

# PMMLD LINK

**The Bulletin of News and Information for Everyone Working  
with People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties**

**Summer 2007**

**Professional  
Development and  
Training**

PMMLD Link

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The Bulletin of News and Information for Everyone Working with People with Profound  
and Multiple Learning Difficulties

## Professional Development and Training

<b>Guest Editorial:</b>	<b>Penny Lacey</b>	<b>1</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Articles</b>		
<hr/>		
<b>Changing Children—Changing Schools? Concerns for the future of teacher training in special education</b>	Baryy Carpenter	2
<hr/>		
<b>Training and PMLD</b>	Peter Imray	5
<hr/>		
<b>From Lecture Room to Classroom: The Transfer of Training to Practice in an Educational Setting</b>	Iain Chatwin	7
<hr/>		
<b>Start where the Learner is: Coaching for a better quality of life</b>	Penny Lacey	10
<hr/>		
<b>Checking Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people</b>	Valerie Wilkinson	15
<hr/>		
<b>Concept Training</b>	Janet Price	17
<hr/>		
<b>Health Aware Champion Training</b>	Theresa Shepherd	19
<hr/>		
<b>Environmental Control Technology for Pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties at Rosewood School</b>	Jenny Boyd	20
<hr/>		
<b>Rock and Role Play: combining the Arts and ICT for Students with Special Needs</b>	Cathy Herries	24
<hr/>		
<b>Improving Transition for Students moving on from a residential special school</b>	FE Interdisciplinary	26
<hr/>		
<b>Transition Learning Programme—A model for Change</b>	Anne Aitchison	29
<hr/>		
<b>Scaffolding in home-based intervention with young children with additional needs</b>	Lindsey Winterton	31
<hr/>		
<b>Future Focus: Health Matters</b>	Annie Fergusson	35
<hr/>		
<b>PMLD Network Forum Digest Forum March 07– May 07</b>		36
<hr/>		
<b>News, Publications and Resources</b>		38
<hr/>		
<b>Reviews</b>		44
<hr/>		
<b>Courses and Conferences</b>		47
<hr/>		
<b>Longer Courses (with Accreditation)</b>		50
<hr/>		

# GUEST EDITORIAL

## Summer 2007

### Professional Development and Training

This issue is called 'Professional Development and Training' and a good number of the articles relate to that theme. There are, however some articles that do not quite fit in but we were anxious to publish them now rather than hold them over for a more suitable theme.

Those under the professional development theme are quite varied and we begin with Barry Carpenter's worry about the lack of training for teachers in schools where children with S/PMLD are being educated. He draws attention to the increasing complexity of needs being presented in schools and the gradual loss of trained teachers as the workforce ages and retires. He charges the Teacher Development Agency with responsibility for ensuring pupils have well-trained teachers using effective approaches, based on research evidence.

Peter Imray from the Bridge School in Islington continues the lament for staff training in PMLD, although he does make several suggestions for what we might do to alleviate the situation.

Iain Chatwin maintains the school emphasis with an article on ways of ensuring training is followed up by developments in the classroom. He explains a six stage model developed in his school for ensuring that what is learned on courses is not lost when the demands of the classroom take over.

The last of the substantial articles on professional development is the one that I promised in the 'Future Focus' last time, on coaching. I analyse what I am trying to do when I use coaching techniques, particularly joint problem solving which I find a very helpful approach when encouraging staff to develop both their thinking and their practice.

There are a few shorter pieces on professional development matters. Valerie Wilkinson from BILD tells us about using the Quality Network to help children evaluate and plan their own services and Janet Price writes about Concept Training. I've written a very short piece about a new induction course Helen Bradley and I are writing and Theresa Shepherd tells us about Mencap's Health Champion Training.

The articles that are not specifically about professional development and training begin with two that relate to technology. The first is from Rosewood School and explores environmental control for pupils with PMLD. The second is from Sommerville Special School in New Zealand and is about combining the arts and ICT. 'Rock and Roll Play' sounds such fun!

Then there are two pieces about transition. The first is from St Margaret's School, Tadworth and explores ways of preparing children for transition from a residential special school to their adult life. The second is from Leicestershire and is about a Transition Learning Programme at Rawlins Community College.

The final article is from Lyndsey Winterton who writes about using scaffolding to help one child with complex needs improve her matching skills. She analyses the process and comments on what happened.

There is the usual mix of information and reviews at the end of the issue. We do hope you find many things to interest you in this edition of PMLD Link.



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#### Winter Issue

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## **Changing Children – Changing Schools? Concerns for the future of teacher training in special education**

Barry Carpenter

I am worried – seriously worried. The provision of teachers equipped to face the rapidly changing profile of diverse disability in our children is not only under threat, but is non-existent. Since the cessation of initial teacher training in severe/profound and multiple learning difficulties (S/PMLD), there has been a gradual erosion of provision, a string of broken promises, and an inability on the part of Government and its offices to recognise the monumental shift in the composition of the

In the late 1980s, when the decision to cease initial teacher training was made, we were promised that funding would be shifted to postgraduate training. This was never fully realised, and gradually, as experienced and committed teacher trainers have retired, courses have expired. We are now left with only two specialist S/PMLD course (at the Universities of Birmingham and Northampton) and a handful of higher education institutes where you can undertake some specialised modules in severe, profound and multiple or complex needs. This is a dire situation. More than ever, we need university departments offering in-depth, reflective courses that not only enable teachers to acquire the skills and knowledge to offer high quality education to children with S/PMLD, but also push back the boundaries of what we know and how we can teach, and evolve some of the pedagogy that as yet we do not have.

