

Information about the client

My son is 3 years old and we live in Lagos, Nigeria where he attends a Montessori playgroup. All the children in his class are between the ages of 3 and 6 years old.

A few months before his 2nd birthday, when he started attending a playgroup I noticed his speech was not as fluent as that of other kids his age. Beyond speech, he didn't seem as developed as the others. His communication needs limited his ability to learn by limiting his understanding of his environment and his interaction with other kids or adults. Only mum and dad seemed to understand his unique mode of communication. To others, his lack of immediate response is often misconstrued. I'm very concerned about his ability to keep up with his peers. I often wonder whether he will ever be able to engage in everyday communication (speech) like others? Will he ever live independent of My/other care?

His life at home and outside of school remain guarded. He is a special boy with special needs. His moods are quite unpredictable and not understood by others. To an extent, we limit his interaction with other parents and children.

The Multi Professional Team approach

I found out about the Multi Professional Team via a relative who is based in Milton Keynes. She did some research and eventually linked us with Dr Mooncey and the ITS team.

The Initial communication was helpful and I understood that our geographical location might have caused a delay in your ability to define the most appropriate approach to our case.

We chose the Multi professional assessment as we wanted a comprehensive assessment. I knew I had made the right choice (regarding MDT Assessment) and that our son was in good hands. My son was very comfortable with the environment as well as the professionals. So was I as a parent...the professionals were and are still approachable.

For the community appointment aspect of the assessment we chose the soft play option. I honestly wish this activity had lasted longer or could have happened over two consecutive days. The venue was quite congested with kids as well as parents. I would have appreciated more time with [Sarah](#) (Sarah Davis, Director of ITS and SLT) so as to pick up as much knowledge and tips as possible. In order to be able to understand his patterns of behavior in relation to that particular environment and other kids.

Conclusions and comments

Because we flew in for the diagnosis and only had days with the specialists, I felt the process was rushed. I was nonetheless enlightened about his needs. I'd say we were guided in the direction of a likely diagnosis and we continue to learn as time goes.

The recommendation of a speech and language therapist has been particularly helpful. We see and appreciate the impact. As we are based in Nigeria, we had to seek the services of a local specialist but we do share detailed reports with the ITS professionals via email. The mail contains updates on our sons development.

They have greatly helped my understanding of my son's unique demands...he has developed tremendously and continues to improve.

As parents we ensure that besides us, the therapist, class teacher and nanny are also on the same page as regards his care and needs. Our son has settled into a confident rhythm.

The assessment has helped our relationship become stronger...he is confident knowing he is loved by those around him.

I only wish my son and I had spent more time with the team. I believe there is so much we could have gained in knowledge and tips from their experience. I wish we could afford to travel more often to visit the team.

Advice to other parents...

To other parents I say please understand that you might have a special child with special needs.

Invest time, money, energy and more in seeking knowledge.

Continue to ask questions about behavior patterns that you don't understand.

Pay special attention to your child(ren) from birth.

Respect and accept the findings of specialists even when they tell you things you'd rather not hear.

Finally, do not shield your child from other children. Rather supervise and guide their play.

How could we improve the service of the Multi Professional Team...

If only you could look into the training of therapists outside of the country; Africa for instance. Or the possibility of scholarship schemes giving opportunity to parents/kids that can't afford the assessment/sessions.

Funlola Araoluwa Raimi

Mother of 3 y/o boy with ASD