### Autism – do you know the signs?

**Pre School Children – 2 years to 4½ years**

#### Social Interaction and Verbal Communication

**Repeating certain words or phrases over and over again (“echolalia”)**

- Delay in learning to babble, using first words or combining 2-3 words by age 3
- Regression in or loss of skills
- Does not yet use 2-3 word utterances
- Does not respond by looking when name is called

**Imagination, ideas and creativity**

- Lack of imaginative pretend play (pretending that dolls and toys are real and enacting out scenarios with them or role play)
- Imaginative pretend play is over-focused or obsessive or copied (not invented)
- Plays imaginative pretend play with others but not equally shared - may passively copy another’s imaginative game, or insist that others follows his/her own themes and rules

**Narrow range of interests, routines and repetitive behaviours**

- Displays repetitive behaviours or rituals that negatively affect daily activities
- Repetitive ‘stereotypical’ movements such as hand flapping, body rocking while standing, spinning, finger flicking
- Self-chosen activities are limited and unchanging
- Dislike of change, which can lead to anxiety or aggression
- Over-focused, unusual or highly specific interests and hobbies
- Prefers familiar routines, likes things to be ‘just right’

**Gestures and non verbal communication**

- Poor imitation of sounds or people's actions
- Imaginative pretend play is solitary or plays near but not with other children
- Plays imaginative pretend play with others but not equally shared - may passively copy another’s imaginative game, or insist that others follows his/her own themes and rules
- Lack of spontaneous gesture that expresses emotion (e.g. putting arm around someone)

**Sensory responses**

- Unusual sensory responses to sound sight, touch, taste, smell, movement and/or pain
- Problems with turn taking

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