This is not a provision-specific plea. Effective teaching of children with complex special educational needs can happen in a variety of settings. What we need are 'pedagogies for inclusion' (Lewis and Norwich, 2005) that enable all children to be active participants in our school system and receive their entitlement to education. At the moment, I perceive many schools achieving this for some children based upon the leadership of those teachers who, over the years, have received specialist training. Sadly, they are predominantly in a particular age group; when they retire, who will be skilled enough to offer that leadership in curriculum, teaching and learning?

A 'one size fits all' approach to special educational needs (SEN) is naive. We are working with children in that spectrum of learning difficulty associated with unique learning profiles, often linked to the nature of their disorder (e.g. Down syndrome, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)), who require specific and specialised teaching approaches. Even where outstanding teaching of children with

S/PMLD exists, there is an ever-increasing group of children with complex needs who do not fit the current range of teaching and learning approaches, and who are challenging our most skilled teachers.

Which children am I referring to? Why are our practitioners skilled in the arts of curriculum adaptation, modification and differentiation unable to address the learning needs of these pupils? It is because there is a 'new breed' of children with severe, profound and complex learning needs. The causal base of the difficulties in learning presented by these children is different from that we have traditionally known, and, because we do not have a hotbed of dynamic training courses spread across the country, enabling teachers to think, create and evolve the 'new pedagogy' – the teaching strategies and approaches that will touch these children at their point of learning need – even our most experienced practitioners in mainstream and special schools, and SEN advisory services, find themselves challenged by the needs of these children. In truth, we are failing to offer high-quality education to these children who become disenfranchised from the school system. On a daily basis, skilled teachers know that they have not made a difference to a child through their teaching, but it is not their fault.

The repertoire of responses they need is not in their professional toolkit. Are the solutions even 'out there'? Have they been developed? Are the Government, and its agencies, even aware? Teacher training for those educating children with complex learning difficulties has been sorely neglected, and, at a time when we need a highly skilled teacher workforce able to bring about resolution of curriculum and pedagogical issues for the sake of these children with 'new' disabilities, we are left with an aging group of teachers surrounded by weak, ineffectual external systems which repeatedly fail to develop appropriate teaching approaches for this complex and diverse group of

learners. And who pays the price? The children!

Who are these children, and what are their numbers? McClusky and McNamara (2005) state that the latest Government figures indicate that there are as many as 700,000 disabled children in Great Britain, and that 'there are more than 100,000 severely disabled children in the UK and their numbers are known to be rising as a result of medical advances' (p. 151). This latter statement directly relates to children whose disabilities, often profound and multiple, are due to prematurity of birth. The EPICure UK study (Marlow et al., 2005) reports that 80% of children born at less than 26 weeks' gestation now survive. A comparable New Zealand study (Woodward et al., 2004) suggests a 90% survival rate for pre-term infants weighing less than 1,500 grams at birth, with a 63% disability factor.

The need for intensive, very early intervention with these children is crucial (Carpenter and Egerton, 2005), but, again, do we actually have the intervention strategies that will truly maximise the learning of these vulnerable infants and minimise the impact of their traumatic birth and subsequent fragile health status. Champion (2005) details the brain development of these very-low-birth-weight, pre-term infants and the neurological compromise they face. Where these children have severe and complex disabilities (and the EPICure study (Marlow et al., 2005) suggests this is so far nearly 50% of surviving infants), their patterns of learning may be different to those we have previously known in children with S/PMLD. For example, the sensory approaches many teachers have found effective for delivering a relevant curriculum may not engage children whose S/PMLD emanate from pre-term birth. Sensory pathways may not only be damaged, but also incomplete and compromised (Champion, 2005).

Another group of children causing major concerns are those with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). International estimates suggest that the prevalence could be as many as 1:300 children, and the disabling effects range across the learning difficulty spectrum from mild to profound ([www.fasaware.co.uk](http://www.fasaware.co.uk)). Their emotional well-being is particularly fragile, leading to high rates of suicide in later life. (Again, the need for teachers to have a deeper understanding of mental health needs, and how to embed emotional well-being into their everyday teaching, is accentuated by this group of children and others; e.g. those with ASD).

Whilst fledgling organisations such as the National Organisation for Foetal Alcohol Syndrome UK ([nofas-uk@midlantic.co.uk](mailto:nofas-uk@midlantic.co.uk)) produce some excellent materials explaining the condition and

warning of the perils of alcohol consumption during pregnancy, the need for a pedagogy specifically designed to embrace these children is vital. Take, for example, the fact that in children with FASD the parietal lobe can be missing in the brain (Goswami, 2004). This area controls numeracy and mathematical computation. However skilled a teacher may be in differentiating the Mathematics curriculum, if that part of the brain is absent just how do we teach Mathematics to the child with FASD?

