



HAND IN HAND: Grahaem Rettie back in the north-east with his partner Teddy Ocana and their daughter Michelle

# Parents hail mission to aid shy Michelle a major success

## FAMILY MOVES FROM CARIBBEAN ISLAND TO GET TREATMENT IN NORTH-EAST

BY JAMIE BUCHAN

A couple's 5,000-mile mission to the north-east to give their ultra-shy daughter a new lease of life has been hailed a success.

Grahaem Rettie and Teddy Ocana came from their home in the Caribbean to find the best treatment for 10-year-old Michelle - victim of an auditory processing disorder. It means she has difficulty communicating and comes across as extremely shy.

Michelle has trouble stringing words together and uses just a few syllables at a time. After nine years of being misdiagnosed by doctors at her tiny island home of Sint Eustatius, in the Dutch Antilles, Michelle and her family upped sticks to Scotland in search of treatment.

Mr Rettie is originally from Aberdeen and the family soon found hope in the Sound Learning Centre, a specialist treatment service in London which this month decamped to Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire. The centre uses light and sound technology to treat

children and adults with a range of difficulties such as autism and dyslexia.

Yesterday, as Michelle neared the end of her 10-day course of treatment, her mother said their journey had paid off.

"We are already seeing great results," she said. "Michelle is very shy and has trouble communicating.

"She finds it frustrating a lot of the time because she's very smart and knows what she's trying to say, but she can't get the words out.

"For years we were told it could have been because of language problems in the Caribbean, or because she's been spoilt or because she's too protected.

"But nobody could tell us what was really wrong.

"When I found out about the Sound Learning Centre on the internet, I thought this

was what we'd been looking for."

The couple said they have already noticed a big difference in Michelle since the treatment began last week.

"The other day she asked if I remembered a place we had been to. I was surprised to hear her use a long word like remember - it really shows she's making progress."

The mother added: "One day we were at the beach in

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At the beach she started dancing to music. She's never done anything like that before  
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Aberdeen and she started dancing to music. She's never done anything like that before, dancing in front of other people. I thought that was a big step forward."

The family arrived in the north-east last year and are staying at Mr Rettie's parents' home in Mastrick, Aberdeen, while they look for work.

The Sound Learning Centre has made several trips to the north-east corner to help locals since last November.

The centre's leaders, husband-and-wife team Pauline Allen and Phil Stickland, have been hosting sessions at Mintlaw's Sapinbrae Hotel.

Over the past two weeks, they have treated 12 youngsters and one adult.

For more details about the service visit [www.the-soundlearningcentre.co.uk](http://www.the-soundlearningcentre.co.uk)



Pauline Allen



Phil Stickland