



Intensive Interaction Newsletter

Sept/October 2004

News in Brief:

- New courses for the 5 morning training in *Intensive Interaction* presented by Marion Crabbe (Speech and Language Therapist) and Graham Firth (Intensive Interaction Project Leader) at St Mary's Hospital in Leeds are currently being planned for the new year. Anyone wishing to put their names forward should contact Marion on 3055393, or Graham on 3055160.
- More training days on 'Using Intensive Interaction' led by Janet Gurney, and 'Getting to Know Each Other' led by Phoebe Caldwell have been arranged. These include dates in York and Doncaster, and many others, right through until December 2005. To find out more contact **Concept Training** on: Tel: 01524 832 828 or via the website at: www.concept-training.co.uk
- More dates for Dr Penny Lacey's **BILD** training event on 'meeting the needs of people with profound learning disabilities', have been announced, running through until July 2005. If you are interested please contact **BILD** on 01562 723025, or via their website at: www.bild.org.uk

Leeds Mental Health Trust Research Presentation Day—24th November, at St Chad's, Headingley, in Leeds

The Leeds Mental Health NHS Trust *Intensive Interaction* Research Project is pleased to announce:

A Research Presentation Day:

The Introduction of *Intensive Interaction* into the Social Care Setting for Clients with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities.

on 24th November 2004, at St Chad's Parish Centre, Headingley, in Leeds.

10:30 – 12:30 pm - **Research Presentation**

12:30 – 1:15 pm - **Lunch** (lunch, and its free, I can't believe it, it just gets better and better— ed)

1:15 - 2:30 pm - **Discussion** (on the issues raised and the future direction of the *Intensive Interaction* project)

The presentation is free, YES FREE! but places are limited. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Graham Firth, or Catherine Leeming on Leeds 3055160, or e-mail graham.firth@leedsmh.nhs.uk

The research has used a methodology based on 'Grounded Theory' to illuminate care-staffs' opinions, attitudes and experiences of using *Intensive Interaction* in the social care setting, with tenants who have profound and multiple learning disabilities.

The evidence provided, with its richness in both detail and depth has been most gratifying. The subsequent analysis has raised many issues that should be of interest to anyone interested in the care of clients who might benefit from increased access to contingent and appropriate social interaction— **That means YOU!**

So, please come along and make your contribution.



Catherine Leeming

Catherine has joined the Leeds *Intensive Interaction* project team as a researcher and assistant psychologist. She will be helping with the analysis in preparation for the big day in November (alright, stop going on about the 'big' day, we get the message— ed).

Intensive Interaction with clients with PMLD is
"...doing things with them at their level, on an intensive basis, giving them..
short bursts of , of real 'you are the centre of the universe' type thing".
Leeds Mental Health Trust Care Staff Research Respondent

NAME: Mark Barber (out in Melbourne, Australia!)

Consultant in Profound Intellectual Disability and Severe Communication Impairment



I arrived here a year ago from the UK where I'd been using Intensive Interaction as a teaching technique for a number of years at Melland High School in Manchester where I worked teaching pupils with PMLD and latterly at the University of Manchester's PMLD course. I've spent the last 12 months in Australia, spreading the word about Interactive Approaches at conferences and the training days that I provide for Speech and Language Therapists, Teachers, OTs, residential support staff and anybody else who will listen!

In addition to travelling around the country on behalf of the Australian Group on Severe Communication Impairment [AGOSCI] and presenting my own, independent day seminars, for the last eight months I've been working part time as a 'teacher mentor' at Bayside Special Developmental School in Melbourne, where I've been providing training for the staff in Intensive Interaction techniques as well as initiating a research project into the efficacy of Intensive Interaction with children at the school.

The staff training initially involved seven, hour-long after-school workshops to introduce the concepts of Intensive Interaction to the whole staff. At the same time I went into classes and recorded a number of video baselines of children identified by teachers and staff as being the 'hardest to reach'. Because of the way provision works here, most of the pupils that have come to be involved in the project are on the autistic spectrum. The majority of the children with profound intellectual disabilities and high support needs are placed in 'Specialist Schools'.

Up to five, 5 minute recordings were made of the identified pupils as they took part in typical individual teaching sessions and also in their 'off task' time. The off task or unfocussed session recordings are currently being rated in five second periods of time, by looking for evidence of e.g.:

- visual scanning [showing interest in what is going on around]
- head down [showing no interest in what is going on around]
- contingent vocalization [vocalizing in response to a nearby 'human event']
- non-contingent vocalization [vocalizing for no apparent reason]
- involvement with a toy or object [plays with/explores a toy/object]
- contact with staff [initiates to staff]
- contact with peers [initiates to peers]
- organized self-involvement [ritualistic or repetitive behaviours, self-directed sensory stimulation]

Each of the **teaching sessions** will be similarly 'rated' to record evidence of features including e.g.

- no interactive behaviours [nothing to indicate communicative response]
- looking at face [looking at or towards practitioner's face]
- contingent 'smile' face [happy to respond to a social event]
- social physical contact [*initiates* or *reciprocates* contact e.g. stroke/touch/hug etc]
- eye contact [eye to eye interaction even brief]
- joint focus [a) jointly involved with staff member in an activity or b) exploring a toy/object]
- contingent vocalization [vocalizes in response to a direct stimulus from staff/adult]
- engaged [a state of complete absorption in a shared social interaction with an adult]

I'll be leaving the school next month to enable the teaching teams to work out their own styles, while I go up to the winter warmth of Queensland to do some more workshops and school training days, returning after a two month break. On my return I'll spend another three months taking further video recordings of the same pupils in their off task time and during their intensive interaction teaching

sessions. I'm predicting that we'll see some marked changes.

