

Speech and Language  
Therapy

Occupational  
Exercises

Early Intervention

Oral Motor Therapy

## What's New

- Specialised Classes Begin
- Release Parents featured on "Today with Pat Kenny" and in the Irish Independent's Health Supplement
- September—December 2005 session Analysis handed into the Tánaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, T.D. and Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen, T.D.
- Tara Cunningham, receives prestigious Social Entrepreneur Award 2005

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# Release

## Communication Intervention



Volume 1, Issue 1

Spring 2006

### Release Celebrates its First Birthday, with Pat Kenny

Tara Cunningham, Managing Director, and Jennifer Wetter, MS CCC-SLP, Director of Speech and Language Therapy celebrated Release's successes on 24 January 2005 along with Release parents Catherine Philpott, Fiona Whooley, Alan Cooke, Finnoula Kelly, Owen and Phyllis Walsh, Grainne Morris and Joyce Tyrell with their children on "Today with Pat Kenny".



Jennifer working 1:1 with a Release family during group class

Within 12 months of opening our doors, Release has worked with over 150 children, completing over 1600 hours of communication intervention.

Commenting on the success of the Program, Tara Cunningham, the founder of Release said, "I can not say how delighted I am at the progress Release families have made. In my wildest dreams, I never hoped the program would work as strongly as it does. I am looking forward to adding to 2005's successes this year."

Jennifer Wetter, MS, CCC-SLP, or "Jenny" said, "Release has been such a success because we go beyond mere assessments and basic articulation—we work with parents to enhance their child's communication."

Jenny continued, "Even better, since parents are involved, I love watching them bask in their child's successes, which they have helped to create."



"It's a no brainer" says Pat Kenny after hearing Release parents tell their children's success stories.

To hear the full report visit <http://www.release.ie/news>

### "Parents in defense of free speech therapy" Irish Independent

Release parents, Sheila Carmody, Catherine Philpott, Marian Delaney and Barbara OLeary talk to the *Irish Independent's* Health Writer, Paul Melia about the severe shortage of speech and language therapists in Ireland and why the Irish government should look to Release for answers.

"They (children with disabilities) need continuity and chopping and changing makes it very hard" says Sheila Carmody. "A teacher needs

to assess each child so they can work with them. If they're starting from scratch each time, they're wasting time. The older they are, the harder it is. Early intervention is the key."

It took Catherine Philpott 18 months to get her son Shaun into a Cork service, however that service only offers two blocks a year of speech therapy ".

Marian Delaney's daughter Maeve

has Down syndrome and has trouble communicating. Until recently she hadn't seen a speech therapist in over a year. Marian says she needs 'a lot of help'. Thanks to the Release Speech Therapy programme, she's now getting it.

Visit <http://www.release.ie/news> to read the entire article.

## Release Offers Specialised Group Classes



**Release Class  
in full motion**

*Specialised  
Classes offers  
parents, teachers  
and SNAs an  
opportunity to  
learn practical  
skills to help  
children's  
communication  
needs without  
signing up for an  
entire session.*

Following on the success of Session 1's Night Classes, Release is now offering specialised group classes.

We found that many people wanted to attend the courses offered during our night classes, but the days and times did not suit.

Jennifer Wetter has prepared courses which can be taught to you and a group of your friends.

Each course last two hours, and the cost is only €35 per person.

Once you have a group of friends (five minimum, ten maximum) call Tara Cunningham on 087.247.3486 to arrange a date which suits both your group and Jennifer's schedule.

If you are not in the Dublin region, please ring Tara as we may be able to travel to your location.

So get your friends together and set up a specialised group class today!

If you have an idea for a specialised class, ring Jennifer on 01.667.8084 and we'll do our best to accommodate your group's idea.

**The classes to be offered are as follows:**

**Spring / Summer  
Session Break  
will be from**

**25 June – 11 July.**

**Now enrolling for  
Session 2**

**10 May — 29 July.**

**We will consider applications for a special discount where two or more parents join together. Email [tara.cunningham@release.ie](mailto:tara.cunningham@release.ie) or phone Tara on 087.247.3486 if you have a friend thinking of signing up!**

### Jenny's Picks of the Month

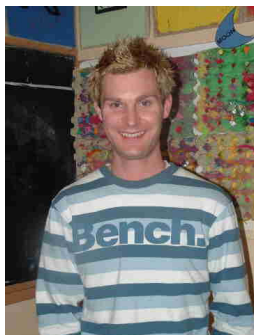
#### Book of the Month:

"100 Language Games for Ages 0 to 3" by Clare Beswick

#### Websites of the Month:

<http://www.quia.com/pages/articgames.html>

<http://www.quia.com/pages/languagetherapy.html>



**Neil Hartery,  
Release Special  
Needs Assistant,  
getting ready for  
the day.**

Neil Hartery started working with Release in January of this year.

