



Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT)

Information for parents and carers
of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

‘A new form of therapy [PACT] has for the first time been shown to improve the symptoms and behaviour of autistic children, offering a potential breakthrough in care for millions of families.’

The Guardian

What is PACT?

The Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT) is an evidence-based intervention in which therapists work with parent/carers to enhance social communication with their young child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). PACT is the first autism intervention to have shown long-term reduction in autism symptom severity: in a large clinical trial, the group of children receiving PACT pre-school, when compared to usual care, showed improvements in social communication and a reduction in level of restricted and repetitive behaviours that were sustained into middle childhood, six years after the end of treatment. In other studies, PACT has also been applied successfully in children up to 10 years of age.

PACT is a partnership between professionals and you as the parent/carer - enhancing the knowledge and skills of those who know the child best, while working with professionals who have specialist knowledge and skills in autism.

The therapist uses specific video feedback techniques to help you as parents recognise, respond to and enhance your child's communication. They will also work to support and empower you in embedding these communication techniques into daily family life. In this way, children are supported to develop their interaction and communication skills in their natural environment, which is one of the most effective ways of ensuring enduring improvements in social communication skills.

How is PACT delivered?

Before starting PACT, the therapist will offer an initial visit to discuss the child's development and current strengths and needs. They will also ask about your experience as a family. Within each session, the therapist records a short video (around 10 minutes) of you and your child interacting or playing together. You then watch the video back together with the therapist, selecting and reviewing video clips to identify and discuss the best individual communication strategies for your child. The therapist will support you to identify positive moments and together discover what is likely to work best for your child.



Where is PACT delivered?

PACT can be delivered either in a clinic or in your home. The PACT team are also currently conducting further research to establish whether it would also be beneficial for the intervention to be delivered within your child's educational setting.

What is the time commitment?

PACT sessions will last around 1 1/2 hours and you will see your PACT therapist for 12 sessions every two weeks for six months and undertake 30 minutes daily practice at home between the sessions. Between sessions, you will be asked to practice your PACT strategies with the child for around 30 minutes a day during play.

After the PACT intervention you may be offered further optional maintenance PACT sessions to continue generalising the communication techniques in daily routines and can continue with treatment and care from health, education, and other services.

Can my child receive PACT at the same time as other interventions?

Yes, PACT works alongside other interventions. You may continue with health, education or social interventions and any support you receive from other local services whilst receiving PACT. PACT addresses social communication needs and other treatments may be needed to support other skills.

How can PACT be accessed?

PACT is now becoming available in a number of areas in the UK. If you have a child aged 2-10 years of age who is showing social communication needs, signs of autism or has received a diagnosis of autism you can ask your local NHS service if they know about PACT and are able to include it in their social communication pathway. Alternatively, you can contact info@PACTtraining.co.uk for details of PACT-trained therapists, in case there is one near you.

‘It was a complete revelation to me, watching the video which illuminated moments of interaction with my child that I had previously missed. I now know when and how to respond in a way that harmonises with him. PACT strikes a chord with my understanding and sense of him. Talking through what I see on the video really helps me gain new insights, a true understanding so we can be on the same page and communicate better together.’

What we do

Hogrefe is an internationally-recognised psychometric test publisher working with a not-for-profit community interest company called IMPACT to train professionals to deliver PACT. Hogrefe offers a half-day introduction to PACT e-learning programme (Level 1) to support health professionals wishing to learn more about PACT. The programme introduces the techniques and research behind the intervention and provides the background knowledge they need in order to continue to Level 2 training with IMPACT. Completion of Level 2 and the accompanying post-course work qualifies the professional to administer PACT in their own practice.



Other resources about PACT:

- For more information about the therapy, please go to www.pacttraining.co.uk/information-for-parents/ or email info@pacttraining.co.uk
- More in-depth information on PACT, including interviews, videos and details of the research evidence can be found at www.research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/pact
- For the charity Autistica's Evidence Summary of parent-led video interventions - www.autistica.org.uk/downloads/files/Autistica-evidence-summary-Parent-led-video-feedback-therapy-4.pdf

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