

# Sensory inclusion of adults with intellectual disabilities: What is the current practice of occupational therapists using sensory integration-informed approaches in the UK and Ireland?

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## 1. Introduction

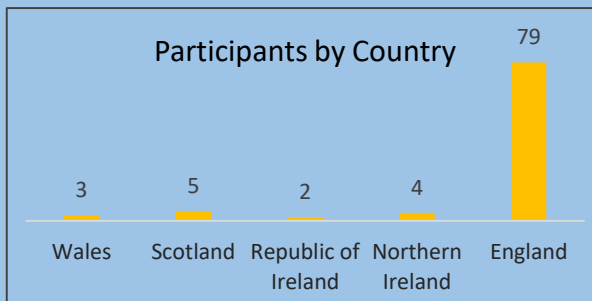
- Intellectual disability occupational therapists (OTs) frequently work with adults with sensory differences.
- But evidence is limited in this clinical area and day-to-day practice is not well understood.

## 2. Aims

- This study aimed to examine current practice of intellectual disability OTs in their use of sensory integration (SI)-informed approaches.

## 3. Methods

- An online survey gathered data from intellectual disability OTs in the UK and Ireland.



## 4. Findings

- 92% of participants used Ayres's theories to inform their work
- The majority of participants used *indirect* treatment approaches
- <50% of those using *direct* therapy aimed for fidelity with Ayres Sensory Integration®.
- SI-informed approaches were:
  - *Most frequently* used with autistic individuals and those with behaviours that challenge.
  - *Least frequently* used with individuals with profound and multiple intellectual disabilities
- A wide variety of terms were used to describe the types of work carried out.
- Barriers identified to using SI-informed approaches included:
  - Access to training, clinical space, equipment
  - High caseload numbers/service pressures
  - Working reactively rather than proactively
  - Responding to crisis

## 5. Conclusions

- Intellectual disability OTs in the UK and Ireland use a wide variety of SI-informed approaches and use multiple terms to describe them.
- Work is needed to: agree common terms to describe types of intervention being used; examine efficacy of intervention techniques and their acceptability to service users and carers.

## 6. Implications

- Findings provide data for OTs and services to compare their practice to.
- They will help inform future research and professional debates regarding use of sensory approaches by OTs and the language used to describe this.

## 7. Acknowledgements

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