

An objective and independent research study into the effectiveness of The Centre for Brain Injury Rehabilitation and Development's treatment of children in schools who are/who were displaying learning / communication / behavioural difficulties in mainstream state primary schools.

SHORT SUMMARY



Introduction

In 2007, a Primary School Head Teacher from Oldham brought his 10 year-old daughter with a diagnosis of autism for treatment to the Centre for Brain Injury & Rehabilitation (“BIRD”). The Head Teacher recognised the organisation’s potential to help children experiencing difficulties in mainstream schools.

It is recognised that a fifth of children in the UK are said to have special educational needs, ranging from relatively mild difficulties with understanding, communication and behaviour to more complex needs and delayed development. Over BIRD’s 30 year history, the charity has shown that many of these difficulties can be improved.

This report summarises the research project which followed.

A full copy of the report and research findings is available on request from the BIRD Charity.

The BIRD Charity

BIRD has been helping people with what is broadly termed “brain injury” for 30 years – through its approach called “developmental reflexive rehabilitation”. In practice, the term covers people with a vast array of neurologically-related disabilities, including children with autism, mild learning, communication or behavioural difficulties, and profound disability.

BIRD’s unique approach is based on a series of movement patterns which facilitate neurological feedback to the brain. There is a great deal of clinical evidence that this approach helps “retrain” the brain’s primitive reflexes.

These carefully and individually-designed movements inhibit the primitive reflexes that have either not developed properly from the infantile reflexes present in everyone in the first year or two of life, or which have been re-released at a later stage through brain injury

The results are often quite remarkable. BIRD manages to radically improve the neurological function of over 90% of the people who come to the organisation for treatment.

BIRD’s work in Oldham

Following discussions with the head-teacher, the local authority & special educational needs co-ordinators in Oldham, BIRD decided to work with children from 12 different primary schools in the area who were experiencing difficulty at Key Stage 2 (7-11). This is a particularly crucial stage in development and, in particular, in educational development.

Initial meetings and briefings were carried out with parents and teachers – and BIRD’s approach explained.

Simultaneously, BIRD recognised that its own clinical measurement system may not be seen to be objective by the wider world in the education field. Consequently, the organisation applied for and secured funding from the Big Lottery to fund a fully independent and objective research report into the efficacy of the work.

BIRD’s overall aim and belief was that its unique intervention methods during these formative years would be objectively *proven* to have a beneficial effect on education, behaviour and communication - both immediately and during the children’s future lives.

The research used both quantitative and qualitative data including academic progress data. It was carried out by a leading academic in the field (full report available by request). The research analysed in detail BIRD's work with 26 schoolchildren - all of whom had identified needs and difficulties at the start of the programme in December 2008.

The study covered a period of 19 months.

Research findings

According to the research, it is possible to state the following:

Academic:

- *The majority of children have made educational progress which exceeds the average rate of progress witnessed by most children nationally.*
- *Given that these children each have an identified "need" which has made learning more challenging for them for varying reasons, and in varying degrees, this makes this rate of progress particularly significant.*
- *Progress in writing is particularly strong and is worthy of investigation in its own right, as progress in reading in the primary sector of education usually precedes progress in writing.*
- *Progress in reading can also be described as "strong."*
- *Progress in maths is above the national mean rate of progress.*

It can also be concluded, using "OFSTED" evaluation terminology and guidelines that:

- *In the overwhelming majority of cases (93%) the children undergoing the B.I.R.D programme either met their own challenging targets or actually exceeded them – in some cases by a significant margin.*
- *A very large majority (80%) of children exceeded those targets set for them in reading by their schools.*
- *A large majority (67%) of children exceeded those targets set for them in writing.*
- *A minority of children (47%) exceeded those targets set for them in maths.*

Behaviour: *During the period in this study aspects of behaviour had improved sufficiently to be commented upon.*

Home life: *The subjective data also suggest that other aspects of their life that were a cause for concern in the home or school context have, in the majority of the sample, also improved and had a positive impact not only on the child but also on family life.*

What next?

BIRD is keen to share the findings of the research report and its own learnings with the UK's wider education community on an entirely altruistic basis as befits its charitable status.

BIRD believes the intervention work truly has the potential to revolutionise the way in which children at this formative age are assisted when presenting communication / behavioural and/or learning difficulties at home and/or at school.

It is unique and has never been tried before. BIRD believes its intervention in these years has the potential, in particular, to prevent children from displaying far more serious behavioural problems in later years.