He's been doing a marvellous job with our Release children!

Neil studied Conservation at UCD, and upon graduating began working in Limerick with a small bus company, working with children with disabilities.

Neil fell in love with the job and then took a course in Special Needs.

We are extremely lucky to have him.

Unfortunately, a couple weeks ago, Neil fell off his horse, and he's been out sick.

Neil wants to thank all his great Release friends for making him such terrific get well cards.

**Oral Motor Exercises** - Parents will practice various Oral Motor exercises for the tongue, lips, teeth, and jaw as well as breath support ideas

**Articulation** - Parents will learn about different techniques for improving their child's articulation. Techniques can be used for various sounds.

**Phonology** - Parents will learn about different techniques for improving their child's intelligibility through phonology therapy techniques. Phonemic Awareness skills will also be addressed.

**Folder Games** - Parents will learn what a folder game is and how they can be used. Participants will learn how to make folder games and will come out of the class with at least one folder game that they made.

**Categories** - Parents will learn techniques for teaching category knowledge to their child.

**Social Stories** - Parents will learn what a social story is and how they can be used in daily life to improve social skills. Parents will have the opportunity to create a social story for their child.

**Finished, Turn Taking, Inside / Outside Voices** - Parents will learn techniques to help their child with various social skills including the concepts of being finished, using appropriate loudness levels, waiting and turn taking.

**WH Questions and Following Directions** - Parents will learn techniques for teaching WH questions and following direction skills to their child.

**Boardmaker** - Parents will learn how to use Boardmaker and its benefits.

### Special Needs Assistant, Neil Hartery

We'll see Neil again soon!

If you want to make or send Neil more cards, you can post them to

Neil Hartery  
c/o Release Speech Therapy  
St Mary's Secondary School  
Haddington Rd.  
Dublin 4

## Calling all Parents: Write to the Ministers

The government has promised services for children with special needs, from Special Olympics photo opps, The Disability Bill of 2004 and People with Special Educational Needs Act. So far, not much has changed.

The Disability Act 2005 clearly states it is "an act to enable provision to be made for the assessment of health and education needs occasioned to persons with disabilities by their disabilities, to enable ministers of the government to make provision, consistent with the resources available to them and their obligations in relation to their allocation, for services to meet those needs, to provide for the preparation of plans by the appropriate ministers of the government in relation to the provision of certain of those, and certain other services..."

Well Release is here to say we're an available resource...**ONE THAT YOU, THE PARENT, SHOULD NOT HAVE TO PAY!**

Release can provide the provision of assessments; can provide services to meet those assessment needs; and is a resource which should be made available to the HSE as the current structure is insufficient to meet the needs of your child.

We ask you to please print out the letter on the last page of this newsletter and mail it to your Ministers, T.D.'s, HSE representatives and local councilmen and women.

If you have any questions as to who you should write to, ring Tara Cunningham, on 087.247.3486.

Some addresses you may want to mail to:

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

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

Minister of State, Senior Counsel  
Brian Lenihan, T.D.  
Department of Health and Children  
Hawkins House  
Dublin 2

Liam O'Callaghan  
Local Health Manager  
Central Office  
Arden Rd  
Tullamore



**Release Parents, put pen to paper and let the Ministers know you want the government to pay for your child's speech therapy!**

## September—December Analysis Handed into HSE and Ministers

At the end of every session, we ask Release Parents to fill out an End of Session Survey to determine how our programme has been delivered, and to quantify its success at home.

We do this review for three reasons: 1. to make sure all of our parents and children are getting benefits from our programme; 2. to give you another opportunity to tell us what you like, and what you would like us to do differently; and 3. to provide the HSE and relevant Ministers with quantitative analysis on how our programme is working.

