

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

James O'Grady
National Manager Disability Services
32-33 Catherine St
Limerick

12 April 2007

Dear James:

It gives me great pleasure to enclose the End of Session Analysis for the January – March 2007 session.

In another successful session we worked in both St Declans Special School, and in our private practice, bringing our total of children helped to over 320 with over 3600 hours of therapy time since January 2005.

We have begun our work with Irish Autism Action, providing all of their speech and language therapy services, and have since moved offices to their Solas campus in Clontarf.

Finally, we held our first annual free theatre workshop which was held over the winter break in February. 26 Release students and their brothers and sisters attended the program having a brilliant time learning how to work with each other in this fun project.

We are able to say without a doubt Release works when caregivers learn the necessary skills and devote their time to work with their children. But who better to say that than a parent...

“*** needs a lot more speech therapy to help him improve his speech. This session has helped us both. It taught me how to help *** with his speech in fun ways. He is working with me well although he does work better in class.

It has also given me great hope. I now believe that if I continue with the program his speech will improve. Something I had nearly given up on. Thanks. Keep up the good work!”

We are still very interested in continuing our discussion about the potential of a government sponsored pilot of Release within the services.

Feel free to contact me directly on 087.247.3486 should you or your peers have any questions about the program.

Sincerely,

Tara Cunningham
Managing Director

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**Release Communication Intervention
St Declan's Special School and
Private Session
Programme Analysis**

January – March 2007

CC:

Minister for Health and Children
Mary Harney, T.D.
Government Buildings
Upper Merrion Street
Dublin 2

Minister for Finance
Brian Cowen, T.D.
Department of Finance
Government Buildings
Upper Merrion Street
Dublin 2

Minister of State
Tom Parlon, T.D.
The Office of Public Works
51 St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Minster for Education and Science
Mary Hanafin, T.D.
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

Tom Kelly
Special Adviser to the Minister
Department of Health and Children
Hawkins House
Hawkins Street
Dublin 2

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Release's Accomplishments

Our experience proves Release can be an invaluable pool of resource for the Health Service Executive and the Department of Education by providing an integrated approach ensuring continuity in the system.

Release opened its doors in January 2005 to provide speech and language therapy to children with varying disabilities, through teaching not only the child, but also the caregivers. To date we have worked with over 320 children and provided over 3600 hours of speech and language therapy in both private and school settings.

At St Declans Special School, parents had to fundraise in order to take part in our services. As the money was privately raised, teacher's schedules were not adapted to take part in Release classes. Therefore there was no carry-thru into the week's work, resulting in minimal improvement in each child's speech.

However in the words of a special needs assistant who attended most classes,

"I thoroughly enjoyed participating in the sessions. I enjoyed how Jen enabled the children to learn through play. I feel the children would have benefited from more weekly sessions. I learned a lot."

Compare this result to that of our work at Ballyowen Meadows Special School. Parents, teachers AND a majority of parents participated in each child's weekly class. Teachers noted improvement in each child's attending skills, confidence, and social skills while speech increased significantly. Parents could not believe the difference the program made to their child's behaviour, speech and confidence. Although the funding was pulled by Beechpark Services, against the wishes of the parents, teachers and school principal; the parents association continues to pay for Release private classes.

Through the comparison of the two schools, we are able to prove a significant point—if there is no follow through during the week, (i.e. completion of Release homework) one hour of speech and language therapy, although helpful, does not help children make *significant* improvement.

Irish Autism Action

Irish Autism Action (IAA) is an organisation of parents for parents. The IAA exists to campaign at a national level for the rights & entitlements of people with Autism, and can also help with advice across a wide range of topics.

The IAA has chosen Release to provide speech and language therapy assessments for over 800 children over five years.

Release will be able to provide this high level of assessments through our efficient roll-out system. Parents will begin their speech and language training of their child through filling out the Release At-Home-Assessment. They will then attend the assessment with their child. A report will be written and discussed in an IEP team meeting within the month, and then sent to the parent with full recommendations as to how best to help their child.

All IAA children assessed by Release will be offered places in Release private therapy classes—if the child is ready for group speech and language therapy.

Release is currently beginning a recruitment drive to hire a dedicated SLT for this highly challenging and exciting role.

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Moving Forward with the Health Service Executive and the Department of Education

1. Speech and Language Therapy is not a stand alone programme, and should be part of an integrated approach, to afford continuity in the system.
2. We at Release would be in favour of further integration with State-run Services in order to contribute to each child's IEP – in order to create a holistic programme written specifically for each child.
3. With the successful private programme our success with Ballyowen Meadows and St John of Gods, St Declan's Special School and our work with Irish Autism Action, we have proved without a doubt the therapy works in both public and private arenas.
4. The HSE and DOE schools, mainstream and special, no longer needs to be without Speech and Language Therapy because Release is a proven available resource.

