

Centre and Homebased Intervention Programme (CHIP)

Slow Ing

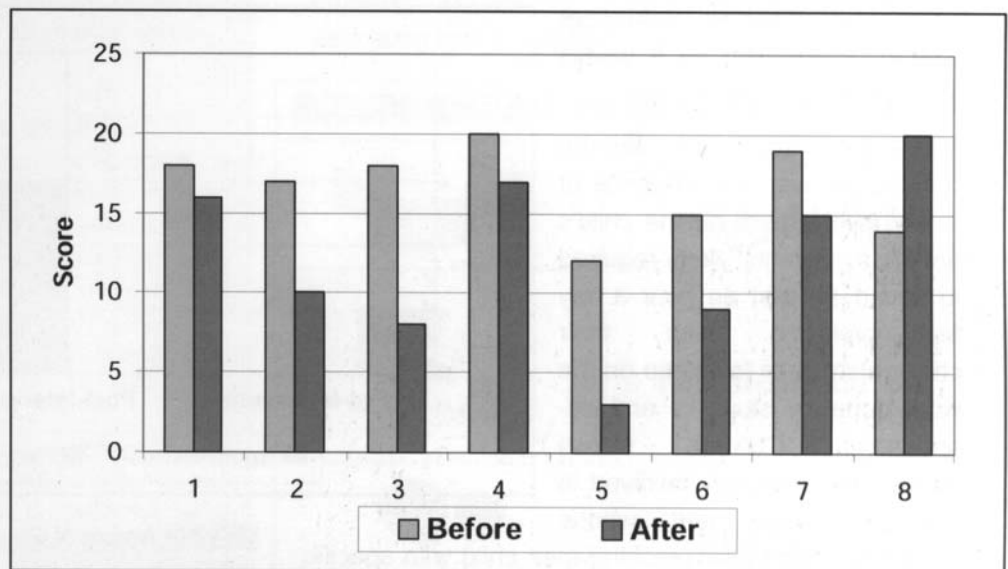
A 10-week intervention programme was offered for 8 children aged 29 to 45 months over the period of August to October 1999. This was conducted as part of a research project comparing the effectiveness of home intervention with Psychology Honours students undergoing training in behaviour modification techniques, and undergraduate volunteers who attended a 3-hour workshop on play and language stimulation for children with autism.

Each child received 6 hours of home intervention from students and project co-ordinators per week. After five weeks of training by one of the group of students (Behaviour Modification or Befrienders), the

students changed over. So all children were exposed to both groups of students in a sequence. Students received feedback from Dr Vera Bernard-Opitz through videotaped sessions and session notes.

Overall results showed improvement in most of the children with reduction in Autism Diagnostic scores as well as increased compliance, attending behaviour and communication. Mean compliance improved with the Behaviour Modification co-ordinator and decreased

with the volunteer (Befrienders) co-ordinator. Responses from feedback questionnaires indicated a preference for the more structured behavioural



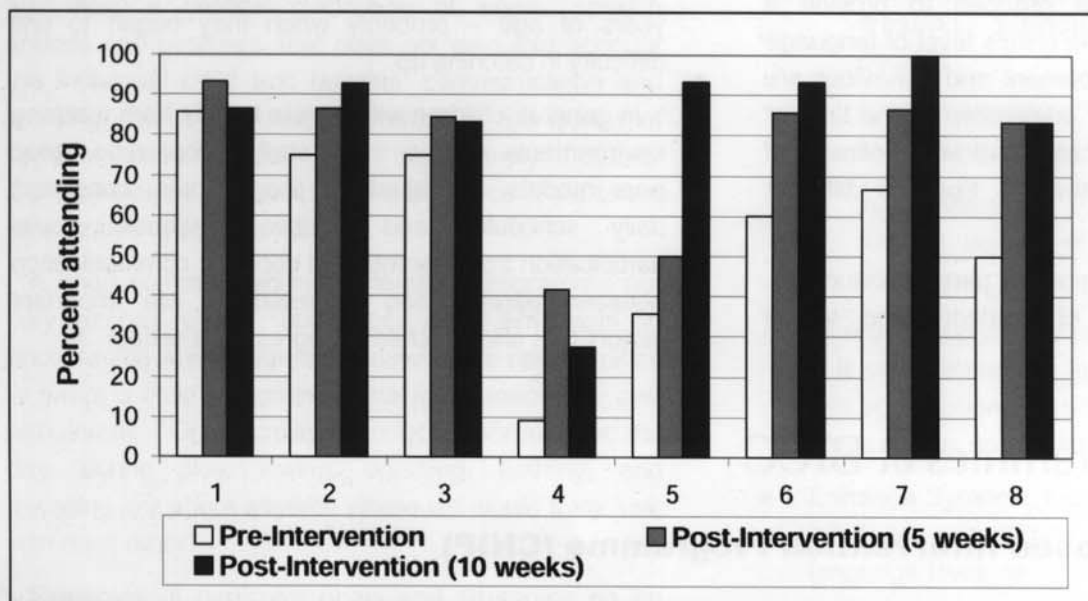
Graph 1: Children's ADOS scores on Communication and Interaction before and after intervention

