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A parenting program to help parents play

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Introduction and Objective

Parents have a huge impact on a child's well-being. This paper presents the results of a pilot project which evaluated a newly developed parenting programme to accompany the Learn to Play programme. The Learn to Play programme aims to develop a child's spontaneous ability to self-initiate sequential pretend play actions, object substitutions, social interaction with peers, and doll play. This programme has been shown to increase a child's ability in play, social awareness, and language utterances.

Method

Four families each with a child who has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder participated in the research. The programme ran for 16 weeks and included an introductory session, demonstration of the principles of the programme, and feedback to parents on their interactions with their child. Over the programme parents were introduced to seven play skills and how to observe each of skills and how to encourage the development of these skills in their child. Before and after the programme each child was assessed using the Child-Initiated Pretend Play Assessment and the Manchester Child Attachment Story Task in order to individualise the parenting programme for each parent and their child. The first assessment gives a measure of a child's ability to spontaneously initiate pretend play and the second assessment is a play based attachment assessment. Parents were interviewed at the beginning, middle and end of the programme.

Results

The results of the study will be presented from the parents' views on the programme: what was useful, what could be improved, and what worked well. Each child's play assessments will also be discussed.

Conclusion and contribution to practice

This paper will provide evidence for a parent lead intervention programme for their child. Parents are often the key to successful intervention and evidence on the value of a parenting programme is a significant contribution to practice.