

# Using the Brick-by-Brick<sup>®</sup> programme to support communication skills

Laura is a Speech and Language Therapist based in Manchester. After 10 years working in the NHS, Laura delivers private Speech and Language Therapy for children. Laura set up a Brick Club in collaboration with A Team Hub, which is based in Leigh.

## Developing communication skills

In 2021, Laura was working with a young autistic boy whose communication skills were limited. As a practitioner, Laura was already familiar with the concept of LEGO<sup>®</sup> based therapy and knew it could be beneficial to children's language development.

Laura began to research LEGO based therapy and how she could develop her expertise in this area. She noticed that the Brick-by-Brick<sup>®</sup> programme training courses, created by Play Included<sup>®</sup> and endorsed by the LEGO Foundation, appeared frequently during her research and decided to register for a training course in Manchester.

## Implementation is simple

Laura got started with the Level 01 Initiate Brick-by-Brick<sup>®</sup> training course, "I loved the elements about play and how they gave examples of different types of playing. I like to be given real examples which make it easier for me to conceptualise the approach."

To develop her knowledge further, Laura completed the Level 02 Facilitator Brick-by-Brick<sup>®</sup> training:

*"After attending the training course, I felt more empowered to be able to deliver the Brick-by-Brick approach with the family that I was working with. The content resonated with me and the way that I wanted to work."*

Following her training, Laura collaborated with A Team Hub, a local community centre offering SEN services, to deliver her first Brick Club. The Hub supported Laura by securing funding from BBC Children in Need, identifying children who would most benefit from the programme, registering them for the sessions, and providing a safe and secure space where the Brick Club could take place. Laura noted: "It's really nice to share the load and responsibility." The A Team Hub acquired LEGO sets for the Brick Club sessions through donations from LEGO stores and local families as well as purchasing the sets outright: "I used the Level 02 training to guide me as to which models to purchase to ensure that it was a good use of money."

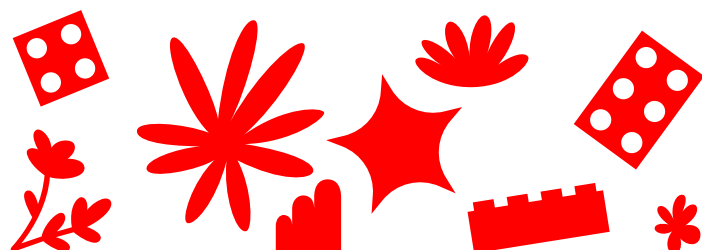
Laura and the A Team Hub ran a 10-week Brick Club pilot scheme in Autumn 2022, inviting six neurodivergent children aged from 8 to 11 years old to participate. Each of the children were diagnosed with ADHD or autistic spectrum disorder.

## Building relationships through play

For neurodivergent children, Brick Club doesn't just provide a safe space, but a fun club that they can attend independently: "At Brick Club, the children have access to all the same kind of social and problem-solving opportunities available at other after-school clubs, but without it needing to be modified for them to be able to join in, since it has been designed for their needs."

Laura saw that the Brick-by-Brick® programme's method of facilitating play also improved the children's confidence:

*"The idea of play and making it fun is key – as we got better at facilitating these two things in the sessions, we saw better outcomes in the children because they felt less stressed, anxious or jittery."*



The children particularly enjoyed participating in a structured, playful group building activity where they had to guess the model being made. As the building started to take shape, they began to work as a team and became more excited:

*"This is hopefully because we've been tapping into more play, which has made the LEGO building process more enjoyable for them."*



## What's next?

In 2023, Laura completed the refreshed Level 02 Facilitator training course; she enjoyed the chance to revisit the training: "It was helpful to explore the different 'Playful Experiences' that are encouraged during Brick Club sessions as well as meeting fellow Brick Club Facilitators and the Play Included team in person!"

Following a successful Brick Club pilot, Laura and the A Team Hub are planning to deliver a Brick Club for another 10 weeks. This time, Laura will be incorporating the techniques learned from her most recent Brick-by-Brick® programme training: "We've adapted what we're going to do next term and we've really tried to make it more about play. We're definitely still in our early stages, however my vision is that we'll have some children that will just love Brick Club and keep on coming back."