With recent research (e.g. Carr Brown and Halle, 2005) suggesting that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in some children may result from their mothers drinking alcohol during pregnancy, the information that can be gained from neuroscience (Goswami, 2004) could significantly influence how we develop future pedagogy, which in turn could raise the attainment of these vulnerable children as our teaching becomes better matched to their learning.

We need to remind ourselves that parents, as the child's first educator, will be trail blazing approaches which support and engage their child. This is never more pronounced than in the area of chromosomal abnormality. Every day, children are born in this country with genetic abnormalities that are rare. Even if there is a diagnosis, they could be one of only a handful of children in this country, maybe even worldwide. One in every 200 babies is born with a rare chromosome disorder ([www.rarechromo.org](http://www.rarechromo.org)). Families search for information, often at great personal expense (Harrison, Henderson and Leonard, 2007), and become the 'expert' on their children's rare conditions. The need for teachers to be well-trained in family-centred approaches in order to establish a meaningful dialogue, and work closely and collaboratively, with parents in evolving pertinent approaches to education is paramount (Jones, 2007). Fragile X syndrome is now the most commonly inherited genetic cause of learning disability in the UK, and here, again, there are teaching approaches which are not widely communicated or understood by the teaching profession (Saunders, 2001). Parents and professionals will need access to comprehensible information about genetics in general, and specific disorders in particular, if we are to improve the life chances of this group of children with chromosomal disorders.

Autism also gives rise to severe, profound and complex learning difficulties in some children. The Medical Research Council estimate prevalence in the UK at 1 in 166 children. More recently, Professor Gillian Baird and her colleagues have calculated that children with some form of ASD

constitute 1% of the UK's child population (a ratio of 1 in 86 children; (Baird et al., 2006). Many of these children present with severe and profound learning difficulties. Often adolescence compounds these difficulties as mental health needs emerge – young people with learning disabilities are six times more likely to have a mental health problem than other children in the UK (Emerson and Hatton, 2007).

Whilst we know much about educating children with ASD (e.g. that they are predominantly visual learners), there are lessons emerging from neuroscience (Carpenter, 2007; Ramachandran and Lindsay, 2006) that demand detailed consideration. The challenge for teachers is how to translate this information into classroom practices.

The General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) has recommended that staff throughout the education system have the opportunities to access and develop specialist expertise to meet the specific special needs of children and young people as and when they arrive ([www.gtce.org.uk](http://www.gtce.org.uk)). The examples of the children cited above demand that we remodel our pedagogy and, furthermore, that we generate teaching strategies which will embrace these children as learners. The debate around personalised learning, fuelled by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT; [www.specialistschools.org.uk](http://www.specialistschools.org.uk)), is surely an ideal opportunity to implement this for all children.

It is incumbent upon the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), with the DfES, to create pathways for teachers to learn about these children, to examine their learning patterns (for as yet we do not truly understand them), to evolve the curriculum response, and then the teaching strategies and approaches through which we will engage these children. There is a societal imperative – these are our children. We cannot walk away. Teaching is an evidence-based profession (Carpenter and Egerton, 2007). There needs to be a dynamic, practitioner-led research culture, investigating, enquiring, discovering how we can teach children who are new to our schools, but deserve to be educated with care and quality.

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## Training and PMLD

Peter Imray

There is an article in the March 2007 issue of the British Journal of Special Education (BJSE) entitled *The role of special schools for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties: is segregation always best?* by Ben Simmons and Phil Bayliss of Exeter University. In the article, the authors look to critically evaluate the premise that special schools are *'the most appropriate educational setting'* by highlighting

*'how the learning environment of one highly regarded special school for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) in the south west of England provided an inappropriate learning environment for children with PMLD as a result of lack of staff knowledge and training.'* pp19

Whilst the tenet of the paper seems to suggest that children with PMLD could more usefully be educated alongside their mainstream peers – an interesting claim, but not one that I'm going to concern myself with here as this would be the subject of an entirely different article; the authors' conclusions that the school's teaching of their PMLD charges was poor because of the paucity of available training opportunities, is one which must strike a chord with everyone involved with PMLD teaching - whether as teachers or teaching assistants (TAs) in 2007. Why is this so?

There is no doubt in my mind that teaching those with PMLD is the most difficult and probably the most intellectually challenging teaching I have ever done – you really do have to work incredibly hard to find 'ways into' some PMLD learners. And given these difficulties it is perplexing, to say the least, that successive governments have refused to reinstate the option of specific special needs training at student teacher level, preferring instead to hide behind the frankly preposterous fallacy that the National Curriculum fits all. It is not possible to simply 'dumb down' from mainstream and expect teaching to be effective, because those with PMLD learn in a totally different way from their mainstream counterparts. The refusal to take this point seriously has inevitably led directly to a running down and closure of SEN departments at universities and a consequent diminution in detailed research on how people with PMLD (and SLD for that matter) learn.

