

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

15 December 2006

Dear James:

It gives me great pleasure to enclose the End of Session Analysis for the September – December 2006 session. Since opening our doors in January 2005, we have worked with over 240 children and provided over 2600 hours of speech and language therapy.

During this 14-week session, we worked with 40 children of varying disabilities in our private sessions and a further 20 children in St Declans Special School, Northumberland Rd.

Instead of my pontificating about how important and successful our programme is, I'd rather have one of our Release Mom's End of Session Analysis Quotes put it in her own words:

Release speech therapy has been invaluable to my son as outlined below:

1. Classes each week for an hour as opposed to 1-2 half hour sessions a month in his special school.
2. I can accompany him to the class and learn how to continue the sessions at home. This service not available in his special school.
3. Release has as the name suggests "released" through pictures and a communication aid a whole new world to him as he is non-verbal but has good comprehension, but up to now couldn't communicate with us.
4. It has reduced his level of frustration as now he can let me know what he wants through picture choices, Yes / No.
5. He is motivated to do more and to do well and enjoys the sessions as his therapist Jennifer wants him to succeed and they work well together. Where as his therapist (SLT) in his special school doesn't want to get involved as "they are not obliged to take on an outside service".
6. We will continue to use Release as it works so well for him and me and urge the government to keep it going too as we can't stop now and the service is not available to be in his school. It is such a terrible shame that we should be pushed into seeking private therapy for our children when such a basic need as communication should be provided as a priority in our schools.

Release has also been contracted by Irish Autism Action to provide all of their speech and language assessments for the next five years.

And as well as continuing our work with 20 children in St Declans Special School, we will be expanding to accommodate 15 children at Kilnamanagh ABACAS School.

We are still very interested in continuing our discussion about the potential of a national pilot of Release as we discussed 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

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

**Release Communication Intervention
Private Session
Programme Analysis**

September – December 2006

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

Minister 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

Deirdre Carroll
General Secretary
Inclusion Ireland
Unit C2
The Steel Works
Foley St
Dublin 1

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

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 240 children and provided over 2600 hours of speech and language therapy in both private and school settings.

Tara Cunningham, MD, recently visited a Director of Disability Services, who asked to see how many people from her area had enrolled in Release. She was quite surprised by the high number of parents quoted. Tara let her see the addresses only of our database. The Director recognised a few of the addresses as "problem parents". Tara was quite happy to inform her, that her "problem parents" are quite happy with Release.

This makes a significant point:

Parents are happier with a service they are forced to pay for, than they are with the HSE's current service provision. This is down to the massive difference between our service, and that of the HSE. Besides being able to offer assessments followed by continuous speech and language therapy, we teach the parents how to work with their children. And when the children progress, it's the parents who get the credit!!! Therefore, Release parents, BUY INTO THE PROGRAM!!!

Release classes provide speech and language therapy, through play-based interaction, giving students the opportunity to progress social interaction with their peers.

Although the program is taught in groups, caregivers and children still receive individual attention in every class, ensuring the caregivers understand their role fully before going home to work on their daily homework.

At the end of every week, a Release student has the opportunity to have over three hours of speech and language therapy.

Release in the Schools

The Release reputation has gone past peer-to-peer and moved on towards school-to-school.

Schools are referring other schools because we insist on providing a timely and detailed speech and language therapy assessment for each child; grouping the children in order to their skill level and NOT age; and most importantly we invite parents, teachers and special needs assistants to attend each one-hour class.

The benefits are two-fold: The teachers learn skills and tools they can use to develop speech in their daily curriculum; and parents get to participate in their child's school day while learning the tools they need to bring home.

Both parents and teachers are given homework sheets to complete with their children—amounting to a half hour per day. This equates to Release students receiving over four hours of speech therapy per week. Both parents and teachers buy into the program—therefore Release students communication skills improve consistently.

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

School Case Studies

Ballyowen Meadows Special School

We completed two extremely successful and beneficial semesters at Ballyowen Meadows Special School in Stillorgan, part of Beechpark Services. Where they previously had two part-time Speech and Language Therapists working with only six children sporadically with only one assessment completed—for the same cost, Release was able to provide continuous one hour weekly sessions for all 27 students including assessments.