To date, every End of Session Survey has our Release Parents giving us the highest ratings possible and to that we are very thankful to all of you.

Unfortunately, Paul Melia, the *Irish Independent* journalist who profiled Release, unsuccessfully attempted to speak with the HSE about Release, despite Tara having given him names and direct phone numbers of those she had met with and spoke to previously. **No one Tara had met with, wrote to, conversed with, had ever heard of Release and therefore, the HSE was not represented in the article. You can see the article on [www.release.ie/news](http://www.release.ie/news)**

It's upsetting, but not a surprise. Tara recently sent all of the previous documents, including all of our media hits to all necessary Ministers as well as members of the HSE. Minister Brian Cowen, is currently speaking with the Tánaiste's office as well as Liam O'Callaghan, Local Health Manager of the Dublin Mid/Leinster HSE.

We hope to see a positive outcome to Minister Cowen's queries into Release Communication Intervention.

*Surprisingly, the HSE does not have any previous documentation on Release despite numerous meetings, conversations and analysis documents delivered.*

## Tara Cunningham, Managing Director, Receives Award for Social Entrepreneurship

Tara Cunningham, MD, and her husband Mark Cunningham, Board of Directors, began Release putting a €50K guarantee against their home. Their goal was to create an effective and efficient speech and language therapy program which could help the lives of hundreds of children, who were not being helped by the current system run by the HSE.

The term social enterprise is not yet a common one, however with Social Entrepreneurs Ireland on the scene, this will no longer be the case.

A Social Enterprise is a business in which the vast majority of the profit

(if it ever makes a profit) goes into the benefit of the community as opposed to the share holders.

Social Entrepreneurs devote their working lives for the betterment of society instead of their bank balances.

Release's success to date led to Tara receiving the prestigious Social Entrepreneur Award 2005.

Mary Davis, CEO of Special Olympics Ireland, and Richard Reilly, Former Secretary of Education under the Clinton Administration presided over the awards where Social Entrepreneurs Ireland recog-

nised 12 Social Entrepreneurs in an awards ceremony last September.

In addition, Managing Director, Tara Cunningham and Director of Speech and Language Therapy, Jennifer Wetter have been interviewed for the upcoming book "Exceptional Lives, People who Change our World", by Clare Mulvary.

"Exceptional Lives" is being written to inspire a generation of young people to lead exceptional, socially orientated lives. Tara and Jennifer are extremely excited to be a part of this immense world-wide undertaking.



**Tara Cunningham receiving SEI 2005 Award Richard Reilly, Former Secretary of Education under the Clinton Administration**

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**For up to date  
information on  
Release visit  
www.release.ie**

- Over 150 children
- Over 1600 hours of speech and language therapy delivered
- Consistent parent and family focused therapy
- Play-based
- Low-cost
- As Pat Kenny said, government support for Release really is a "no brainer!"



## Communication Intervention

**Release is a Communication Intervention programme, encompassing Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Exercises, Oral Motor Therapy and Early Intervention, designed to teach parents the skills they need to enhance their child's communication skills. The programme is taught in a group format, thereby increasing the numbers of people helped, while starting a peer-to-peer network.**

April 2006

To Whom it May Concern:

My child is privately enrolled in Release Communication Intervention, a programme, encompassing Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Exercises, Oral Motor Therapy and Early Intervention, designed to teach us parents the skills we need to enhance our children's communication skills.

I have been involved in all aspects of my child's therapy, from their assessment and weekly one hour of therapy to the half hour of homework we try to do together each night.

My child has benefited greatly because of the skills I've learned, and I'm thrilled that I now know different techniques to help my child.

I believe this government should review the Release Programme in great detail, with a view to providing this as a government sponsored service.

The Disability Act 2005 clearly states it is "an act to enable provision to be made for the assessment of health and education needs occasioned to persons with disabilities by their disabilities, to enable ministers of the government to make provision, consistent with the resources available to them and their obligations in relation to their allocation, for services to meet those needs, to provide for the preparation of plans by the appropriate ministers of the government in relation to the provision of certain of those, and certain other services..."

I believe Release can provide the provision of assessments; can provide services to meet those assessment needs; and is a resource which should be made available to the HSE as the current structure is insufficient to meet the needs of my child.

I look forward to seeing Release paid for by this government.

Sincerely,

Name:

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Address:

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