The wholesale shipping in of mainstream teaching initiatives (such as the national numeracy and literacy strategies) has inevitably led to teaching PMLD 'developmentally' using the mainstream model. Thus it was possible for Simmons and Bayliss (2007) to observe a numeracy lesson which was exploring numbers between 1 and 9. For the one child with PMLD (in an SLD class), the TA would

*'find the number for the child, put the (number) in the child's hand and help the child raise the (number) to show the teacher'* pp21

as though this constituted success! It might be

possible to put this down to one isolated and very rare example of a single teacher of PMLD having no clear understanding of profound learning difficulties, but it seems more likely that this is not such a rare occurrence. Where after all, do those teachers who are new to SEN obtain their training? Certainly not at initial teacher training level. Richard Aird (2001) points out that the lack of specialist training has led to a *'diminishing standard of knowledge'* (pp93) a fact supported by Jill Porter (2001) who stated that even six years ago, there were insufficient numbers of teachers getting trained in learning difficulties.

*'Courses have closed (she wrote) full-time training has largely disappeared, and there has been a diversification of training providers. These trends seem largely set to continue.'* pp 306

And indeed they have! Moreover, the problem does not merely stay with teachers, since the ever growing role of the TA absolutely demands that they be effectively trained directly in PMLD and SLD styles of learning. Many schools now use Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) to cover teaching on a regular basis on the very sound premise that they know considerably more about the children than a supply teacher can hope to, and will therefore make for greater consistency and less disruption when a teacher is absent. TAs of all grades take on considerably more responsibility for the education of the child than they did ten years ago, and though they rarely get paid anywhere near the rate that they should, this is (again) the subject of another article!

But what if anything, can we do about the lack of

training?

1. **Lobby your MP.** I know that this sounds pathetic, but the normal processes of democracy can be made to work if enough people take up the challenge. The government really **MUST** address the facts that (i) the amount of money given to special schools for training is not sufficient to ensure adequate training for all of their staff (ii) universities need to be funded to supply courses for re-training mainstream teachers interested in SEN as well as the opportunity to specialise in SEN within the normal B.Ed. or Cert. Ed. (iii) TAs often have a career structure within their individual schools, but disgracefully, no central government funding is allocated to pay for it! Everyone involved in special education knows that the whole system would fold tomorrow without the TAs. (iv) the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) do not encourage graduates wishing to enter teaching to specialise in SEN. They have to do their training in mainstream – even if (as is often the case) they've been working as a TA in a special school and have absolutely no intention of ever teaching mainstream! The implication – that mainstream teaching is the very pinnacle of the teaching profession is ludicrous, arrogant and downright false. (v) if you're wondering what you have to do to lobby your MP, just send him or her this article.

2. **Persuade your management to take training their staff seriously!**

3. **Send your teachers and TAs on basic courses.** Unfortunately, there aren't too many good providers. The Bridge School (interest declared!!) have been running introductory courses in PMLD; ASD; and Challenging Behaviour for the last 10 years, but don't take my word for it, contact any of the central London SLD schools for an honest and unbiased appraisal. Whole school INSETs are also available for those schools too distant from London – email [training@thebridge.islington.sch.uk](mailto:training@thebridge.islington.sch.uk) Other good providers known to me are STRIDE - contactable through [www.stridetraining.co.uk](http://www.stridetraining.co.uk); Concept Training at [www.concept-training.co.uk](http://www.concept-training.co.uk) ; and there are occasionally interesting courses related to PMLD at Lighthouse Training at [www.lighthouse.tv/](http://www.lighthouse.tv/) You might also contact Flo Longhorn for all things sensory, at [www.cerl.net](http://www.cerl.net) ; Dave Hewett - especially for his work with Melanie Nind on Intensive Interaction, at [www.davehewett.com](http://www.davehewett.com) ; Richard Hirstwood for anything to do with sensory rooms at [www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk](http://www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk)

4. **Look up universities who provide in-depth post graduate teacher training.** Again, these are few and far between, the best probably being Birmingham, who have an exceptional special needs department at [www.education.bham.ac.uk](http://www.education.bham.ac.uk)

Unfortunately, funding restrictions mean that no full-time course are available any more, but distance learning for teachers is still a reasonable option.

5. **Send new teachers and experienced TAs on generic accredited 'introductory' courses.** These usually take a term or two and should be sufficiently in-depth to give a really good academic and practical grounding. Again, The Bridge runs these (as 60 taught hour courses spread over two terms) on PMLD/SLD; ASD; and Challenging Behaviour– email [training@thebridge.islington.sch.uk](mailto:training@thebridge.islington.sch.uk) for details, but the only other trainers I know of are Northampton University, to be found at [www.northampton.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/detail](http://www.northampton.ac.uk/courses/undergraduate/detail) and Canterbury Christ Church University at [www.canterbury.ac.uk/courses/](http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/courses/)

Essentially however, training needs to be part of the basic package for employing all teachers and TAs who work with those with profound learning difficulties. This is expensive and funds must be found from somewhere. We may look to central government to provide the funding, but we are competing with many such demands upon the public purse and there is no guarantee that any monies will be forthcoming. Whilst this shouldn't stop us trying to secure central government funding, I don't much see the point of wringing our hands and saying nothing can be done, so maybe we need to think outside of the box. Schools, parents, governors etc. could therefore do worse than send off a standard 'begging' letter to all of the companies in their area – a simple trawl of the local telephone directory will provide the names and addresses – in order to seek training funding. Heaven knows, the cause is worthy; success can easily be measured by the number people trained; and some companies may well want to be associated with positively helping the most disadvantaged of our community.