Beechpark Services declined Release's further service at the school, even though the parents committee, teachers and special needs assistants wanted Release to remain with costs covered by the parents committee—as they were so impressed by the results of the program. This story was aired on “Today with Pat Kenny” in January 2006 (visit www.release.ie/news). To date, the children at Ballyowen Meadows have little to no speech and language therapy.

The Ballyowen's Parents Teacher Association and the school principal referred us to St Declan's Special School.

St Declan's Special School

We began working at St Declan's Special School, Northumberland Rd., Dublin 4 in September 2006. All of their funding for services has to be achieved by the parents committee, as their students do not receive any government or Department of Education monies towards speech and language therapy.

Of 47 students, parents were able to raise enough money for Release to work with 20 core students. In order to include the other parents, Release offered a free seminar which reviewed basic principals of speech and language therapy they could roll-out in their daily lives.

St Declans are so happy with the Release program, they have fundraised enough money to work with an additional 20 children from January – May 2007.

ABACAS Schools

In November 2006, both Kilnamanagh and Kilbarrack ABACAS Schools approached Release to provide assessments and / or speech and language therapy for their students.

We are currently outlining our scope of work for these schools and are in the process of recruiting an SLT to further increase our capacity.

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.

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

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.

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 upcoming work with Irish Autism Action and Kilnamanagh ABACAS, 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:

1. help fill the huge vacancy for Speech and Language Therapy in Ireland
 - a. through the capacity of providing assessments and continuous, weekly speech and language therapy.
 - b. 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.
 - c. through a proven level of recruitment of Speech and Language Therapists from abroad, to increase rather than reallocate the scarce resource.
2. close the gap State-run Services are facing on a day-to-day basis with regards to Speech and Language Therapy.
 - a. both in the provision of services as well as recruitment
3. help the HSE and DOE provide a better service to its clients, through an integrated approach, ensuring continuity in the system.

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

End of Session Parent Review Quotes¹

1. As you know I have been very exercised about the lack of speech therapy at schools. Thankfully we have the resources to fund Release privately, but we hear from government that it is not funding, but resources in terms of speech therapists that's the problem. The availability of services such as Release give the lie to this funding should be made available and the "pass the parcel" between the Department of Education and Department of Health should stop.

Personally, it was great to have such an amount of therapy time. *** always had problems with going to speech therapy, but was always happy to go to the speech (at Release).

I know it was part of the programme, but I preferred the "work" or the "games". Thanks for everything.

2. *** has always benefited from Release.

*** had a lot of difficulty staying focussed and calm during this current block of Release sessions but the Release team provided excellent support strategies to cope with ***'s lack of focus.

Each week, extra support was offered to *** which assured that by the end of the block *** was much better behaved and re-gaining his focus.

Notwithstanding his difficulties this session (which we believe were due to his new sister ***) *** has acquired a wonderful amount of extra speech and language skills.

The exercises that Release do with the children provide the challenge the children need in a very enjoyable, supported framework. *** has always enjoyed the program.

Thanks for all the help this term.

We look forward to the next session."

3. Similar program closer to the Mid-West would be very helpful.
4. My child needs lots of social classes and events to attend to promote social skills which are very underdeveloped. Meeting children like him socially helps him greatly and promotes his learning of language etc. He is very comfortable with this type of setting.

He loved Release and went willingly every week—which was worth everything to me. When he is happy and comfortable, he learns well!

I think Release should be available to all children with "special needs".

I also enjoyed the classes. It gave me time with my child without family distraction.

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. Catherine Wood and Michael Hickey are the Special Needs Assistant for this session.

