Characteristics of good ASD early intervention: checklist

What to look for in an early intervention

All therapies and services for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) should be family focused, well structured and based on good evidence.

Here’s a list of characteristics to look for when choosing an early intervention. The more of these characteristics you find in a service the better – but not all interventions will do all these things.

Family focused

The intervention:

- includes family members so they can work alongside the professionals and learn how to help their child
- is flexible – it can be offered at home as well as in other settings such as kindergartens and early intervention centres
- provides families with support and guidance.

Well structured

The intervention:

- has staff who are specially trained in the intervention and services they provide
- develops an individual plan for each child and the plan is reviewed regularly
- monitors each child’s progress with regular assessments
- is highly structured, well organised, regular and predictable
- provides a supportive learning environment – your child feels comfortable and supported
- prepares and supports children for the move to school
- enables contact between the child with ASD and typically developing children (ideally of the same age).

Evidence-based

The intervention:

- is designed for children with ASD
- focuses on developing attention, compliance, imitation, language and social skills
- includes strategies to help your child learn new skills and use them in different settings (sometimes called ‘generalising’ skills)
- has an approach to reducing difficult behaviour that involves identifying what the ‘purpose’ of a behaviour is, and then teaching more appropriate alternative behaviour to replace the difficult behaviour.

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