



Acorn Park School

MyFit Trial: Jan – Sept 2012

A number of students have been highlighted across the school that may benefit from the deep tactile and weighted pressure the MyFit provides.

The students have severe autism and learning difficulties, most are non-verbal and use visual schedules and PECs in order to communicate and ensure a consistent routine. Some have minimal functional communication, 2-3 word phrases and elements of echolalia.

Areas of difficulty introducing the MyFit to our students:

- The initial new concept of the MyFit often causes anxiety about trying it or adds a change to routine. This has been overcome by patiently working alongside the student demonstrating the use of the MyFit without any pressure for it to be worn, and leaving it as free access for students to seek out.
- A more direct approach has been needed with some, having it clearly visualised on a schedule of activities to reduce student's anxiety regarding choice. All students who have tried this approach have the functional skills to remove the MyFit at any point and therefore show consent to wearing the Myfit.
- Once students have worn the MyFit and become comfortable with this they often will not remove it. Making it challenging to follow guidelines regarding use of weighted products and ensuring a change in the sensory input provided to the body.
- One student who presents as potentially benefiting from the use of the MyFit has trialled it and has then associated it with a particular member of staff and going out in the car. This student would seek out the MyFit not to put on but as an object of reference to begin the process of going out on a trip. Over time this began to cause more behaviours than benefit and this student is currently not having access to a MyFit, however OT would like to review this. This student can cope with other students using the MyFit and therefore we are hoping the association is reducing.
- One student using the MyFit for 2 days of a trial, will slide down the wall in order to put his shoes on as he leaves the house and classroom. By sliding down the wall the material is wearing very thin and there is a risk of the weighted balls falling out from the jacket.

A full trial has taken considerable time to introduce to our students however one case study has proved to be successful and the funding has been agreed to purchase the individual their own MyFit vest.

MyFit Case Study:

Student Details:

Rob* (pseudonym to protect confidentiality) is a 17 year old boy with severe autism and learning difficulties. He has minimal functional verbal vocabulary, requesting favourable items such as 'toilet or flappy please' but being supported with the use of schedules and PEC's. He attends a residential school where he is supported 1:1 throughout the waking day. Rob finds engaging in adult directed tasks challenging. He often has episodes of either running and climbing and sudden movements or will flop to the floor; pulling his jumper over his head and banging his hands to the floor.

From OT assessment, through observation and the completion of the sensory integration inventory, Rob was acknowledged to present a cluster of hypo sensitivities to proprioceptive and vestibular sensory inputs. His tactile system presents as being hyper sensitive being defensive to activities such as thoroughly washing his body or hair and removing his clothing.

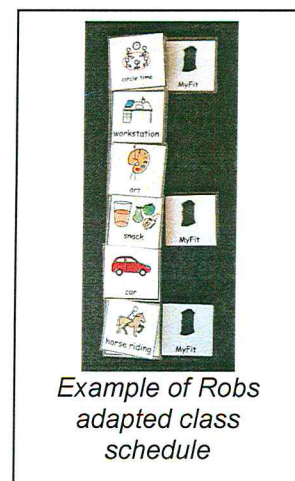
Working with Rob has been challenging to engage him in adult directed task. On being given a demand (verbally or through use of visual schedule) he will flop to the floor or, curl himself tightly onto the chair pulling in tightly to the table. He pulls his jumper over his head and flops onto the table surface.

More recently Rob has episodes of behaviour where by he appears distressed and is not easily settled, beginning to push and grab at staff and hitting the floor or walls hard with the backs of his hands or his head.

Introduction of MyFit:

The MyFit jacket has been trialled with Rob over the last 2 school terms. OT has supported the class team to incorporate the use of the Myfit jacket into Rob's schedules. Initially Rob refused to wear the MyFit but given a gentle approach and several attempts of showing him it, using visual resources such as social stories Rob tolerated trying it on. Once the Myfit was put on Rob would then not take it off when asked, clearly pulling up the zip and turning away on several occasions.