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## From Lecture Room to Classroom: The Transfer of Training to Practice in an Educational Setting.

Iain Chatwin

This article contains and exploration of the strategies employed within a residential special school to monitor and support the impact of training on care and education practices. Sunfield is a charity providing education and social care for children between the ages of 6 and 19 who have severe and complex learning needs. Through a 24-hour curriculum learning opportunities are offered across a range of 'classroom' environments from school to community, and 'teaching' is undertaken by a team of professionals including teachers, therapists and social care workers.

Training has often been the 'Cinderella' department in many organisations. Yet there is evidence that training for staff new to organisations, and continuing professional development for existing staff can yield authentic cost/benefit results, whatever the field of practice (Pfeffer, 1994; LaLonde 1995). Within our area of work results should mean better outcomes for the end-users of our service, those we care for and educate.

There is a genuine need for organisations to keep their staff up to date with practice issues and new models of working, particularly within the field of learning disability and early intervention services. The changing nature of disability means that we need to be aware of the specific needs of previously untargeted groups who are coming to us. For example Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is now the biggest cause of non-genetic learning disability in the western world (FAS Aware UK, 2007), but how much do we know about the specific support needs of children with FAS?

A common dialogue heard in social care begins with '*why should we train staff if they are then likely to use their training and qualifications to obtain posts in other organisations?*' While we would all support the 'greater good', no organisation can economically afford to be a training provider without some return on their investment. However, a transient workforce should not be an excuse for limiting training opportunities for staff. We need to consider the implications within our organisations of not training staff who then remain. A lack of regard for, and investment in, training is a common feature of failing schools. Attending training courses remains the main vehicle for professional development in schools, and the inclusion of non-teaching staff is indicative of a proactive training culture (OFSTED, 2002).

Little & Houston (2003) acknowledge that creating and sustaining change in a classroom or care setting is challenging, and it is not typical for

orthodox training sessions alone to effect change in staff performance to a level that benefits their end-users (Baker, 1998). Supporting practitioners to be able to transfer new skills and knowledge into their practice setting relies on addressing a range of factors including motivation to learn, appropriate matching of teaching and individual learning styles, and the correlation of training conditions to the practice setting. The critical factor in professional development is that learning leads to improvements in practice (McKenzie *et al*, 2000), though research suggests that this has been infrequently evidenced (Showers, 1990).

At Sunfield we developed a model for evaluating the impact of training on practice which led to the development of trainer involvement in post-lecture room learning (Chatwin & Rattley, 2007). The model focused on a training programme for education and care staff working with children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders, specifically the Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped CHildren (TEACCH) approach (Mesibov, Shea & Schopler, 2005). However this model will generalise to many training programmes.

Evaluation of training is common, though it tends to focus on the quality of the training event and what participants have learned. Very little evaluation can answer the question 'how has the learning been used?' since this happens outside of the training time-frame, possibly only becoming evident months later. To answer this question, the onus for evaluation tends to be shifted from the trainer to the practice-based manager, probably through a supervision and appraisal process which includes self-evaluation by the trainee.

However this raises the issue of the manager's knowledge of the training content and intended outcomes. How does the manager know of variation between practice and the training model? While intentional variation to increase

appropriateness to particular settings may be valid the effectiveness of training will be affected by how accurately it is interpreted, and unwitting variation caused by 'therapist drift' (Jordan & Powell, 1996) needs to be avoided.

In this respect observational assessment by trainers has clear benefits for in-house training programmes. At Sunfield we have developed the TEACCH trainer role to include acting as post-training 'performance consultants' (Gaines-Robinson & Robinson, 1995), which through trainer observations and discussion supports proper implementation. These considerations mean that evaluation of training is not only end-user focused, but also employs multiple levels to support continuous improvement of practice and training. This allows professional development based on broad training programmes to be individualised through the common, shared, specific and sub-specific competencies model (NHS, 2004).

Benefits for trainers of working to a consultancy model include:

- Clearer understanding of implementation issues.
- Ability to provide individualised and targeted responses.
- Feedback for training day content and delivery style.
- Opportunity to further articulate principles.
- Working from Kirkpatrick's (1998) four stages of evaluation, originally proposed over forty years ago, and acknowledging criticism of this model by Phillips (1994) and Gaines-Robinson and Robinson (1995), we have created a model for in-house organisational training evaluation (figure 1).

**Stage 1: Point of entry.** Formal or informal measures of existing knowledge may be obtained. Can inform content and delivery style of training event.

**Stage 2: During training event.** Formal or informal measures of acquisition of knowledge and skills, and effectiveness of training methods. Gives feedback to allow modification of content and delivery style of training process if required.

**Stage 3: End of event.** Formal or informal measures of the value of training to trainees. Gains in knowledge or skills. Gives feedback to allow modification of content and delivery style for future training events, and inform practice support needs.

**Stage 4: Return to practice.** Formal or informal measures of relevance/transferability of knowledge and skills to practice.

**Stage 5: Continuing practice.** Formal or informal measures of individual and collaborative implementation of knowledge and skills to practice. End-user benefits identified.

