

## **Introduction to PACT (Pre-school Autism Communication Therapy)**

### **1. Why PACT?**

- 1.1 The PACT (Pre-school Autism Communication Therapy) is world leading - the first autism intervention rigorously tested to show sustained impact on reduction in autism symptoms (Pickles et al. 2016). PACT has proven sustained effect on significantly reducing the difficulties in social, communication and repetitive behaviours/ restricted interests and improving communication initiation skills in the long-term (6 years after treatment end).
- 2.1 The PACT therapy is included in evidence for the NICE Clinical Guideline 170 (NICE 2013) and one of the leading evidence-based interventions for autism in the 2017 'National Autism Project' review ([www.nationalautismproject.org.uk/](http://www.nationalautismproject.org.uk/)). PACT is now a recommended intervention for core autism symptoms within the national Department of Health 'Improving Access to Psychological Treatment' (IAPT) curriculum for Autism and is being disseminated internationally.
- 3.1 PACT is efficient, relatively low cost on professional resources. PACT therapists train and supervise parents/ carers embedding therapy in the child's naturalistic interactions within family life, leading to '*real world validity*', generalisation and impact on child daily life and functioning.
- 4.1 The PACT has successful feasibility testing, working within existing organisational frameworks and community services e.g. NHS community clinics/ centres, family/ school/ social care centres and within the child's home.
- 5.1 Our PACT 'train the trainer' programme has been successfully tested in the UK and internationally, extending the capacity for individual centres to develop PACT training in their own context with updates from continued progressive PACT research and support from the Manchester PACT team.
- 6.1 PACT transfers skills, between PACT therapist and parent, senior supervisor and PACT therapists and PACT research and senior supervisors, through unique professional collaboration.
- 7.1 PACT was awarded the Outstanding Innovation Award as the most 'innovative and potentially transformational solutions to social issues' and Making A Difference Award for social responsibility (2017) for 'outstanding benefit to society through research'.

### **2. How does PACT work with families?**

- 2.1 PACT is theoretically based collaborative work between therapists and parents/carers using structured video-feedback and therapist supervision techniques to help parents/carers better recognise and respond to their autistic child's altered communication. By working with parents/carers rather than directly with the child (the traditional approach), therapists empower parents

with enhanced key skills proven to lead to better child social communication outcomes.

- 2.2 In this way PACT video feedback '*illuminates imperceptible moments*' of child communication and interaction, supporting better understanding of responses that lead to a better '*alignment*' of adult: child interaction and communication initiation. Parents talk through their new insights and observations of child responses, supported by structured therapist feedback and '*guided discovery*'.
- 2.3 PACT maximises reflection, evaluation, understanding and behavioural change in the adults who know the child well, whilst preserving self-worth and *empowering* parents/ carers in becoming '*skilled partners*' in their child's individualised therapy.
- 2.4 Parents/ carers undertake 30 minutes daily motivational play based practice daily. PACT is *generalised* in the everyday natural interactions of the child from the outset, reducing the barrier to transition of skills into the child's '*real world*'.
- 2.5 Parent/carers receive 1 ½ - 2-hour sessions alternate weeks for 6 months (a total of 12 sessions) with take home written goals to practice in 30 minute daily play context between sessions.

### **3. What are the benefits of PACT training?**

- 3.1. To become PACT certified through training on the PACT theory, methods, and protocol and gain fidelity.
- 3.2. The PACT programme is relatively low cost. PACT training equips professionals, who have skill and background in children who have autism, to become skilled PACT practitioners.
- 3.3. Professional support from the Manchester PACT social enterprise to maintain high quality standards of implementation through annual updates, conferences, continued research.
- 3.4. Collaborative, progressive developments in autism treatment research, involving professionals, organisation and parents/carers participation and feedback.

