



1 Introduction

Many people with intellectual disabilities live in inappropriate and unsafe housing in the UK (MENCAP, 2022). The lack of choice and control in terms of dwelling, affordability and the requirement for home modifications to support their ongoing needs are all contributing factors to poorer health outcomes (NHS, 2017).



2. Study aim

To understand how occupational therapists contribute to home environment designing, to support people with intellectual disabilities to live better lives. Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) was sought as the needs and priorities of disabled people have not always been included in research and in the provision of services (NIHR, 2024; Atkin et al., 2020). The study was carried out in collaboration with Team Springwell, Sussex Partnership NHS foundation Trust (SPfT). They are the Experts-by-Experience (EbEs) in this study.

3. Meet team Springwell...



Sussex Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust



References

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The Occupational Therapy Contribution to Good Home Environment Design A Collaborative Research Journey with Experts-by-Experience (EbE)

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4. Method in approaching this collaborative research as a process and principle

4.1. The research collaboration process so far...

1. BUILDING RELATIONS
Familiarised with Springwell members, interests & projects.

Gauged capacity of & interest from group.

1. Exploratory conversations.

All this, took time.

2 GRANT FUNDING TO
Compensate Springwell & their facilitator.

Support meaningful engagement from EbE: a shift from PPI to co-researchers.

Fund accessible communication process.

3. PLANNING & DESIGNING
Obtained consent from EbEs.

Used accessible means to communicate.

3. Co-created interview questions & schedule.

4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Included people who the research seeks to benefit.

Liaised with SPfT facilitator before any co-production activities commenced.

Safeguarding & policies (consent, MCA (2005), confidentiality).

5. INTERVIEW PROCESS
Access to space & technology.

Reasonable adjustments to support EbE involvement.

EbE co-led interviews with own questions.

Considered risks: fatigue and time optimisation for everyone.

4.2. Research design: Together with Springwell, 13 semi- structured interviews with occupational therapy practitioners from across the UK were conducted online. The data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

5. Results of the process

- Conditions were set where EbEs felt able to contribute with authority e.g. meetings were held in their space with familiar support structures and a known facilitator.
- Providing safe opportunities for all to be involved by managing dynamic Interactions and power tensions in-situ.
- Technology was critical to share information, and scheduling and conducting of interviews.
- Involvement from EbEs lived experiences brought a different perspective with focus on disability rights, human rights and training of occupational therapists.



6. Next steps....

Knowledge transfer and exchange (HSE, 2021)

- **Data analysis:** findings were discussed with EbEs to review their understanding and agreement before publication.
- **Dissemination:** support Springwell to contribute (speak or audiovisual record) for a conference presentation.
- **Foster further collaboration** - to develop further research collaboration and involvement from people with intellectual disabilities in home designing and wellbeing.

7. Implications & conclusions

- The involvement of intellectually disabled people as co-researchers should occur from the beginning, but is a challenge when funding only flows after grants are awarded.
- Ensuring a culture of safety and empowerment was essential for continued involvement.
- Utilising technology and providing accessible communication methods was integral.
- The co-researching and trust-building process takes time. It continues to be shaped and negotiated as the research evolves.
- Evaluation process to determine further collaborative research opportunities.

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Ethical approval:

University of Brighton Cross-School Research Ethic Committee. **Ref:** 2023-12383-Yong The occupational therapy contribution to good home environment design to support the participation and wellbeing of people with intellectual disabilities.