**Stage 6: Supervision and appraisal.** Formal review of training effectiveness and application of knowledge and skills to practice. Identification of benefits for organisation.

(From Chatwin & Rattley, 2007: 183)

At stage 3 of the above process we are familiar with the notion of end-of-course evaluation forms. While these traditionally provide valuable feedback on the training event, they can also serve a role in encouraging participants to think more deeply about the application to practice. Our evaluation form includes a question on how the training will be followed-up.

Evaluation at points 5 and 6 is most likely to highlight any short-comings of the training programme in terms of preparation for practice. Gaining feedback at this point can be more problematic for trainers who are not based within the organisation. One strategy we have trialled in our Induction and Keyworker training is to develop workbooks that are completed in the workplace and require evidence of an application of training to practice. These workbooks are then reviewed by the trainer.

The cycle shown in figure 1 informs future presentations of an individual training event. However, it also forms part of the individual's professional development process, with new training experiences building on previous knowledge, skills, work practice and reflection. In-house trainers have a role, both inside and outside of the training room, in fostering a culture that is supportive of professional development. 'Work environment factors' significantly impact upon the application of training in human services (Clarke 2002: 152) and so positive attitudes toward

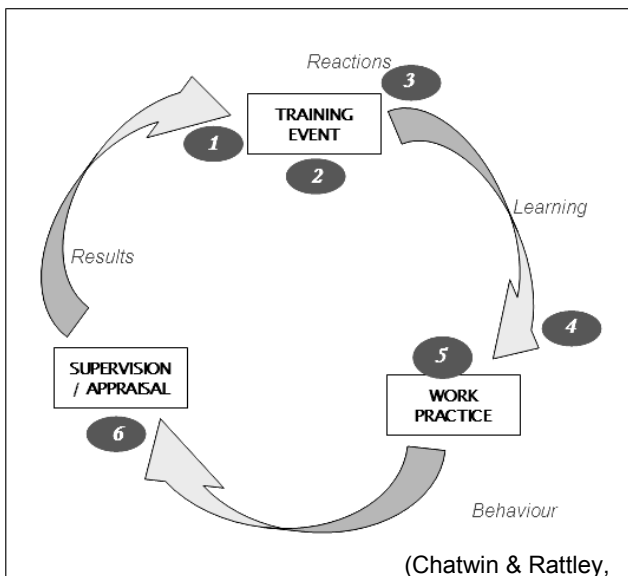


Figure 1. Six points of training evaluation

new practices and individual professional development are important (Smidt *et al*, 2002).

Training is not an isolated event; its purpose is to contribute to the development of day-to-day practice. Equally where trainers can move from being discrete interventionists to consultants, the scope for improved, more appropriate training can be greatly increased. While trainers from outside of an organisation may not be able to provide this service, some form of post-training feedback mechanism should be developed that can both influence future training and support individual professional development plans.

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## Start Where The Learner Is: Coaching For A Better Quality Of Life

Penny Lacey

Coaching is big business. Celebrities have 'life coaches', sports clubs have coaches and organisations hire coaches to improve their productivity, grow leaders, give career advice, encourage work-life balance and support staff retention. In this article I will explore coaching in learning environments where children and adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities can be found. I will start by briefly discussing some of the ideas that others have written about and then conclude by examining what I do as a coach with those who work with people with PMLD.

So what is coaching? The core work of a coach is to bring about change in individuals but also change in organisations from sports teams and businesses to schools, colleges and learning disability services. Helping people and organisations to plan where they want to be and the path to get there is central. Using and redirecting the resources they already have is essential as is introducing new and different ideas. Changing attitude is usually the vital centrepiece as it provides the motivation to drive the change in practice.

According to Lehane (2005), superior performance is predictable when people:

- know what is expected of them;
- know how they are doing;
- know what they need to improve;
- have a view of the future that they can paint themselves into;
- trust the leadership;
- are fairly rewarded for what they do.

As an advocate of coaching in the workplace, Lehane adds that these six things cannot be achieved without a seventh:

- operate within a climate of coaching.

Putting those 'top tips' into a context with children and adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) is not difficult and in this article I shall emphasise the first four (in the light of the seventh), concentrating on how to encourage development in the individuals, particularly staff, who are supporting, teaching and caring for people with PMLD. The wider view of the organisation will only be considered at the end of the article.

There is a lack of agreement about what makes a good coach, although no-one denies that one-to-

one personal development is a good thing. 'Cowboy coaches' giving false hope and claims to success, have given the activity a bad name which is prompting the development of a more organised industry, showing real benefits to organisations (Jarvis, Lane and Fillery-Travis, 2006). One of the benefits is a clearer understanding of what coaches need to do to be successful in helping individuals in organisations to move forward.

Many coaching approaches seem to be passive in that coaches listen to and work with people's current perceptions (Goodge, 2005), which fits in well with one of my personal principles with all learners: 'start where the learner is and not where you think s/he should be.' However, the other part of my principle has these words 'but you can't leave her/ him there.' It is so important to help people you are coaching to move on to new learning, new understanding, new skills and new actions.

