

Intensive Interaction Newsletter

September 2003

Issue 1 (a real collectors item!)

News in Brief:

- Helen Elford has recently been appointed as Research Assistant for the project— Having met her I think we are very lucky to have someone of her undoubted talent to come and work with us.
- The Blenheim Centre, part of Leeds City Council's Inclusive Learning Service is now extending its use of *Intensive Interaction* for its students with profound and multiple learning disabilities.
- Dave Hewett was in Leeds recently providing a training day for the staff of the Trust's Children's Service

The *Intensive Interaction* Research Project nears a start (about time - ed!)

After meeting with almost all the home managers the *Intensive Interaction* research project has now identified the four NHS staffed houses in which *Intensive Interaction* is to be used as a means to promote sociability and fundamental communication skills for all it's tenants.

In these houses it is envisaged that all the staff will receive training and guided support in the use of *Intensive Interaction*, and will be given the opportunity to provide evidence to the project team of the successes, challenges and practical difficulties of using the approach in the social care setting.

The positive feedback about the potential for using *Intensive Interaction* was quite overwhelming, but unfortunately it was only possible to choose four homes due to the number of care staff in-

involved, and the practicalities of training and collecting evidence through interviews and questionnaires from the nearly 60 staff who work there.

This does not mean that training and support in the use of *Intensive Interaction* will not soon be made available to all other NHS staff who feel they could benefit from it. As soon as the initial work has been done with the research project staff, they further training opportunities will be made available more generally across the trust.

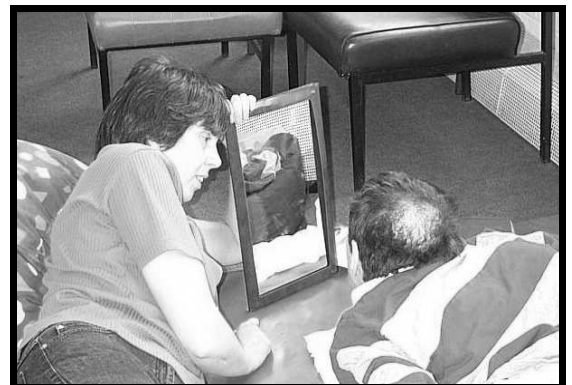


Dave Hewett

Dave Hewett on the project

Dave Hewett, one of the originators of *Intensive Interaction*, said of the current project being run by Leeds Mental Health Trust:

' In the last fifteen years, awareness about the use and application of *Intensive Interaction* has been steadily growing amongst practitioners from all disciplines in the field of severe learning disability. Here is yet another milestone. I expect that the findings of the *Intensive Interaction* project will have wide implications, providing knowledge that will



Harvey and Debbie exchange eye contact and facial expressions at the Inclusive Learning Ser-

be of benefit nationally.

How encouraging and uplifting also to see the project producing its own newsletter. Please all take up Graham's call to put more people on the mailing list for the newsletter. The future challenge for those of us dedicated to the use of the approach is to continue the dissemination of this vital knowledge and here is an example of the sort of initiative that is needed.

All best wishes to Graham and the project team.'



Intensive Interaction is designed for those people with profound and complex learning difficulties, and who may in addition have a physical or sensory impairment. It can be used as a way of teaching, or simply as a way of being with people, and involves the use of naturalistic and pleasurable activities through which sociability and communication normally develop in infancy. The approach was pioneered by Dave Hewett and Melanie Nind at The Harperbury Hospital School in the 1980's from a model of 'infant/caregiver interactions', developing further the ideas of *Augmented Mothering* by the late Gary Ephraim.

The central priority of *Intensive Interaction* is always that of enabling our clients to develop positive ways of relating to others, and by using various interactive 'games' or activities as a catalyst for social interaction it is hoped that people with profound and multiple disabilities will progress from being passive or socially excluded, and develop or simply use their social and communicative skills to a greater extent.

Intensive Interaction addresses the needs of:

- † People who are pre-verbal, with few or limited communicative behaviours.
- † People who are socially withdrawn, and do not positively interact with other people.
- † People who display various stereotyped, or self-stimulatory behaviours that exclude the participation of other people.



Kirsty and Aileen sharing personal space at the Inclusive learning Service, West Leeds

Do You know of anyone else who might like to receive a copy of this newsletter in the future? If so just contact the Project Office to add them to our mailing list.

Responses to our Initial Questionnaire

Contact us!

Graham Firth
Leeds Mental
Health NHS Trust
*Intensive
Interaction Project*
Office, Psychology
Dept.,
St Mary's Hospital,
Green Hill Road,
Leeds
LS12 3QE.

Phone: 0113 3055160
Fax: 0113 3055013
Email:
graham.firth@leedsmh.
nhs.uk

Over the past few months the *Intensive Interaction* project has been looking to find out where and when *Intensive Interaction* is carried out in Leeds, and who does it. We sent out an initial questionnaire to as many of the people we could think of in Leeds who provide services to our clients with profound and multiple disabilities.

We sent questionnaires to staffed houses (both NHS and other providers), to some schools (both *special* and mainstream), to ATC's, Further Education providers and colleges,

and to various therapy departments and nursing staff teams.

In all we received over 70 replies (a return rate of nearly 70%), which was extremely pleasing. From those returns it seems that only a small minority of staff feel that they know enough about *Intensive Interaction* or feel they have sufficient skills to use it fully. Many of those that responded knew little or nothing of the approach, and many also used the form to indicate a desire to access some training or further information on the approach.

In the near future, we will soon make a start in providing the information and training that people want.

Watch this space!