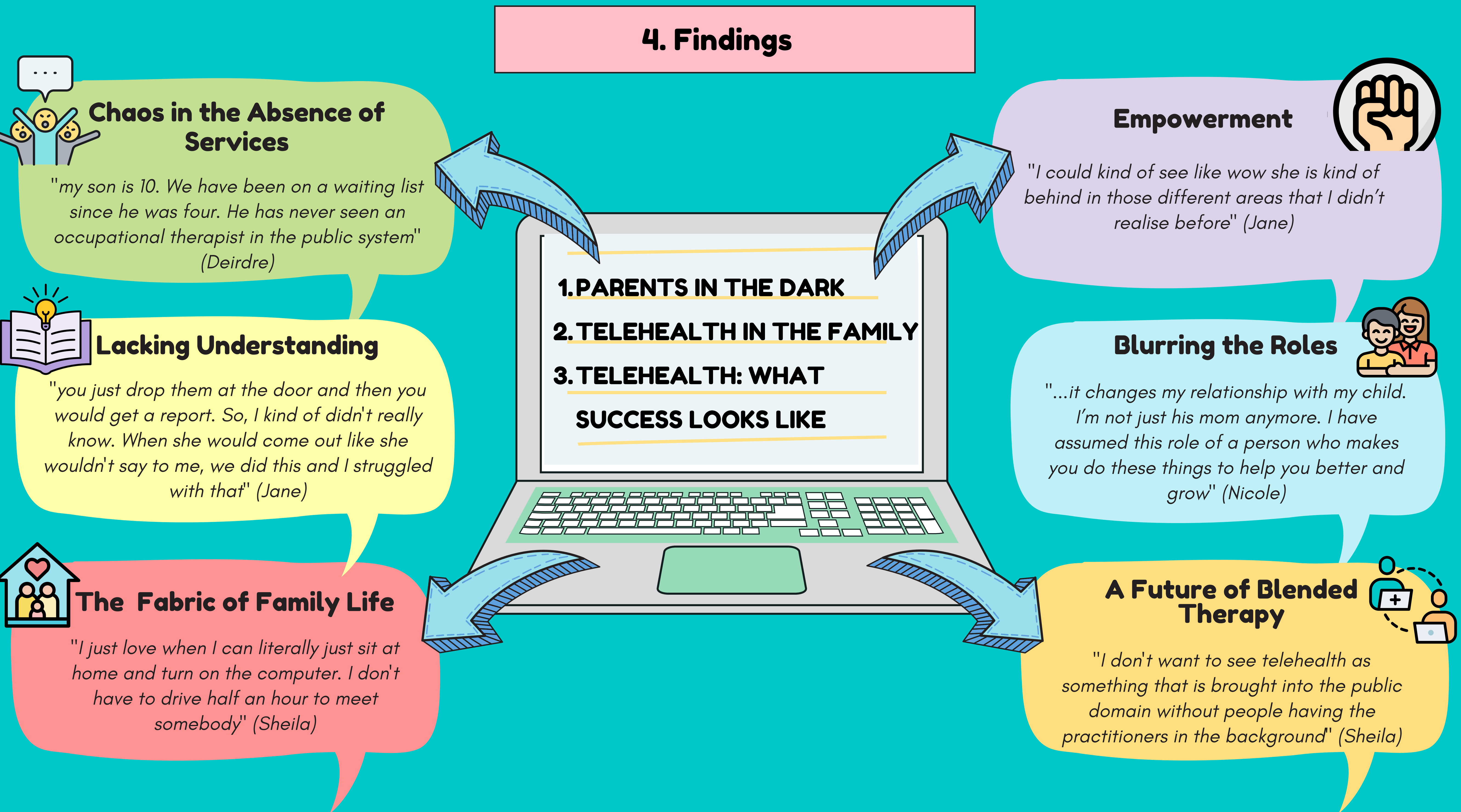
**Gap in Literature:** Many benefits to the use of telehealth have been identified in the literature, yet there is a dearth of published evidence available on the experiences of parents of children with DCD on this service delivery model.

2. Research Question

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

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



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' cumulative 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 capitalise 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.**