In education a variant called 'peer coaching' has been a feature since the 1980s (Showers and Joyce, 1996) in an effort to improve the results of staff training which had been very poor even for people who had volunteered for courses. Showers and Joyce (1996) found that organising teachers into peer coaching teams, supported by training and general school improvement was successful in moving practice forwards. At the centre of peer coaching is that teachers learn from one another by planning, teaching, problem solving and evaluating together. One interesting point made by Showers and Joyce is about discouraging peer verbal feedback following peer observation. The reason for this is that the conversation can become too much about supervision and less about peers improving together. I'll come back to this thought later when I analyse what I do when coaching in learning environments.

Beginning-teacher mentoring also uses coaching as part of its methodology and much has been written about that recently. Mentoring has been defined as

a role for an experienced person to help a less experienced person find and develop their talents and skills (Podsen and Denmark, 2006) to which Pitton (2006 p1) adds, 'a mentor is a guide, a supporter, a friend, an advocate and a role model'. It seems that the relationship between the mentor and mentee is crucial and, of course, that takes time to develop. The quality of learning conversations are important and mentors do not necessarily develop these just because they are good teachers of children. It certainly seems useful to point out that there are skills to be learned if mentoring and coaching are to be effective.

Simkins et al (2006) suggests that some of the skills needed for in- school leadership coaching are: forging a partnership, inspiring commitment, growing skills, promoting persistence, and shaping the environment. These are interesting skills that bear a little more exploration. In fact I intend to use those headings to analyse what I do when providing training and coaching in learning disability organisations

### **Forging a Partnership**

Most of my partnerships with schools, colleges and adult centres are formed quickly and are over quickly. Often I am asked to lead a single training day in an organization and I need to be very efficient in developing a relationship with as many people as possible. The initial relationship is usually with someone in a management position who is very clear about the remit for the training but during the day I need to build up trust with as many frontline staff as I can if I am going to give people sufficient confidence to be able to develop what they do on a day-to-day basis with children/ adults with PMLD. I want to confirm their good practice and influence them to change their not-so-good practice. I need to get them to make explicit what they do and reflect on it so they can decide what to maintain and what to change.

The skill that I have tried to develop over the years to help forge partnerships in training session I have called 'teaching through comment' (Lacey, 1996). Where I can, I ask participants about their own practice so I can use it as a basis for developing the next step in their thinking. Teaching through comment can be difficult to prepare as I don't know what is going to be said in advance. However there is huge potential for the teaching to be 'where the learners are' if I ask them to be explicit about their practice and help them to see what might be possible. I make suggestions, telling them about other workplaces I have visited and they can work out what they might want for their own organization.

Recently I have begun to work with the staff in an organization for more than just a one day for

training and this is where the most individually concentrated coaching occurs. I still have to work fast in forging a partnership and I usually do that by talking about how we can work together on 'joint problem solving'. It can be hard ensuring them that I am not in their learning environment to inspect them and I am not going to tell them whether their practice is good or not so good, mainly because I am not the expert in their workplaces: they are. Being critical is not the way to forge a partnership and is rarely successful in changing what is happening. As on the training day, I get them to tell me about what they do and why; what works well and why; what they find does not work well and why. I ask questions which are designed to get them thinking laterally but I try never to imply criticism of what they are doing.

### **Inspiring Commitment**

I have already mentioned the importance of building a relationship or forging a partnership and coaches who can do that fast have an advantage. Inspiring commitment can be of any size, from a whole organization focus through to a commitment to a particular intervention with a particular person with PMLD. What is most important is the ability of the coach to get that commitment going. Often that relies on the enthusiasm of the coach and how well s/he gets this across. Conveying excitement about the work with an individual with PMLD is sometimes the key.

One approach that can help to build up commitment in staff is carrying out a strengths and needs analysis of a particular person with PMLD. When I am asked to work with the whole staff together then I use one of two pieces of video to demonstrate how to do a 'strengths-needs' analysis. William is a young man at the end of his schooling and Dee is only 5 years old and at the beginning of hers. Most often I chose William to analyse as it is harder to be positive and enthusiastic about people who are past the young and cute stage.

The video of William is comparatively easy to analyse in terms of what he can do, his cognitive skills and his ability to communicate. Before we look at the video, we go through aspects of cognitive and communication development so it is possible to place him somewhere in Piaget's Sensorimotor stage of Development. He clearly shows, for example, that he is learning how to anticipate what is going to happen next in a familiar activity and how to convey intentionally his desire for an activity to be repeated. He cannot yet ask for 'more' but he has some of the requisite skills, such as smiling when he likes an activity and pushing away something he does not like. He also shows a very clear enjoyment of activities that include vibrations. We can then discuss how we use these

strengths to decide on his learning needs. For example, William needs a person to play with him and provide 'burst-pause' activities so he can learn a bit more about anticipation and intentional communication. 'Burst-pause' activities depend on the staff member using little games in a burst of activity after which s/he waits for the person with PMLD to react. To begin with the pause is probably not very long or the person with PMLD will have forgotten what was happening and will not be able to anticipate what will happen next. In the case of William, he needs a slightly longer wait because he has already understood anticipation in some situations. For example, he can smile when a vibrating snake is handed to him, before the vibrations are turned on. However, the time between the vibrations being turned on and off must be quite short or he loses interest in the toy and pushes it away.

