

Newsletter of the Pre-school Autism Communication Trial



We are looking forward to working with you on the first large-scale intervention study in autism. Many thanks for your interest in the study so far!

The **Pre-school Autism Communication Trial (PACT)** examines the effectiveness of a communication focused intervention for pre-school children with autism and their families. **PACT** is funded by the Medical Research Council and it is the first large-scale intervention study of its kind!

PACT is a three site randomised controlled trial. The trial is led from the University of Manchester in collaboration with the University of Newcastle and the Institute of Child Health/Guys Hospital in London. Jonathan Green is the chief investigator for **PACT**.

With **YOUR** help and support, we are hoping to recruit 144 families; that is 48 families per site.

The Intervention in brief

*Families that have been randomised to the **PACT** treatment will attend bi-weekly 3 hour sessions for the first 6 months delivered by Speech and Language Therapists. After 6 months the sessions will be followed by monthly booster sessions. The routine care of the families in the **PACT** treatment will not be affected.*

*Families that have been randomised to the **Treatment As Usual (TAU)** arm of the study, apart from receiving their regular care, will also:*

- *receive a report based on rigorous assessments carried out by experienced researchers*
- *have the chance to talk to the **PACT** team*

The intervention in the North East will be delivered at North Tyneside PCT

*Inclusion Criteria for referral to **PACT**:*

- *Child between 2 years and 4 years 9 months with presumptive or confirmed diagnosis of 'core' ICD 10 Autism*
- *Child has above 12 months equivalent level in general (non language) development*
- *The family have spoken English at home which is adequate to allow them to participate in this communication based intervention*
- *Neither child nor parent has long term severe hearing or visual impairment that would limit participation in the intervention*
- *No current clinically severe psychiatric illness in parents*

Exclusion Criteria:

- *Epilepsy requiring regular medication*
- *Twins*

Randomisation update Nationally

Since starting the study in September, we are pleased to announce that 23 participants have been randomised to the study. With your help we are looking forward to continuing to receive your referrals to meet our target!

Meet the Team

Ruth Colmer

Ruth is currently working as one of the PACT speech and language therapists employed by North Tyneside PCT in the North East. She studied at the University of Newcastle and has lived and worked in the area since graduating in 1999. Over the past few years she has been working predominantly with children who have complex language, learning and communication disorders. Ruth began working as a member of the PACT team in April this year and is working part time for the project whilst continuing to work part time with primary school age children in Sunderland. Ruth is very excited to be involved in the trial and is enjoying the opportunity it is giving her to work closely with autistic children and their families.



Ruth & Sarah
Speech & Language
Therapists

Sarah Randles

Sarah is a speech and language therapist employed by North Tyneside PCT and working for PACT full time. She trained at the University of Newcastle and since graduating has worked with a wide range of children in pre-school, school and clinic settings. Throughout this time Sarah has gained most pleasure from working with pre-school children and children with autism. Working for PACT has given her the opportunity to further pursue her interests in these fields. Sarah is enjoying working with the families that she has met so far and is looking forward to meeting and working with many more (children and their) families who will be involved in the PACT trial.

“There has been very little systematic research into effective treatments for autism. In funding this project, the MRC hopes that solid research foundations can be established”

*Colin Blakemore,
executive of MRC*

PACT needs your help!

Contact the team

Kathryn Temple is the Research Associate working on the PACT Trial and is based in Newcastle. She graduated from Durham University in 2005 with a BSc in Psychology. Since graduating, she has worked for Durham University on a project investigating the working memory profiles of children with Developmental Coordination Disorder and for Newcastle University working with children with autism. In Kathryn's spare time she enjoys keeping fit and at the moment is training to take part in the Great North Run 2007.



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