

'Don't let my daughter down'

Mum's plea to authorities over funding for autism organisation

A Kircubbin mother is appealing to the authorities to help secure the future of an autism organisation, which has been a 'life saver' for her family.

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Christine Faye's six-year-old daughter, Amelia, has autism, and while Christine and her partner, Alan, can cope well now with their daily challenges, it is a far cry from what life was like for them a few years ago.

"My daughter was non-verbal, Christine said. "We didn't know what we were doing with her. We were asking for help, with the likes of toilet training, but we weren't getting it. There were so many waiting lists and it was

so disheartening." After struggling for so long, Christine researched online and found the Parents' Education as Autism Therapists (PEAT) organisation, based in Northern Ireland, and she says joining it was the best thing she ever did. "My daughter's speech is amazing now; she's developing social skills; she's independent, and

I can't thank them enough for it. "We just used to sit with her crying and didn't know what to do. With feeding she would've just eaten chicken nuggets and chips, which is a basic thing children with autism would eat. But now she's sitting down with the family, she's eating, she's happy and she's trying new things. It's completely changed our daughter." Through the help of PEAT Amelia is now in mainstream education and is a pupil at Kircubbin Integrated, where she receives the support of a classroom assistant. PEAT teaches parents Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) skills to



Christine Faye from Kircubbin with daughters Amelia (6) and ???

help improve their children's behaviour, with monthly meetups, residential retreats and therapists meeting one-on-one with parents to help them through their particular issues. However, the organisation's future is now uncertain. ABA therapy is not officially recognised in Northern Ireland as a treatment, despite the fact it is widely followed in America, the Republic of Ireland and has a number of dedicated schools in

England. It previously received funding from Cauldwell and the National Lottery Fund but they have since stopped, meaning parents may have to fit the bill in the future if they want it to continue. "It's just so upsetting because there are so many more parents trying to get in contact with PEAT and it's just been dropped," she said. "It's helped us as a family; it's been a life saver for us." Christine said that, along with giving PEAT

greater recognition, she would like more parents of autistic children to know that ABA therapy is

available to them as another form of treatment. For more information about PEAT visit petni.org

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PEAT has been a life-saver for us.
- Christine Faye

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