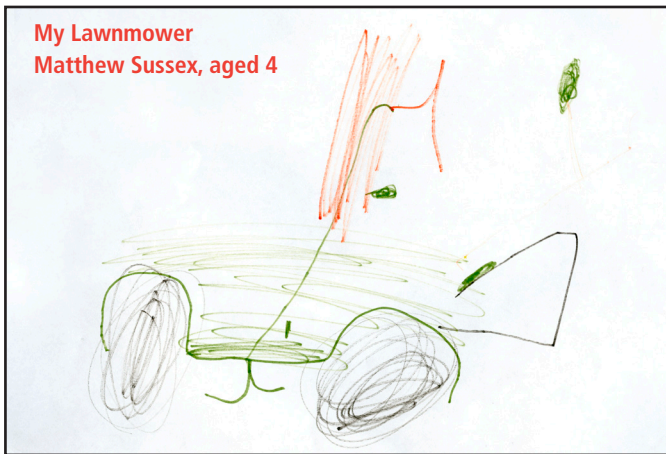


Pre-school Autism Communication Trial Newsletter

This comes wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year.

My Lawnmower
Matthew Sussex, aged 4



The PACT trial is now in the last few months of data collection. We will be able to begin analysis of the trial results in the spring and plan to have first results out in late Summer/early Autumn.

I am pleased however that we can already say that the trial has been a success from a 'technical' point of view (ie we have been able to complete the experimental design). Our final randomised cohort totalled 152, slightly above the target we set ourselves and achieved to time. We have a good spread of cases across our three sites (Manchester 52 cases, London 52 cases, Newcastle 48 cases) with balanced numbers in experimental and treatment as usual

conditions. I am also very pleased to say that our therapy and research teams have remained completely unchanged through the trial and have been a delight to work with; this is also good technically since we have not had the disruption and threats to internal validity of

having to train up new researchers or therapists halfway through the trial. I am sure partly related to this and a credit to the relationships that both therapists and researchers and have built up with families involved in the trial is that we have had very few withdrawals so far to end point (under 4% of the sample), and we have now completed 75% of our end point assessments.

Not only is the 'internal validity' of the trial in this way excellent I also think that the 'external validity' (in other words the representativeness of our cohort to everyday practice) will prove also to be very good when we come to the analysis. We have had across our three sites a very broad

range of families recruited into the trial representing a spread of social class, parental education, ethnicity and geographical background. This means that the intervention will have been tested across a wide variety of situations representative of clinical practice.

On behalf of the PACT Team I would like to thank all of you who have collaborated so enthusiastically with this trial and have referred families to it. We look forward to sharing the results of our work with you as they emerge over the next year or so.

Finally, we have had many enquiries from colleagues asking for details of the PACT intervention and of training opportunities. Until we have the results of the trial we are not able to disseminate the intervention manual or to undertake any training; but be assured that after the results are in (and depending of course on the outcome in terms of effectiveness!) we do have potential plans in place for such dissemination. In future newsletters I will be able to address this in more detail.



Best wishes

Professor Jonathan Green
Chief Investigator

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Bercow Review

In September 2007, John Bercow MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Speech and Language Difficulties was asked to lead an independent review into Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication needs. With the help of expert advisors, he saw and heard for himself what the present situation is and how the support available can be improved. He staged a series of consultation groups and listened to the voices of parents, children and young people in locations across the country. He visited children's centres, nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools right across the country. He commissioned research by leading academics in the field of speech, language and communication needs, and has now published the Review's final report, setting out their findings and recommendations to Government. <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/bercowreview/docs/7771-DCSF-BERCOW.PDF>



The Bercow Report

A Review of Services for Children and Young People (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

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You can download this publication at www.dcsf.gov.uk/BercowReview

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ISBN 978 1 84775 211 6

01607731000813

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Farewell and a big thank you to all our therapists!

Over the last couple of years we have had the privilege of working as part of the PACT team. During this time we have worked with a number of children and their families across the North East. We have both really enjoyed building relationships and working collaboratively with parents, and feel that this has given us the opportunity to gain an insight into the effects of autism on family life. We would like to thank all families for being committed to this study and for taking such an active role in developing their children's communication. It has been a pleasure to be part of this project, and the knowledge, skills and experience we have gained will be invaluable to us in our future careers.



Ruth Colmer and Sarah Randles

Our role in the PACT team will come to an end in spring 2009, and we will move on to new Speech and Language Therapy positions. We will take with us many lasting memories of our time working for PACT.

We wish you all a happy New Year and best wishes for 2009.

Ruth Colmer and Sarah Randles
Research Speech and Language Therapists

During the course of the study we have received many comments from parents and share a few with you here.

"Reading the reports has been exceptionally informative and has given us a baseline for our son to improve on"

"Taking part in the study has provided appropriate care; support and education to help children with autism thrive and learn."

"The research team was fantastic. Very courteous, professional and bonded well with my son"

"A big thank you to all, we sincerely hope that this research will help future children"

Contact Details

If at any stage you wish to contact the PACT team please email us at 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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School of Clinical Medical Sciences
Sir James Spence Institute
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4LP
Telephone: 0191 282 1380

If you have any comments on this newsletter or would like to contribute an article please contact the PACT team



Please forward this newsletter to your colleagues