

# Aiming high – Increased participation after return to school with high-level difficulties after acquired brain injury (ABI)

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## Introduction

- Successful reintegration to school for children after ABI is considered an essential outcome of intervention (McDougall et al. 2006) but the service provision for the paediatric population can vary greatly (McKinlay et al. 2016).
- Children may have residual higher level difficulties that are known to be ongoing and long term (Feeney & Ylvisaker, 1995), but they may often not qualify for local therapy services in the UK.
- The Brain Injury Community Service (BICS) at The Children's Trust provides interdisciplinary, goal-directed neurorehabilitation, working in the child's environment, across the UK.

## Method

### Single-case study methodology – 'Chloe':

- Age 9 years at time of ABI (anteriovenous malformation)
- Pre-morbidly very high achieving student
- Did not meet the criteria for local community service input
- BICS intervention period 1-2 years post-injury

### A range of outcome measures used:

- Child & Adolescent Scale of Participation (CASP)
- Child Occupational Self-Assessment (COSA)
- La Trobe Communication Questionnaire
- Teacher and sibling questionnaire feedback
- Observations of participation in school
- Parent report

## Results

### Difficulties identified

- Initiation
- Idea generation
- Verbal memory
- Expressive language
- Higher level language
- Planning/organising
- Fatigue
- Identity changes
- Self-confidence

### Input from BICS

- Inter-disciplinary assessment
- Exploration of identity with Chloe to support self-awareness, goal setting & strategies
- Brain injury education to teachers, child, sibling & parents
- Support and training to home & school
- Classroom observation
- Provision of strategies
- Transition support to secondary school
- Support in Educational Health & Care Plan (EHCP) process

### Results

- Increased scores in the CASP for school participation; 80→100 (Figure.1)
- Positive change in 8 COSA areas (eg getting homework done)
- Observed increase in classroom participation
- Increased participation in school clubs
- Reduced frequency scores in the La Trobe Communication Questionnaire
- Positive teacher & parent reports
- Positive questionnaire feedback from teachers (8) and sibling

### Outcomes

- Increased participation in school
- Increased awareness of high-level cognitive and communication difficulties
- Reduced reporting of cognitive-communication difficulties

"if she were to suddenly get annoyed at me I understand she's probably tired or something else is causing it; I find it a lot easier not to get annoyed at her"

**Sister**



"I appreciate now she may not remember previous instructions or activities independently"

"..made me more conscious of breaking down instructions into steps and providing time to process instructions without reducing the level of challenge"

**Teachers**

"..more aware of how Chloe is feeling, her awareness of her difficulties and the frustrations this creates"

### What made things hard

- "Chloe did not meet the criteria for local speech and language therapy"
- "A general lack of knowledge and understanding about the effects of brain injury"
- "Chloe's needs are sometimes subtle – it is ongoing battle convincing people she has a permanent brain injury and needs support"

### What helped

- "Getting the referral to The Children's Trust before leaving hospital"
- "Being able to understand Chloe's complex and dynamic condition"
- "Support from The Children's Trust: practical, advice, emotional support, education sessions for teachers, ongoing work with teachers"
- "Very supportive primary school and exceptional teaching assistant funded by the EHCP"

