

## Stage 4: Individual Activity - Focus Shift and Re-engage Attention:

In the final stage of Attention Autism, the adult models an activity, and then each child is given the same equipment to use themselves. They do not have to copy exactly what the adult modelled. The aim is for the child watching to have a go independently with confidence, and then to take their materials back to the leading adult at the end. The activity should be engaging and enjoyable for the children.

Children will focus their attention as part of a group to watch the demonstration, then shift their attention to work on their individual task, and then finally shift their attention back to the group to show their completed task. This stage also aims to build independent working skills and instruction-following skills. Autistic advocates, as well as Gina Davies, founder of the Attention Autism approach, both emphasise the importance of these activities being adapted to the needs of the child, for example sensory needs should be taken into account in the materials offered, and children should be able to move around the room and use their usual self-regulation techniques when needed.

The Attention Autism approach aims to foster an interest in learning new things and to inspire communication in whatever form



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## Attention Autism Overview

Attention Autism is an intervention approach by Speech and Language Therapist Gina Davies which aims to work on the early fundamentals of language including awareness of others, attention, listening, shared attention, switching



## The Aims of Attention

As well as the goal of developing natural and spontaneous communication skills in Autistic children, there are several other aims that Attention Autism strives to achieve. These include:

- To engage attention.
- To improve joint attention.
- To develop shared enjoyment in group activities.
- To increase attention in adult-led activities.
- To encourage spontaneous interaction in a natural group setting.
- To increase non-verbal and verbal communication through commentary.
- To build a wealth and depth of vocabulary

## Stages of Attention Autism:

The Attention Autism programme is split into a series of stages. A stage is only introduced when a child is ready. Practitioners spend as much time on each stage as they feel is required for a group of children.



## Stage 1: The Bucket to Focus Attention

The first stage of Attention Autism involves filling a bucket with visually engaging toys that aim to help children learn how to focus their attention. The toys will be presented to the group by an adult leader, such as teacher, learning practitioner, occupational therapist or parent. The adult leader will make simple comments about each toy to help introduce them to the children and expand their vocabulary.



These sessions are carried out 4 or 5 times a week. Practitioners start by showing 3 things in quick succession from the bucket, with the aim of building to 3-4 minutes of engaged attention. 'Engaged attention' may look different in an Autistic child to a neurotypical child - however the Attention Autism approach does not require the child to look at the adult, or to sustain eye-gaze on the objects - instead 'engaged attention' may be indicated by non-verbal signals such as seeming alert and interested, and looking frequently at the object. When the majority of the group is happy, relaxed and anticipating interesting things when the session starts, they are ready to move onto stage 2.

## Stage 2: The Attention Builder

### This is built onto Stage One

At this stage the small group are introduced to highly appealing and visually stimulating activities.

This stage aims to build and sustain attention for a longer period of time.

Gina Davies, founder of Attention Autism, points out that children are not required to make eye contact or sit still during these activities - the focus is on engagement, in whatever way the child demonstrates this.

## Stage 3: The Interactive Game - Turn-Taking and Shifting Attention

The adult leader demonstrates a simple engaging activity and invites children up one at a time to have a turn. This may be the same activity from stage 2 or something new.

In this stage the aim is for children to learn to shift their attention from learning as one of a group, to individual participation, and then to back to one of a group. In order for this stage to be successful and enjoyable for the child, it is important that the activity is just as interesting to watch as it is to take part in.