

Title: The investigation of autistic behaviours in infants "at risk" of developmental disorders such as autism.	
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Outline of Research	<p>This study will investigate whether autistic behaviours are present during infancy. Currently autism is not diagnosed until a child is around 3 years of age, however both parental accounts and retrospective video studies have suggested that symptoms may be present from a much earlier age, even during infancy. There has been little prospective and empirically sound research in this area. It is therefore unclear what age the symptoms of autism first appear or in fact how symptoms present during infancy. For this reason these are currently no screening tools available to detect autism in children under the age of around 18 months. Identifying infant behaviours of autism would allow screening tools to be established, therefore contributing to a reduction in the age of diagnosis and allowing vital early intervention to commence at a much earlier age. In order to investigate the earliest signs of autism this study will follow a group of infants who have an increased risk of developing autism (siblings of children already diagnosed with the disorder.) These infants will be followed over an 18 month period, in order to comprehensively document their development.</p>
Findings to date	<p>To date, we have conducted a pilot study involving infants with no increased risk of developing autism. Through this pilot study and retrospective research in the area we have developed a tool that assesses the behaviours thought to be the earliest signs of autism.</p>
Expected start and finish dates	Jan 2007 - 2010