With a Service Level Agreement in place with the HSE and / or the DOE, Release can:

- help fill the huge vacancy for Speech and Language Therapy in Ireland
- through the capacity of providing assessments and continuous, weekly speech and language therapy.
- through the successful group therapy approach, which enables the child, parent, and school—i.e. teachers and SNAs to learn the skills they need to progress the child's communication.
- through a proven level of recruitment of Speech and Language Therapists from abroad, to increase rather than reallocate the scarce resource.
- close the gap State-run Services are facing on a day-to-day basis with regards to Speech and Language Therapy.
- both in the provision of services as well as recruitment
- help the HSE and DOE provide a better service to its clients, through an integrated approach, ensuring continuity in the system.

End of Session Parent Review Quotes¹

1. "**** needs a lot more speech therapy to help him improve his speech. This session has helped us both. It taught me how to help *** with his speech in fun ways. He is working with me well although he does work better in class. It has also given me great hope. I now believe that if I continue with the program his speech will improve. Something I had nearly given up on. Thanks. Keep up the good work!"
2. "I found the classes very helpful. *** had years of one on one speech therapy concentrating on sounds and then with reading. I liked that this course also deals with other problems like winning & losing games and social skills. The handouts were good and we are using the story on how to win & lose at home. Jennifer was very good with him and we learnt a lot."
3. "I have enjoyed the collaboration with the S&L and I have learned new skills."
4. "Thank you so much Jenny."
5. "They really enjoyed these classes."
6. "Would recommend the Release sessions. Relevant and helpful toward ****'s needs."
7. "As always, excellent...Great support for ***. *** has got out very well during the current session of Release. Many thanks to everyone for all their support."
8. "Another great term with Release. Thanks to one and all."

¹ End of Session original documents available upon request for viewing. Copies will not be furnished for data protection.

Jennifer Wetter, MS, CCC-SLP, Director of Speech and Language Therapy, also known as Jen or Jenny below.

*** indicates child's name withheld

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End of Session Analysis Private

	lowest		highest		
Question	1	2	3	4	5
Assessments					
I found the At-Home Assessment relevant and helpful for the Release Assessment			1	4	2
The Release therapist was well prepared for my child's assessment.				1	7
The Release therapist explained the tests being performed, and worked well with my child.					8
The Release Assessment Report was comprehensive and conclusions offered positive next steps helpful to parents and teachers (where applicable).				2	4
Totals	0	0	1	7	21
Classes					
Did Release Classes promote new skills acquisition?			1	4	7
Did the therapist use communication and supports systems appropriate to your child's cognitive abilities?				3	10
Did the therapist spend time with you and your child for individual instruction?			1	4	8
Did the therapist implement plans designed to accomplish goals discussed at the beginning of each class?			1	3	9
The homework was well-explained and backed by useful handouts.				5	8
I was able to find the time to work with my child for ½ hour per day.			4	4	5
I found the therapist receptive to my ideas and made changes to classes accordingly.			1	5	7
Totals	0	0	8	28	54
Overall Session					
I feel the course is well valued.				1	12
I found this session to be extremely helpful to my child and to me.					13
I will attend another Session at Release	0			1	11
I will refer friend(s) to the programme				1	12
Totals	0	0	0	3	48

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End of Session Analysis – St Declans Special School

	lowest			highest	
Question	1	2	3	4	5
Assessments					
I found the At-Home Assessment relevant and helpful for the Release Assessment					
The Release therapist was well prepared for my child's assessment.					
The Release therapist explained the tests being performed, and worked well with my child.					
The Release Assessment Report was comprehensive and conclusions offered positive next steps helpful to parents and teachers (where applicable).					
Totals	0	0	0	0	0
Classes					
Did Release Classes promote new skills acquisition?			1		3
Did the therapist use communication and supports systems appropriate to your child's cognitive abilities?					4
Did the therapist spend time with you and your child for individual instruction?	1	1			1
Did the therapist implement plans designed to accomplish goals discussed at the beginning of each class?			1		2
The homework was well-explained and backed by useful handouts.	1			1	1
I was able to find the time to work with my child for ½ hour per day.	1	1	1		
I found the therapist receptive to my ideas and made changes to classes accordingly.			1		3
Totals	3	2	4	1	14
Overall Session					
I feel the course is well valued.					4
I found this session to be extremely helpful to my child and to me.		1			3
I will attend another Session at Release					4
I will refer friend(s) to the programme					4
Totals	0	1	0	0	15