Although no firm outcomes can be assumed until after the tapes are analyzed, anecdotally, we have already had some dramatic developments, involving a number of previously isolated pupils who have responded very positively to the change in their school experience. Increases in social responding, initiating, signs of pleasure in close physical proximity or contact have been reported, as well as increases in vocalization, periods of mutual gaze and enjoyment of extended physical and 'vocal' dialogues and what staff have begun to call the development of 'trust'. We'll have harder evidence in December, when the final videos are taken: As the teams involved are now shaping their typical teaching sessions around Intensive Interaction, I shall be looking at how the features of communicative interactions have changed during 'off task' times and during their teaching sessions.

The after school training sessions have evolved into a fortnightly meeting of interested staff members. We look at videos that I've taken of staff working with pupils, picking out good practice by using a stop/start technique with the video footage. At certain parts of the interaction I'll stop the video and we'll discuss what has just happened; where we think the interaction is likely to go, or could go next; what the teacher thinks is happening, or our impression of what the pupil might be thinking is happening; what the teacher might do next or could have done better and indeed to celebrate what went really well and learn from it. The group discusses which approaches seem to be working well and what they have problems with. It takes a lot of courage for staff to open up like this, but doing so helps to forge closer links among teams and mutual support for when things don't seem to be going well. Most importantly, it gives practitioners another pair of eyes with which to look at what they do, to problem solve together and to ensure that lots of staff know what works with lots of pupils who they might meet in corridors - assuring a school community approach to individual pupils. We're also grappling with the problem of methods of recording sessions in ways that don't take too long and are appropriate for the school.

Part of my work with teachers in general here, has been to assist them to reconsider how they write teaching targets, and helping them to adjust from task or outcome focused, SMART targets, towards objectives that focus more on the **processes** involved i.e. focusing on the nature of the interaction - moving from "*Charlie will use three signs*" to, for example

If a 1:1 interaction fails, Charlie can be encouraged to attempt to repair it, or the teacher pretends not to respond to Charlie's attempted eye contact as an initiation, Charlie will try another way of initiating

At the centre of this work has been to encourage them to focus on what interests the pupil and placing this at the centre of the teaching/learning equation, and, that by adopting the interests of the learner, we can engage them in more social and definitely more fruitful learning experiences. This has proved very challenging for some practitioners, as teaching styles here are very task focused, but others have taken to it enthusiastically, especially those who work with the SLT most closely. This part of my work has wholly depended on the good will and support of the Principal of the school and the Assistant Principal for which I am extremely grateful

I have been using the Lancashire Education PIVATS package as well as the Framework for Recognizing Attainment [UK National Curriculum General Guidelines Document] as a structure. The concept that underpins the philosophy that guides the work is underlined by the same excellent document;

".. progression is not necessarily only movement up a hierarchical ladder of skills and knowledge. Lateral progression is also important". P16

I'd be happy to hear from anyone who's interested, wants to know more, or who has anything to suggest! My email is drmarkbarber@hotmail.com

Useful e-addresses: PIVATS <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/advisory/index.fhtml>

National Curriculum General Guidelines; www.nc.uk.net/ld



EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTENSIVE INTERACTION TEACHING WITH PUPILS WITH PROFOUND AND COMPLEX LEARNING DISABILITIES.

Judith Watson & Anne Fisher *British Journal of Special Education, Volume 24, No 2 (June 1997)*

Over the years several studies have summarised the changing nature of communication and highlighted the difficulties of measuring language effectiveness (Tannock & Girolammetto, 1992; Nind & Hewett, 1994; Nind, 1996). The presented article evaluates two teaching methods. This includes the use of *Intensive Interaction* for pupils with profound and complex learning difficulties, and studies the pupils' progress over a year using the two. The question under research is whether *Intensive Interaction* experiences are especially facilitatory in comparison with other school experiences.

The Participants:

The participants were pupils with very severe learning difficulties and often multiple impairments. The age of the participants was between 10 and 19 years.

Research Study 1 - Methods & Findings:

Intensive Interaction sessions were videotaped at six weekly intervals on up to six separate occasions for each staff/pupil pair. The same member of staff worked with a given pupil over the whole period. It was anticipated that *Intensive Interaction* would offer an *optimal* environment for communication and would increase awareness and engagement by both staff and pupils. The use of the Pre-verbal Communication Schedule (PVCS) enabled the researchers to assess the pupils' typical communicative behaviour during the classroom activities. The PVCS assessments and the data from the videotapes were evaluated. The findings suggested that *Intensive Interaction* confers a framework, which is predominantly facilitatory of communication.

Research Study 2 - Methods & Findings:

In this study the teacher and researcher measured the progress of her five pupils with severe learning difficulties, and often multiple impairments, over nine months. This time she used two distinct teaching methods, *Intensive Interaction* and teacher-directed group activities. During *Intensive Interaction* she gave emphasis to the process rather than the outcome, while during the teacher-directed group time the emphasis was on the learning outcome. The researcher used recording sheets and video recording in order to measure the two desired outcomes. The analysis of these methods revealed that *Intensive Interaction* was a more rewarding social experience for the pupils, and one in which they showed initiative and control.

Discussion:

The findings from both studies imply that *Intensive Interaction* not only adds to the quality of life of pupils with profound and severe learning difficulties, but also that they learn to apply new skills. The claim was therefore made that more emphasis should be placed on physical contact and handling, and on a more playful approach to the curriculum. The authors also advised that teaching staff should pay more attention to the child as a whole, and give less emphasis to specific goals and learning outcomes, and subsequently that this approach will enhance the pupils' development.

Anna Sampson (Research Assistant Psychologist)

Contact us!

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.

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