

COTSS-PLD Resource for

Occupational Therapists Working with People with Learning Disabilities who are parents

Working with people with learning disabilities who have children has long been part of the learning disability occupational therapist's role.

Occupational therapists (OTs) use their skills to support parents with learning disabilities and to be part of the differing networks of support that parents with learning disabilities might need. Keeping the parent at the centre of intervention and also working in a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary way are key strategies that OTs use.

The OT can take on a variety of tasks for parents or parents-to-be:

- offering the chance to practice activities of daily living skills and the opportunity to learn new skills in relation to the person's parenting role
- providing accessible information
- highlighting the person's strengths as well as their needs to them and to others involved
- joint working with other agencies such as health and/or children's teams/voluntary agencies
- helping the person be clear about their responsibilities as parents and where they can get support

OTs in adult learning disabilities teams do **not** usually undertake formal 'Parenting Assessments' - and I believe that this should be left to experts who are paid to prepare that kind of assessment which might be used in the courts.

Key publications are listed below and there is a lot of information on websites which contextualise the work that OTs might be part of.

The Valuing People Website - there is a page for parents with learning disabilities

<http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople115.jsp>

'Good Practice Guidance on Working with parents with learning disabilities', 2007 available via the Department of Health website

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_075119

'Finding the Right Support', by Beth Tarleton, Linda Ward and Joyce Howarth

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/norahfry/online.html>

Check out their website - they are always doing research and run a network for parents with learning disabilities and professionals who are interested in this area of work.

OT Assessment/Intervention and Resources

Use your usual OT assessment tools in the main. Your work will mainly be about enabling the person with activities of daily living although some of those tasks may relate to their parenting role. You can work with the midwife, health visitors and school and try to adapt the resources they have to ensure they are accessible to the people you are working with.

There are some few resources out there for parents with learning disabilities. Let **Anna Spur via the COTSSPLD email** know if there are any other assessment/intervention tools and resources that you use and like and that could be added to this resource website.

Have a good look at:

- the **CHANGE** website: **CHANGE** - publish good resources for working with parents - 'You and Your Baby 0-1' , and 'You and Your Little Child', and 'Planning A Baby'.

<http://www.changepeople.co.uk/>

- '**The Parent Assessment Manual**' (1999a) by S McGaw, S Beckley, K Connolly and N & G Ball. Trecare NHS Trust.

OT's Training Needs

Good practice dictates that you should have 'Safeguarding Children Children' training and Protection of Vulnerable Adults training.

Safeguarding children training also gives you an opportunity to meet up with people from local agencies and to work on your links with other people who can support people with learning disabilities who are parents.

Please contact Lanier Pole, OT via the COTSS-PLD email cotsspld@hotmail.co.uk with any queries.

Written by L. Pole, March 2008.