

AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER

Autistic Spectrum Disorder affects up to 12 children per 10,000 (Fombonne, 2003). However, The National Autistic Society has recently estimated that the prevalence rate may in fact be nearer to 1 in 100. Each child with autism or Asperger Syndrome is unique but all will have some difficulties in the realms of: communication/ language; socialisation; flexibility of thought and behaviour. Some children's development differs only slightly from that of their typically developing peers: others have more severe difficulties and find any interaction challenging.

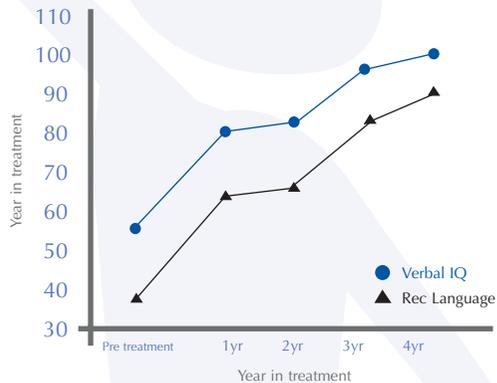
Autistic Spectrum Disorder is a life-long condition that cannot be cured. However, children can be helped to learn the sorts of skills that will enable them to reach their potential. Early intensive intervention helps children on the autistic spectrum to learn and to develop.

Ref: Fombonne, E 2003 Epidemiological surveys of autism and other pervasive developmental disorders: an update. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 33: 365-382

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

One would expect to see a year on year improvement in the child's functioning. The graph below shows verbal IQ and expressive language functioning from a group of children following an intensive behavioural intervention programme.

Ref: Sallows, G and Graupner, T 2005 Intensive behavioural treatment for children with autism: four year outcome and predictors. *American Journal on Mental Retardation Vol 110 (6)* 417-438



Dr Margaret Anderson

Margaret Anderson has been working with people with cognitive differences for over twenty five years. She has worked with children and adults in the health service, social services and in education. She has lectured at two U.K. Universities and is currently an Associate Lecturer at Thames Valley University in London.

Dr. Anderson is a nurse for people with learning disabilities and is also a teacher. She has a PhD in Health and Social Welfare and has undertaken training in a variety of approaches to working with children with autism. Dr Anderson has worked exclusively with children on the autistic spectrum for the past eight years, providing early intensive behavioural programmes. Her work also includes supporting children in school, advising teachers and school staff on facilitating learning and development in children on the autistic spectrum.

Dr Anderson has contributed to several books on issues around disability and autism, and is the author of *Tales from the Table*, five accounts of early intensive behavioural intervention. Published in 2007 by Jessica Kingsley Publishing.

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Autism and Asperger Syndrome in Children: Making a Difference

Dr Margaret
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HOW ALD CAN HELP & CASE STUDIES

EARLY INTERVENTION IS IMPORTANT

The importance of early intervention is emphasised in the research and literature relating to autistic spectrum disorder. Many different approaches to helping children learn and develop are available and the emerging research acts as a guide for parents seeking intervention for their child.

ALD provides an established approach to working with children on the autistic spectrum, with support from seminal and contemporary research. We begin work with the child and family as soon after diagnosis as possible and aim to meet the child's learning needs through a specialised curriculum and a behavioural approach to learning. The aim is to make the most of the child's early developmental potential.

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Using a structured approach to learning and development with young children can enable them to gain skills and knowledge about their world. Addressing needs through using the child's strengths facilitates enjoyable and successful learning experiences, preparing the child to learn alongside his/her peers at school.

ALD can provide a range of educational programmes for children and these are outlined below. Support is offered in the child's home, addressing not only his/ her educational needs but also the practicalities of everyday life with a child with autistic spectrum disorder.

Case Study One: Jack

Jack is a lovely little boy who is four years old. Jack received a diagnosis of autism two years ago and has been on a home programme for the last 18 months. In this time, Jack has learned age-appropriate self care skills, he has acquired speech, he has learned to co-operate with others and to play both on his own and with other children. Although Jack still has many social, play and language skills to acquire, he is on target for beginning school with his peers.

Case study Two: Oliver - a Success Story

Oliver is now 13 years old. He has a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and undertook intensive behavioural intervention as a young child. Oliver has been in mainstream school since he was 5 and is now in secondary school. His teachers' expectations for his GCSE grades are high.

Oliver has some difficulties in organising himself and his belongings and has help in school to do this. He is a popular member of his class and has many friends.

ALD remains available to Oliver and his family if needed.

INTER-AGENCY AND INTER-DISCIPLINARY WORKING

ALD values partnership with other professionals as well as parents. Typically, home teaching would dovetail with work from:

Speech and language therapy - which is crucial in enabling a good diagnosis of the individual child's language needs. Intervention prescribed by the speech and language therapist can be built into the child's home programme.

Occupational therapy - needed to address the motor and sensory issues that affect children on the autistic spectrum. Exercises from the O.T. can be built into the child's daily programme.

ALD would also liaise with the child's pediatrician, G.P., dietician and, of course, pre-school or school in addressing the child's needs.

AGE PROFILE

2-5 years old: ALD provides Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention programmes for young children. Less intensive teaching is also available for children with Asperger Syndrome. ALD provides support at home for teaching skills, building relationships and managing behaviour. ALD is happy to offer liaison with pre-school and school placements.

5-9 years old: ALD can provide autism-specific teaching at home as a support to school placement. Areas such as friendship, self regulation and understanding emotions are addressed away from the pressures of the school day. Advice on promoting self care skills and socialisation is available, along with school liaison work.