

# Social

# Communication /

# Autism - under 7's

The logo for 'pinpoint' features the word in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters 'pin' are blue, 'poi' are red, and 'nt' are blue. A small red dot is positioned above the 'i'.

for parents by parents

## Worried about your child's communications - talking , listening, body language, behaviour?

Children develop at different rates but most will gain skills at about the same stage and in a similar way. Some children take longer, some will find it difficult and will need help and some will simply be different in how they develop. Some children speak at roughly the same time as their peers , make good eye contact and find getting their message across easy. Some will have their own style and others may always find these things challenging. You may notice that your child stops and starts developing, gains some skills and not others, takes much longer or doesn't talk. Some talk but don't seem to understand. Some find it difficult to look at others or dislike eye contact. Others will get frustrated at not being able to tell you what they want or make you understand - this can result in tantrums, melt downs and other repeated behaviours.

## How do I know if my young child has a communication difficulty or autism?

This is a difficult paragraph to write as there are lots of different views on this and the experts do not all agree. In simple terms, children who have speech and language delay or difficulties are not necessarily autistic. Not every child who doesn't choose to speak or make eye contact will have a diagnosis of autism either. It can be helpful to think of it as a continuum of need and to focus on identifying your child's needs, working out what helps and what doesn't. And then putting in place the right help and support. Some argue strongly that in autism there are communication difficulties and repetitive and/or disruptive behaviours but every child is unique and autism can look different for every person with a diagnosis.

Communication skills can develop over time. Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK. Only a qualified professional (in Cambridgeshire its the Pediatricians) can make a diagnosis of Autism (see our Handy Guide on autism assessments). Many children will not receive an assessment or diagnosis until it is clear that normal developmental delay can be ruled out.

## Who can help?

If you have concerns about your child and they are under seven, speak to your GP ,health visitor or school so they can offer suggestions and support. The Speech and Language Therapy team also offer drop in's where you can get advice. You may want to ask for a referral to the Speech and Language Therapy Service so that they can assess your child and offer support if its needed. You can find detail on their website:

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/what-we-do/children-young-people-health-services-cambridgeshire/specialist-services/childrens-speech-and-language-therapy>

## Where to find out more on website:

[www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk](http://www.pinpoint-cambs.org.uk) and look under Useful Information