**Parent's Perspective**

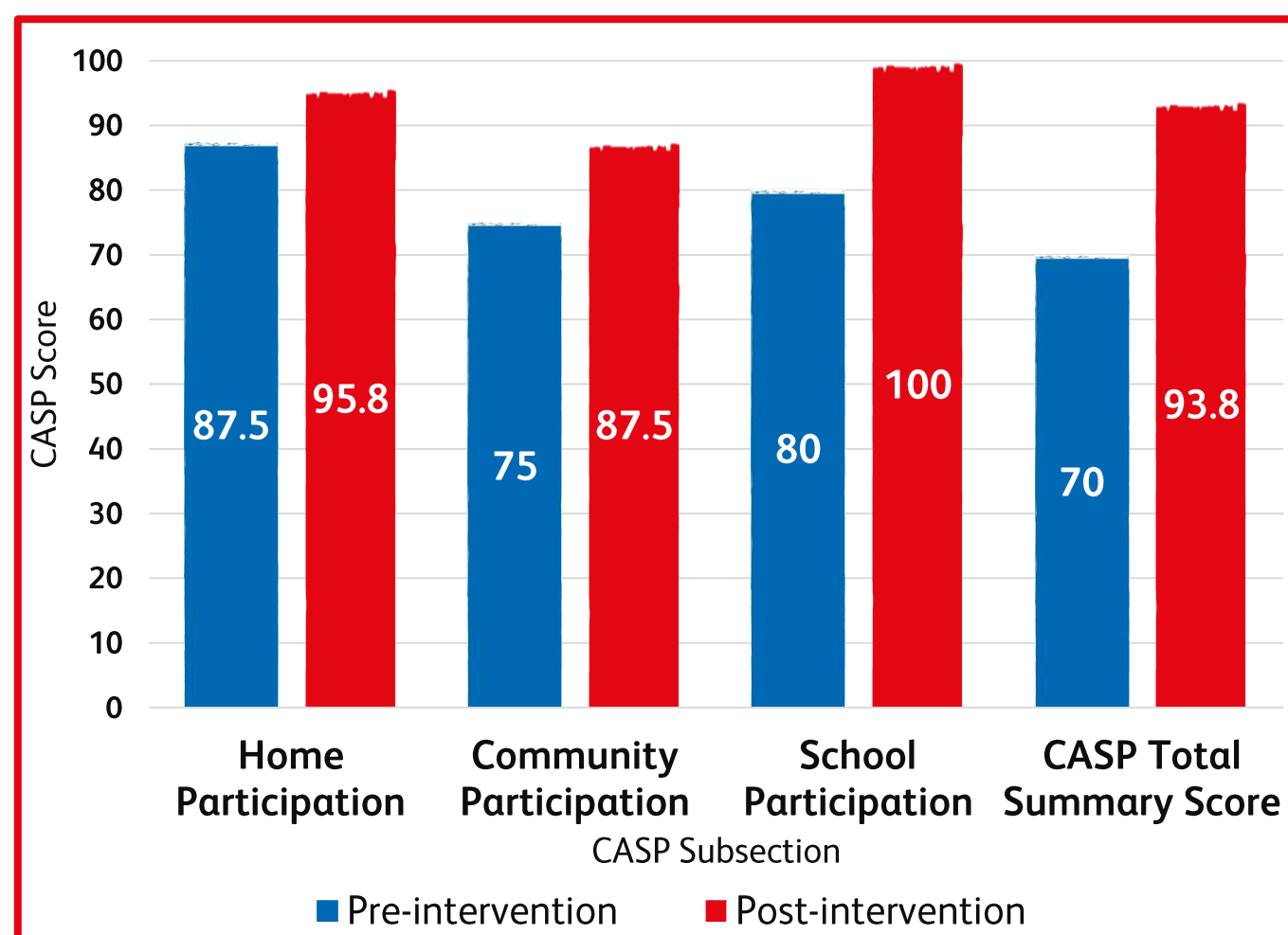


Figure 1: CASP Subsection Scores

## Conclusion and Impact for Children

- School participation can be positively influenced 2 years post-injury for a child with high-level difficulties following ABI, with targeted specialist intervention in the community setting.
- Children with higher-level difficulties often perform within the average range in therapy and school assessment and therefore frequently do not meet the criteria for local service intervention.
- These children need specialist ABI support to aim high and meet their potential.

## References

- McDougall et al. 2006; Brain Injury 20(11): 1189-1205
- McKinlay et al. 2016; Brain Injury 30(13-14): 1656-1664
- Feeney & Ylvisaker, 1995; Journal of Head Trauma Rehab 10: 67-86



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