

Social communication groups

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Why we started

- **Increasing numbers of people referred:
pilot diagnostic service**
- **Many not eligible for individual SLT from
our service**

The pilot

- **2011 funding agreed**
- **9 referrals**
- **Immediate challenges**
- **Structure**

Structure and Content

- **All had met at least one SLT before**
- **7 weekly sessions: first session prioritised aims, rated self**
- **75 minutes long sessions: refreshments, warm up, topic, ending activity**
- **Final session-coffee**

Topics

- **Asking for what I want**
- **Starting, maintaining & ending conversations**
- **Understanding & using nonverbal communication**
- **Expressing 'negative' emotions**
- **Sharing my opinions with others**
- **Saying 'no'**
- **Knowing how much to tell people about myself**

What worked- immediate feedback

- **Meeting other autistic people**
- **Safe space**
- **Common ground**
- **Facilitators being flexible**

What worked, what we learned

- **Initial contact vital**
- **Anxiety & fatigue**
- **Every group different: consensus always**
- **Flexibility**
- **Opportunities to problem solve**
- **Opportunities to make friends**
- **Link into ALAG**
- **It's not always autism!**
- **Give people time**

Challenges

- **The environment**
- **Starting on time, uncertain attendance- what to do while waiting**
- **Might have nothing in common, range of needs**
- **Only 6 weeks**

What next?

- **Autistic co-facilitator?**
- **Future groups**
- **Logistics: people have more time commitments, demands on SLT service**