teaching method used by the Honours students for 5 parents. Nevertheless, children benefited from both intervention methods.

Graph 1 shows the children's scores on the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) on Communication and Interaction, and percentage of

analysed video segments in which the child paid full attention to the parent or task at hand. (Cut-off score for autism is 12 and above.)

Contributing to G's improvement is the active involvement of all family members and caregiver in his home programme. G is also encouraged to vocalise to communicate his needs/interests, and this has helped



in improving his communication abilities.

Graph 3 shows the nature of G's verbalisations in video segments taken at the BICC over the CHIP period. There was no verbal communication in the observed segment prior intervention. G learned to imitate sounds, to respond to prompts, to vocalise and spontaneously vocalised at times.

Graph 2: Percentage of video segments in which children paid full attention to parent/task

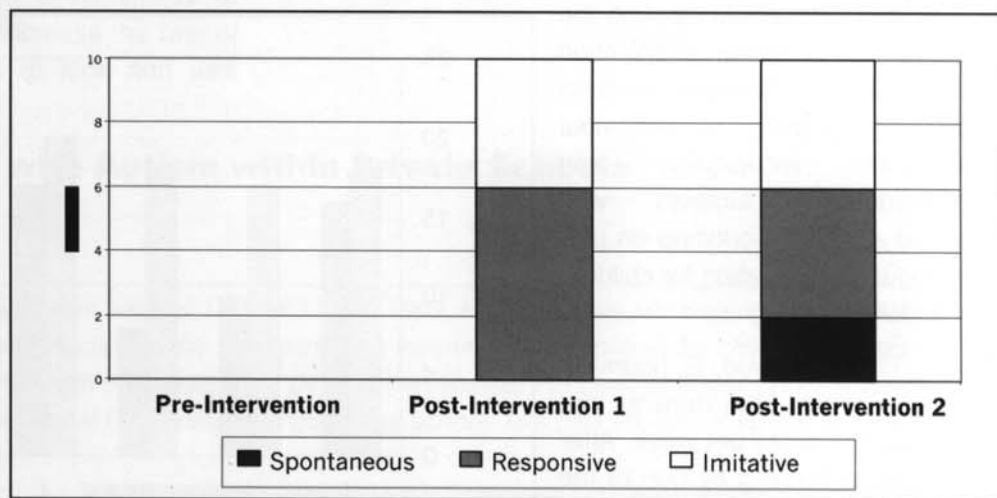
* Child 1-4: 5 weeks Behaviour Modification followed by 5 weeks Befriender Interaction

Child 5-8: 5 weeks Befriender Interaction followed by 5 weeks Behaviour Modification

One observation made over the programme was the influence of family involvement on the child's progress. Parents were required to spend at least an hour a day teaching/playing with their children so as to follow up on the work done by students and coordinators. Children whose families were actively involved in the programme and whose caregivers spent time teaching their child with specific targets appeared to benefit most.

One such example is G, who has over the 10 weeks learnt to communicate more effectively. G was non-verbal when he first came, and communicated his requests by pulling his parents'/caregiver's hand. He has since learned to vocalise simple vowel sounds and use these in his communication. Overall, G has also made progress in understanding contingency and in attending behaviour.

In summary, the 10-week intervention programme involving behaviour modification and play/language



Graph 3: Nature of G's communication with parents at three different times

stimulation has helped children and their families. Not only did children benefit from the teaching provided by students – parents and caregivers also learned to apply the related techniques and continued to teach their child. ❁