



# Pre-school Autism Communication Trial Newsletter

My Lawnmower  
Matthew Sussex, aged 4



## Clare Holt



Hi my name is Clare and I am in the second year of my PhD (a research based Doctorate) working alongside the PACT study. Some of you may have met me before as I regularly film assessments with Kathy and I look forward to meeting more families over the next few months. Originally from Essex, I moved to Manchester last year to start my PhD having previously studied psychology at both Durham and York. In my spare time I try to go running and am often found baking! My research aims to look at play behaviours in autism and see how these relate to language. I also am following on Laura Blazey's research, looking into how children interact with their parents and what effect this may have on play and language.

Clare is also recruiting families with children WITHOUT autism to take part in her research. The families will be required to take part in similar assessments to those in the PACT study, but in their own homes rather than at Booth Hall. These families will act as "controls" to which Clare will compare her results from the PACT study. If you have enjoyed the experience of the PACT study and know of anyone with children aged between 1 and 4 without autism, please encourage them to contact the PACT office.

## Happy New Year ! Study Update

Welcome to the winter edition of the PACT newsletter. Many trials reach the end of their recruitment phase without reaching the target for recruitment. Thanks to the incredible hard work of the referrers, the research assistants and the families involved in the PACT study we reached the end of recruitment in March 2008 and not only did we achieve our target but surpassed it! 152 participants were recruited to the study. Two thirds of these families have now completed their contribution to the study. There have only been a couple of families

who have been unable to continue, with most remaining enthusiastic and committed. Our thanks goes to all those involved, as without your dedication, we would not be able to continue our research. Our next newsletter will be towards the end of 2009 when we will be able to bring you the results of this study. Please remember if you change address or contact details to let the PACT office know. It is important that we can keep our records up to date and can keep you informed about the study.

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## It's advantageous to participate in research

Olga Aslanova describes her experience of being involved in the PACT study.

'When Sophia was diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder it really took me by surprise as I have never come across this condition before. I must confess I was at a total loss as to what to do next. Sophia's paediatrician told me about the PACT study being conducted by Manchester University. I agreed to enter without hesitation because in the past, I have been involved in many research projects and knew how advantageous it could be for Sophia and me to participate in front line research. There is no doubt that new ideas and research initiatives need case studies upon which the research is based, otherwise they would be unproven theories that couldn't be implemented to improve the lives of other autistic children and their frustrated families. We need to experiment and fight autism with the most support that we as parents can receive from medical and speech and language professionals. Well done PACT Team and THANK YOU!'

Olga & Sophia Aslanova



## Farewell and a big thank you to all our therapists!



Tori Houghton and Carol Taylor

As we are nearing the end of the treatment phase of the study it is time to say farewell and thank you to those who have provided the intervention with our families. The speech and language therapists working on PACT have almost completed the intervention with families in the treatment part of the trial. They have all worked extremely diligently and enthusiastically with a wide variety of children and their parents. They have shown exceptional skill in sensitively adapting treatment tailored to the individual child and parent needs. The positive reports from parents to the local Paediatricians, Education and Health Care Professionals have further reinforced the value parents place on skilled practitioners delivering individualised communication focused therapy. We wish to send a special thank you to all the therapists for their tremendous and exceptional work throughout the trial. They will be greatly missed by the children and their families and all the members of the PACT team. We wish them all the very best in their future careers.

## Don't forget to post back your questionnaires !

Families who are involved in the treatment arm of the study will have received regular parent questionnaires through the post from the PACT office. If you receive one, we would be very grateful if you could complete it as soon as possible after you receive it and return it to us in the attached prepaid envelope. Your assistance with this is very much appreciated.

We would like to keep in contact with you through regular newsletters and greeting cards, and later this year we will be sending you the results of the study, so even if you have completed your final assessment, please don't forget to tell us if you move house or change contact details.

If at any stage you wish to contact the PACT team please email us at [pact@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:pact@manchester.ac.uk)

Further details of the study are available on the PACT website: <http://www.medicine.manchester.ac.uk/pact/>

You can also contact your local PACT office at:

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**University Place**  
**University of Manchester**  
**Oxford Road**  
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**If you have any comments on this newsletter or would like to contribute an article please contact the PACT team**



Please don't forget to let the PACT office or your research associate know if you move house