### **4. What is the evidence for PACT?**

- 4.1. The PACT results are published in The Lancet (2010 and 2016). The Lancet paper reporting the PACT 6 year follow-up results, had a major impact (<https://www.altmetric.com/details/13040173>) with comment in 89 news outlets, 392 tweets, featuring on Radio 4, Today programme, BBC breakfast and main news, with national and international media coverage. Three of the PACT publications were nominated within the top 10 autism publications

internationally for 2015 and 2016 respectively (spectrumnews.org) and the paper was selected as a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) 'Signal' study (<https://discover.dc.nihr.ac.uk/portal/article/4000580/parent-focused-therapy-has-some-long-term-benefits-for-children-with-autism>) for its high quality design and relevance to UK decision makers. The PACT team recently won the prestigious University of Manchester 'Making a Difference' Award 2017 for 'Outstanding Benefit to Society Through Research' - (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJkZsCZffEQ>) and Outstanding Innovation Award .

- 4.2. The PACT therapy is included in the evidence for the NICE Clinical Guideline 170 (NICE 2013) 'consider' recommendation for 'social communication' intervention in autism and figured prominently as one of the leading evidence-based interventions for autism in the 2017 'National Autism Project' review ([www.nationalautismproject.org.uk/](http://www.nationalautismproject.org.uk/)) PACT is now a recommended intervention for core autism symptoms within the national DH 'Improving Access to Psychological Treatment' (IAPT) curriculum for Autism and is being disseminated internationally.
- 4.3. Training on the PACT model has already been undertaken in the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Canada, and Hong Kong with further requests for training and international grant applications.
- 4.4. PACT has been adapted to LMIC (Low-middle Income Countries) in the first substantive global health RCT in autism in collaboration with India and Pakistan (PASS trial; Lancet Psychiatry 2015) This trial embedded PACT in an existing mental health framework in a low resource setting (South Asia), demonstrated successful implementation and initial results.
- 4.5. An adapted form of the same treatment model has been used in the first pre-diagnosis prevention trial in autism in infancy (iBASIS trial; Lancet Psychiatry 2015; voted as in the top 10 autism papers internationally in 2015). Recent publication of the 2-year follow-up of this trial (Green et al Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 2017) showed for the first time that a prevention intervention in autism could modify emergent autism symptom trajectories. (<http://www.altmetric.com/details/18693611>). A replication trial is currently underway in Australia (<http://research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/ibasis/ibasisaustralia>).
- 4.6. Professor Green's invited blog for the Medical Research Council in 2017 summarised some of these achievements (<http://www.insight.mrc.ac.uk/2017/04/12/autism-steps-right-direction/>).
- 4.7. PACT has been rigorously evaluated in world leading randomised control trial research over 13 years through extended partnership between clinical academics and NHS professionals, led by The University of Manchester in close collaboration with Newcastle University, King's College, London, Guy's and St Thomas', Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and other NHS services. PACT has already generated world-class research and

significant impact, giving some of the most robust evidence to date on autism intervention.

- 4.8. The PACT Social Enterprise IMPACT (Interaction Model in Parent/ Adult - Child Therapy) aims to extend the reach of global PACT dissemination, continue PACT research and implementation in the current social context of health/ Social Care and Education services.
- 4.9. In addition to the UK based trials, PACT is the first Autism evidence based intervention to be successfully replicated in Low and Middle income Countries (LMIC) demonstrating its potential for incorporation into existing world health provision delivered in communities, with a focus on culturally appropriate, feasible and scalable delivery.
- 4.10. Further PACT research is planned leading to current research in middle childhood and future planned research in adolescence, early adulthood.

## **5. Who can train in PACT?**

- 5.1 PACT training is suitable for professionals (speech and language therapists, clinical/ educational psychologists, teachers, occupational therapists, social workers) who have experience of working with families of children who have autism between the ages of 2-10 years.
- 5.2 For training enquiries, please complete the PACT training application form and email to: [craldred@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:craldred@tiscali.co.uk)