



# Intensive Interaction Newsletter

November 2003

Issue 2 (what already!)

## News in Brief:

- The British Institute of Learning Disabilities has some information on *Intensive Interaction* on its website at: [www.bild.org.uk](http://www.bild.org.uk)
- 'An introduction to *Intensive Interaction*' is to be given by Graham Firth as part of the Practitioner's Forum series of seminars, on Tuesday 2nd of December, 7:30 - 9:00 pm at Thomas Danby College, Leeds. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Marilyn Crooke on Leeds 2786351 to reserve a seat.
- Melanie Nind is presenting a workshop on *Intensive Interaction*- Quality Communication, at the BILD conference on 'Valuing good practice for children and young people with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties'- on Thursday 20th November at the East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham- Contact BILD for further information; but you'll need to get your skates on!

## Meeting The Needs of People with profound Learning Disabilities- A BILD event with Dr Penny Lacey

On the 16th of October, at the MIC Centre in London, Dr Penny Lacey (Senior Lecturer in Education at The School of Education, Birmingham University) presented a very interesting and highly valuable training event on 'meeting the needs of people with profound learning disabilities'.

This day was one of a series of such days run by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) and covered various topics and issues, including *Intensive Interaction*.

Despite the somewhat cramped conditions the day was very stimulating, with some informative video footage, some interesting literature on the principles of working with people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, some early development models, and a method of linking assessment of a person's strengths and their needs in terms of learning opportunities (a model which immediately seemed a valuable and constructive way forward, and

I am personally trying it out at the moment- with some success! GF).

Towards the end of the day a period of discussion raised some important issues (with staff shortages unsurprisingly being of central concern).

The event is to be repeated in Sheffield on Friday 21st of November, so if you are interested please contact BILD (Tel: 01562 723025 or e-mail [learning@bild.org.uk](mailto:learning@bild.org.uk)) to book a place, although you'll have to be quick!

Also, Dr Lacey runs a distance learning course on Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities- details are available from [www.education.bham.ac.uk](http://www.education.bham.ac.uk).



John Paul and Julie interact through hand games at the Inclusive Learning Service

## The Intensive Interaction Research Project -An update

The research project in the Leeds Mental Health NHS Trust group homes has now formally been granted ethical approval by the Leeds (West) Ethics Committee, and the interviews of the staff members, being conducted by Helen Elford (Research Assistant) have now started.

The chosen staff in the 4 selected houses will receive their specific training in the use of *Intensive Interaction* starting on the 17th of November at St Mary's Hospital in Leeds, the training being carried out by Marion Crabbe (Speech and Language Therapist) and Graham Firth (*Intensive Interac-*

*tion* Project Leader). The training consists of 5 morning sessions spread over 5 weeks, and will be quite practical in nature, based on an experiential learning model, as well as addressing some of the underlying principles in more detail. It is hoped that the training will be enjoyable, as well as a worthwhile learning experience- much like *Intensive Interaction* itself.

Finally, we would like to thank all the staff of the 4 group homes for their efforts and enthusiasm shown so far.

**Graham Firth** *Intensive Interaction* Project Leader

## Did You Know?



Recommended reading for those wishing to get a fuller picture of *Intensive Interaction*:

Nind, M. and Hewett, D., (1994) *Access to Communication*, David Fulton: London.

Nind, M. and Hewett, D., (1998) *Interaction in Action*, David Fulton: London.

Nind, M. & Hewett, D. (2001) *A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction*, BILD publications: Kidderminster.

Other books by other authors working in the field will be included in later editions- perhaps you know of some particularly interesting books- please let us know so that we can share it with others- why not write a short review and send it in for the next edition of the newsletter?



Debbie and Jenny laughing together at the Inclusive Learning Service, West Leeds.

Have you got any pieces of news or information that you think might be of interest to other people working in this area? It might be your own story of using *Intensive Interaction*, perhaps a book review, or some information on a training event. Anything will be very gladly received. If you have, then just send it in to the address below. Go on, give it a go, you might just find you enjoy it.

## A Personal Account- Barbara Robinson

I have used the *Intensive Interaction* approach for many years at a small post 19 college in Leeds. I look at my involvement with *Intensive Interaction* as a great learning curve in my life. The historical background was not like a 'flash of light', on the way to Damascus- I was told to go on a course and told to put *Intensive Interaction* into practice. I was working at two colleges at the time, and both of them allowed me to attend two, two-day courses run by Dave Hewitt and I was given the 'bible'. *Access To Communication*, written by Hewitt and Nind.

At first I was self-conscious in the classroom and anxious to get 'results' straight away. I experimented with music, blowing bubbles, anything to inject more fun into the lesson. Over the years I became more comfortable with the approach and did not seek instant results. There is no right or wrong way of interacting with your students. I was eventually inspected by H.M. Inspectors who seemed fascinated by the whole thing. I felt very comfortable about this as they had no pre-knowledge themselves about the subject, which must be a first!

A new student was referred and I was asked to try and increase his sociability and communication skills. He was the first person I had ever met who had Creak's nine diagnostic points of autism. Much of his behaviour seemed to be a response to situations that he didn't understand and his lack of communication skills intensified this problem. At first he would hover outside the door. Eventually he came in but stood by the door. I noticed he enjoyed taped music. One day I played a Pavarotti tape. He beamed and trilled - the only sound I can compare it to. It was a breakthrough and despite ups and downs he began to make eye contact, accept touch and communicate in his own way. His home said his behaviour there improved. This student enabled me to write an *Intensive Interaction* course and give a seminar paper at the P.G.C.Ed that I attended later. I felt at long last I knew what I was doing and could spread, 'the word'.

I have since attended the two-day course again with Dave Hewitt. I think you need to do this and re-read the book as many times as you can.

Two years ago I met Aileen and Graham, work colleagues, and the new input from younger staff made a big impression on me, as did their evaluation sheets - it's a difficult area to tackle.

Thank you

### Contact us!

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