

EARLY COMMUNICATION AND AUTISM PILOT

LEAFLET FOR PARENTS

What is the pilot?

This is a new pilot scheme for families that have children with complex social and communication difficulties. It has been developed by the Nottingham Regional Society for Autistic Children and Adults (NoRSACA), Nottinghamshire Education Authority and the Health Service. It is based on a past successful project led by NoRSACA.

A major aim of the pilot is to improve services for parents/carers. The pilot will enable different agencies to work together more effectively. We want to have more streamlined services, less confusion for parents and better outcomes for children.

Who is it for?

It is for children aged three years and under who have a complex social and communication difficulty. The child may or may not have a diagnosis of autism. The family must live in either the Gedling, Broxtowe or Rushcliffe districts of Nottinghamshire.

How can my child obtain a place on the pilot?

A referral needs to be made to the Consultancy Panel which meets regularly. The people on the panel work for the Health Service, NoRSACA and the Education Authority. They will consider all enquiries and will need to have as much information as they can about your child.

How can I find out if the pilot might be suitable for my child?

You will be able to find out more from professionals working with your child such as Speech and Language Therapists, Paediatricians, Early Years Special Needs Teachers, Health Visitors and Family Workers, or you could contact the Early Communication and Autism Pilot service on 0115 9609263.

What will happen at the Consultancy Panel meeting?

The Consultancy Panel will be considering your child's needs and ways in which support can be provided. These may include:

- Looking at existing services for assessment and support
- Arranging (in consultation with other relevant professionals) for an assessment by the Early Communication and Autism Pilot team.
- Deciding that regular support from the pilot service is appropriate.

- Deciding that the full service offered by the pilot would not be appropriate and suggesting other ways to support your child.

How will I/we be involved as parents/carers if our child is on the Pilot?

Because you know your child better than anyone else we will need you to be directly involved with the pilot. The involvement will vary according to the type of option you are working with. However the core service on offer would need a commitment from you to be available for

- A two hour home teaching session every week (during term-time)
- We will need your help and expert guidance to develop individual programmes for your child. You will then be expected to practise these strategies and skills during the week with your child.
- There will be 8 parent workshops lasting approximately 3-4 hours which you will need to attend.

The intervention will last for approximately 12-18 months or until your child enters full-time education. The Early Communication and Autism Pilot team will support your child's entry into school by developing an individual transitional programme with the receiving school. This programme will include staff training and sharing information, and strategies for working with your child.

Comments from parents involved in the 'Frameworks and Communication' project.

"I know how to play with him now, I have lots more ideas. I know how to deal with his tantrums now and other things he does."

"His behaviour now is very different now.....I think our better understanding has helped him improve. He gives meaningful eye contact now and he's pointing."

"It's given us the strength to cope with Luke and to work with him. It's taught us how to enjoy him."

"It's difficult to say how, but it seems like we've changed. I think it's the input from people with experience of autism - you learn to pick things up from them and then start to work things out for yourself."

"It helps having more and more knowledge about autism, it helps me understand him and also what to do."

"I wouldn't have coped without it. We've really needed it because it means that we're listened to....and you're made not to feel stupid when you don't understand."

"It would've been much more difficult for nursery if there hadn't been any project. It may have taken longer to settle him or have been more difficult....the project gave him the basic skills that he could build on once he got in to school."