

SPOTLIGHT

on... occupational therapists



Q&A with Lucy Bates, occupational therapist

Tourettes Action interviewed Lucy Bates to find out how an occupational therapist can be of support to someone with Tourette Syndrome.

Can you give us an overview of what occupational therapy is?

“A human being is a human doing, occupational therapists enable people to do”. Occupational therapy looks at an individual’s functional skills and occupations. This can be anything from getting washed and dressed in a morning, to work based tasks, to leisure pursuits. Occupational therapists can be involved wherever an individual has difficulty completing activities, and enables them through a variety of ways to be able to participate in the tasks they find challenging. Occupational therapists work across the lifespan from infants to elderly people. We are initially trained to work with people who have physical and mental health conditions, although we tend to specialise to develop expert skills in specific areas.

How might occupational therapy support someone with Tourette Syndrome (TS)? Can you give examples of different environments, i.e. school, home, work place?

It really depends where the issues or difficulties lie. For example if an individual had issues focusing at school because of their tics we would work with that individual at home and school to develop strategies to help them to focus, and therefore learn. On another occasion it may be that an individual has difficulty with organisation skills, so they may struggle planning routes to get to work or remembering what they need for the day. Therefore we may work with them to help plan the route, access public transport etc., or give them strategies to help with memory. Wherever there is an issue or difficulty completing or participating in activities, occupational therapy can help. The list really is endless!

Do occupational therapists have the clinical skills to deliver behavioural therapy for managing tics, i.e. Comprehensive Behavioural Intervention for Tics (CBIT), or Exposure Response Therapy (ERT)?

We do not tend to have the specialist training to complete these type of interventions as part of our core training. Individuals should ensure their therapist has the specialist skills to offer any type of therapeutic intervention.

How do you access occupational therapy?

Occupational therapy can be accessed in a variety of ways. Individuals can be referred to occupational therapy via the NHS depending on their difficulties and areas of need and whether they meet the criteria of the service in their particular area. However there are also many independent occupational therapists who would be able to support individuals in a number of ways. The Royal College of Occupational Therapists has a directory of independent therapists which is accessible to all via their website (please refer to end of document). parents may have.

Is Occupational Therapy an ongoing form of support, do people have regular sessions or does it tend to be a one off consultation?

Again this is dependent on where individuals access OT and what is available. Each NHS team is different in what can be offered in terms of assessment and support. From an independent point of view, I would complete an assessment with an individual and then compile recommendations. Depending on the needs and what the client wants to work towards this may be one to one therapy, equipment provision, advice for schools/workplace, education and training or a therapy programme to complete at home.

Do occupational therapists often work as part of a multi-disciplinary team? Would you consult with someone's neurologist or psychologist for example, if you were working with someone who has TS?

Yes, we work very closely as part of a MDT. This is really important as we need to work together in order for the best possible outcomes for the individual. Regular liaison is essential to ensure we are working towards common aims.

Where would someone go if they wanted to find out more information about occupational therapy?

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists has an excellent website (www.rcot.co.uk) with lots of information about OT and what we do.

About Lucy Bates

Lucy qualified as an Occupational Therapist in 2005 after studying at the University of Northampton. Since qualifying Lucy has specialised in Sensory Integration and is now an accredited Sensory Integration practitioner. She currently works fully in independent practice with a range of children and adolescents, across a range of settings.

Tourettes Action would like to thank Lucy Bates for her very helpful explanations to our questions

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists – professional body for Occupational Therapists

www.rcot.co.uk

Helpdesk phone: 0300 777 8427

Helpdesk email: help@tourettes-action.org.uk