OT worked with the class team to support Rob visually to understand when the MyFit will be available for him to wear. OT supported staff teams to understand that with any weighted or tight squeezing sensory garment it is important to ensure it is taken on and off to ensure the sensory input received from the body remains effective.



Example of Robs adapted class schedule

Intended Outcomes of MyFit Trial:

Data was collected prior to wearing the MyFit and from the time Rob used the MyFit following a visual schedule - of taking it on and off.

Staff looked at two areas that it has been felt the MyFit may benefit Rob in:

- the time Rob spent flopped on the floor from being given the initial instruction about transitioning to the next task and to when he moved
- the time Rob engages in tasks once he has transitioned to it

Conclusions:

Data collection showed when wearing the MyFit jacket regularly throughout his schedule Rob showed changes to his pattern of flopping to the floor.

Horse riding:

Data showed at horse riding (an environment with overwhelming levels of sensory input) Rob flopped at every new activity when not wearing the MyFit. Transitions were slow taking over 5 minutes and there were episodes of hitting his hands on the floor. Participation was brief within each activity on his horse riding schedule. When wearing the MyFit Rob took on average 2 minutes to transition and completed every element of the horse riding schedules: grooming, walk, sweeping and riding. Staff wrote on the data sheet in large letters: 'NO FLOPPING AT ALL!!!' which is very positive results.

Tuck Shop:

Discussions with the speech and language team who have supported the monitoring of the MyFit jacket have noted changes in Rob's behaviour and level of engagement in the daily routine of attending tuck shop.

Without the MyFit Rob would either run into the room, jump on the sofas and touch the surfaces and/or push up to a wall and flop to the floor pulling his jumper over his head. Rob required physical assistance in most tuck shop visits. Even the motivation of choosing snack would not encourage Rob out. When wearing the MyFit jacket the speech and language team records report Rob does not flop, speaks clearly and needs no physical assistance to request his snack.

Class Tasks:

Rob can spend a large proportion of time flopped on the floor and hidden in his jumper. When wearing the MyFit Rob has sat upright and focussed at the table and engaged well with staff. He has participated in circle times and managed transitions to the toilet and been able to returning to the previous task. When wearing the MyFit Rob appears more aware and engaged with his environment and less threatened by it. Rob still chooses to sit in the corner and on the floor, covering his legs with cushions but can be engaged with at this time. This also shows Robs need for even more deep pressure to his body to help understand where his body is and how it fits with the environment.

Behaviour Support:

Staff reported during an incident of extreme behaviour for Rob; running and grabbing staff, making vocalisations, hitting hands and head onto walls, attempts

to bite staff he could not be settled by motivators, time or space. At this point his MyFit was offered to him, which he did accept. He took this and then ran and crashed onto a large bean bag where he settled being able to use the time and space to organise and calm himself.

Overall Observation:

Changes were most evident at the time of wearing the MyFit rather than showing a carry over of sensory input to the time when it was not worn as would be expected. This may explain why Rob is defensive to removing the jacket because of the positive, grounded feel it provides him with. Rob continues to seek further sensory input even when wearing the MyFit which shows his need to feel safe, secure and grounded through heavy, tight pressure on his body.

The MyFit appears to have raised both Rob's and staff's understanding on the need for deep tactile pressure to help him feel organised and calm. At this stage, Rob is 17years old and a number of the behaviours he presents have appeared to become learnt behaviours that serve a need, other than that of only sensory origins; particularly avoidance of tasks which may bring about unwanted, unexpected and difficult to process sensory experiences. Providing Rob with a resource such as the MyFit at a younger age may have made a huge impact on his ability to settle to routines and tolerate work to adult direction.

The benefits of early intervention to avoid learnt behaviours and also to support students to not need the intervention over the course of time are so important, however the MyFit vest has made a great difference to Rob's life and provides a more grounded and organised baseline to work from in order to begin to develop skills.