*** indicates child's name withheld

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

5. I feel *** needs more opportunities to interact in a group situation instead of opting out. He will always let others go before him instead of making himself heard. The more opportunities he has to interact in a group situation the better and when it's achieved in a controlled environment it's so much better and of great support to the child.
6. Release speech therapy has been invaluable to my son as outlined below:
 - a. Classes each week for an hour as opposed to 1-2 half hour sessions a month in his special school
 - b. I can accompany him to the class and learn how to continue the sessions at home. This service not available in his special school.
 - c. Release has as the name suggests "released" through pictures and a communication aid a whole new world to him as he is non-verbal but has good comprehension, but up to now couldn't communicate with us.
 - d. It has reduced his level of frustration as now he can let me know what he wants through picture choices, Yes / No.
 - e. He is motivated to do more and to do well and enjoys the sessions as his therapist Jennifer wants him to succeed and they work well together. Where as his therapist (SLT) in his special school doesn't want to get involved as "they are not obliged to take on an outside service".
 - f. We will continue to use Release as it works so well for him and me and urge the government to keep it going too as we can't stop now and the service is not available to be in his school. It is such a terrible shame that we should be pushed into seeking private therapy for our children when such a basic need as communication should be provided as a priority in our schools.
7. *** and I have been coming to our Release sessions. Jennifer and Michael are fantastic and *** considers them his friends and we hope to continue as long as there is a place for ***. *** is entitled to speech therapy from Temple Street but last year we only got 11 hours in total which is totally inadequate.

We have gotten more speech therapy in one term with Release than one year with Temple Street.

But it's not just the amount of therapy, it's also the quality and content. The variety of methods and techniques keeps *** interested and excited. This encourages him to make a much greater effort. Within a few weeks of starting Release *** said his name properly for the first time. We don't expect miracles but because he loves the sessions he really wants to make an effort and therefore the improvements are happening.

I have no doubt that *** as improved since starting Release and we hope to continue with the programme to improve his speech and language and also his self confidence.

8. I have found the programme extremely beneficial and have recommended it to several friends who have children with special needs.

However, we have to travel two hours for classes as we live down the country and I feel that *** would benefit more if it was closer – as we have to wake her up in the morning to get up to Dublin. As a result, she is often very tired in class and for the whole day, but overall I have found the programme extremely beneficial and I have noticed an enormous improvement in ***'s communication and cognitive skills.

Thank you very much.

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

9. This sort of program should be funded in some way by government. Particularly in view of the fact that *** has not received ANY speech and language therapy through her early services forum.

Early intervention does seem to aid development greatly and if it were to depend solely on the early services, unfortunately *** would have missed out on valuable support to date.

Thanks Jennifer for all the work you put in.

10. *** is sometimes resistant to going to classes on Saturdays but they are very valuable for him and he has benefited hugely over the past year and a half or so. Apart from the various speech and language skills that he is developing, what is great about Release is that it is regular, consistent and reliable speech and language therapy. Children develop at different stages and the consistency is hugely beneficial rather than (as can happen) assessments, long breaks, waiting lists and more assessments.

11. Thanks for pointing out that *** is ready for Yes & No and advising me not to promote the use of these words.

Your careful listening to him has identified other issues and I would be grateful if you would help me with further development of individual sounds especially M and N.

12. Overall, we are very pleased with Release—it gives me, the mother, a chance to be involved with my son in a structured class.

communication intervention

Speech and Language Therapy
Occupational Exercises
Early Intervention
Oral Motor Therapy

Appendix A--Results of End of Session Review

	lowest			highest	
Question	1	2	3	4	5
Assessments					
I found the At-Home Assessment relevant and helpful for the Release Assessment			3	3	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.				1	7
The Release Assessment Report was comprehensive and conclusions offered positive next steps helpful to parents and teachers (where applicable).			2	1	5
Totals	0	0	5	6	21
Classes					
Did Release Classes promote new skills acquisition?				3	13
Did the therapist use communication and supports systems appropriate to your child's cognitive abilities?			1	4	11
Did the therapist spend time with you and your child for individual instruction?			1	4	9
Did the therapist implement plans designed to accomplish goals discussed at the beginning of each class?			2	2	11
The homework was well-explained and backed by useful handouts.		1	1		14
I was able to find the time to work with my child for ½ hour per day.		1	5	5	4
I found the therapist receptive to my ideas and made changes to classes accordingly.			1	5	9
Totals	0	2	11	23	71
Overall Session					
I feel the course is well valued.				2	14
I found this session to be extremely helpful to my child and to me.			1	1	14
I will attend another Session at Release				2	14
I will refer friend(s) to the programme			1	1	14
Totals	0	0	2	6	56