

## Nursery staff learn signing to help young children thrive.

New Forest nursery staff have undergone Signalong training to help them better communicate with their young children.



**SIGN CHAMPIONS – Staff from Little Deers learned over 100 signing gestures to support children’s learning during Signalong training with leading Dorset-based charity Autism Unlimited.**

Little Deers, based in Burley, reached out to leading Dorset-based charity [Autism Unlimited](#) for help in supporting children with language, speech and communication delays.

Trainers visited [Little Deers](#) and instructed them in Signalong - a keyword sign supported communication system used alongside spoken word.

Manager Kerry Griffiths said the training will benefit every child at the nursery: “Over the years, we’ve seen quite a significant increase in the number of children coming through with speech, language and communication delays, and we want to train our staff to be able to support them so that as they grow, they can thrive and progress, because communication is key.

“We knew Autism Unlimited provided accredited training, so we consulted them about which workshop would suit our staff best.

“The Signalong Essential Vocabulary course was perfect because it gave us all an excellent grounding in signing, with a large range of signs based on natural gestures which can be introduced by the team through activities, singing and story time.

“We all really enjoyed the experience and finished feeling we could take something really valuable back to all our children, because signing not only benefits children

with language delays, it also supports attention and listening, understanding, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression in every child who learns with it.”

Autism Unlimited, based in Christchurch, supports and empowers autistic children, young adults and their families through bespoke education, independent living skills and career guidance.

Other organisations which have enlisted the charity’s numerous training programmes include the local NHS, MoreBus, Dorset Custody Visitors and Lighthouse Poole.

Claire Causley, Training Manager at Autism Unlimited, said: “Signing can be particularly helpful for children with communication challenges because it provides an alternative means of expression which enables them to convey their thoughts, feelings, and needs effectively. It benefits all children and adults because it’s easy and fun to learn and promotes language development and ensure that everyone can be part of the conversation.

“We were extremely impressed by the commitment of the Little Deers team to develop new ways to communicate and promote the learning of all their children.

“We would like to hear from other childcare providers and any companies or organisation which would benefit from our highly bespoke training, which can be delivered in person or online and also includes Understanding Autism and Autism Acceptance.”

For more details, visit the website: <https://www.autism-unlimited.org/support/training/> or call 01202 483360 (option 2).

Picture caption: SIGN CHAMPIONS – Staff from Little Deers, based in Burley, learned over 100 signing gestures to support children’s learning during Signalong training with leading Dorset-based charity Autism Unlimited.

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[www.autism-unlimited.org](http://www.autism-unlimited.org)

Little Deers is a Not-for-Profit charity, run by The Little Deers Management Committee, whose members are elected by the parents of the children who attend the setting. For more information visit: [www.littledeers.org](http://www.littledeers.org)

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