Supporting children with Selective Mutism in Northamptonshire

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Access to SLT services within Northamptonshire

* As a SLT service we are completely funded by health

* Recognised within the team that we needed to establish a more robust care pathway for children with SM

* NHFT does not offer a specialist pathway for children with SM – this pathway is what we can offer via the local speech and language therapy service.
Northamptonshire SM caseload

* Significant increase in referrals over last 2 years

* Approx. 4 amount of new referrals per month

* Current SM caseload constitutes 1.8% of the overall caseload – which equates to 75 children
Review of the evidence

* Importance of early identification and intervention

* Importance of collaborative approach to supporting the child with SM - information sharing/educating others

* Providing a support system for parents and teaching staff
As a result, our sessions put a real focus upon:

* The importance of early intervention

* The value of social comfort and environmental adaptations before a small steps programme

* The importance of the key person and agreement re everyone’s role
Then and Now

THEN
- Child came to initial session in clinic with parents
  - Initial advice given
  - Review X amount of months/years (😊) later
  - On generic caseload

NOW
- Total revamp!
- Please refer to handout
Initial Assessment

- Initial meeting with parent – child not present!
- Information gathered
- Diagnosis of SM discussed
- SM pathway advised
The SM Care Pathway

- Rolling programme, 4x sessions per year, starting approximately every 3 months
- Work in progress
- Informal style (tea, coffee, biscuits & sweets!)
Firm Foundations

- What is SM (and what it isn’t!)
- Risks, triggers and maintaining factors
- Creating the right environment; at home and at school
- The role of the keyworker
- ‘The Pep Talk’
- Action planning

“Thank you for providing a clear starting point”
Intervention: Strategies

- Indirect strategies e.g. Commentary style of talk, Triangle Tactic, Graded questions, Talking Bridge, Do I answer for my child?
- Graded exposure – Low versus high risk activities/communication load
- Action planning with focus on child’s priorities

“Empowering – I feel I can help my son”
Intervention: Small Steps programme

- Sliding in approach
- Other intervention approaches e.g. reading route, telephone, email and text
- Model of confident talking
- Action planning

“Research led and personal approach”
Monitoring progress and Troubleshooting

- Sharing resources and good practice
- Troubleshooting specific questions
- Case studies and practical activities
- Review of maintaining factors if progress stalled
- Action planning

“Friendly and supportive group”
Generalisation and Transitions

- Facing fears in school
- Facing fears in the community
- Social functioning; moving towards spontaneous speech
- Supporting transitions
- Action planning

“It felt like a journey we were all on together”
100% of attendees would recommend sessions to a colleague or family member.
Meet Holly

**Before:**
- 9 years old
- Mute since pre-school
- No verbal communication with Father
- Good non-verbal communication in school
- Maintaining factors

**After:**
- 10 years old
- Freely communicates with Father
- Communicates to every peer in class (within small groups)
- Working towards spontaneous communication
Meet Miley

Before:
* 5 years old
* Mute since pre-school
* Very supportive parents
* Lack of social comfort in school
* Bullying in school
* Maintaining factors

After:
* 7 years old
* New school
* Communicates to key worker, small groups of peers in small steps programme
* Working towards communicating with a range of people in a range of places
What next?

* On-going development of SM pathway
* Improving liaison with other services
* Up-skilling the wider SLT team
* Raising awareness of Selective Mutism
* Continuing to support a wide range of children with Selective Mutism and their families and educational settings