Hopefully you can see, from the example of William, the potential of a simple strengths and needs analysis for building up a positive picture of people with PMLD, which in turn can foster commitment from staff. A good example of this being achieved in one school lends some support to my claim. I was asked to help staff move forward with Mark who seemed to be a very unhappy person. Mark's mother was keen to be involved in the process and I was able to work with both his teacher and her. After sitting with Mum and chatting whilst we observed Mark in a teaching session, we all repaired to a quiet place to do a 'strengths-needs' analysis. We compiled the two lists and worked together on joint problem solving, exchanging ideas freely and quickly. I asked many questions and together we moved towards possible ways forward. Both Mark's mother and his teacher were enthused by the exercise and agreed that they now saw him in a different, more positive light. They realized that his behaviour was communicating legitimate unhappiness and that they had some power to change what was happening to him to increase his happiness. It was a very exciting moment for all of us.

### **Growing Skills**

The 'strengths-needs' analysis is not only about getting commitment from the people around the individual with PMLD but it is also about building up skills to meet needs more effectively. One of the most important skills for staff and carers are those that enable the identification of needs. Observation skills are vital and I try to help people to hone those they already undoubtedly have by going back over particular incidents several times asking questions and drawing attention to actions and reactions. For example, in one organisation I spent a little while observing and playing with Tom and then led a discussion with staff based on what I'd seen and

heard put together with their much longer experience of Tom, in a joint problem solving scenario. One of the things we talked about was Tom's tendency to get rough and even violent when he gets overexcited. Between us we used what we had observed over time to help us decide to work on 'gentle' with him. It would be a long term aim for him to be able to produce 'gentle' behaviour even when becoming overexcited, so he can learn to manage his own behaviour. In the meantime we agreed that staff would work very hard to avoid situations that caused over stimulation and to remove the activity or Tom before the violence began.

The use of questioning in joint problem solving is vital. I need to ask questions and make suggestions to see what the staff and carers think makes sense. One very good example of this was with Chris who has recently changed his behaviour. He has stopped using his few words and was turning away from every activity offered to him. There were fewer and fewer things he liked to do and staff were clearly feeling they were failing with him. Through questioning from me we established that the change happened following the departure of his sister from home to another part of the country. He now sees his sister rarely. After that we began to talk about depression and realized how what we were seeing fitted into Chris being depressed. Staff agreed that they would pursue that possibility and consult with health professionals. In the meantime we agreed they would try to encourage him to do the few activities he still liked and to take exercise, which he still enjoyed. We also thought that teaching him very simple relaxation techniques would help as well, as might talking about his sister and sending her letters containing photos of Chris, hoping to get back photos of her.

There is no set pattern to the questioning I use. I treat every situation as unique and 'go with the flow'. Behind the questioning though are more than 30 years of experience of PMLD, knowledge of some of the available research, alongside the various experiences one has over nearly 60 years of living. It truly can be coaching of the less experienced by the more experienced person. It can also be a 'new pair of eyes' from someone who has no emotional investment in the situation. I can help staff and carers look afresh and perhaps ask old questions yet again.

### **Promoting Persistence**

One of the most difficult things to achieve with any kind of professional development activity is persistence. It is relatively easy to get enthusiasm going during the activity itself but giving people the tools to maintain it is much, much harder. I

encourage follow up from the one day training with a written action planner which I can only hope that folk will fill in. There is no way I can insist but I hope by providing the framework for doing a strengths and needs analysis that participants will feel supported to complete back in the workplace. I have not formally evaluated this particular tool but I have used this model before in a research-based study where the results were very positive (Lacey 2001)

When I use coaching and joint problem solving around individuals with PMLD, I try to involve managers in the whole process. Ideally, I plan the coaching with a senior manager and report back to her/ him afterwards. Where possible I talk through the next stage of the development and coach the manager to support the staff. I also write a brief report on the results of the joint problem solving citing each child or adults who was at the centre of the conversations.

How ever enthusiastic staff are following a training day or coaching experience, it is vital to follow it up and this always falls to the senior managers in the organization. There is no way I can follow up every session even if there was funding to keep buying me (or someone else) in. At some point individuals in the organization need to take ownership and generate their own enthusiasm and that often involves managers providing time for staff to talk and work together.

The use of videoing can be very helpful at all stages of the process. Videoing interactions between staff and children/ adults can be used for joint problem solving and regular videoing can be helpful in encouraging persistence after the event. Staff can form small groups for mutual coaching and joint problem solving but it will be much more likely to happen if senior managers not only recognize its importance but provide time and a place and show genuine interest in the process.

### **Shaping the Environment**

Forming groups for peer coaching and mutual joint problem solving is one way in which the environment can be shaped better to meet the needs of the disabled people within it. Quite often the results of my coaching include ideas for changing the way teaching and learning is organized. For example, if Intensive Interaction (Nind and Hewett, 200?) is to be developed for individuals in different groups in the organisation, it may be necessary to consider how to organize staff to enable that to happen. Often flexibility in staffing can only be achieved if all staff are involved. Fiddling with rotas within a single group may not be sufficient to enable the release of a significant amount of individual attention.

In one school we talked at length about the way in which pupils with PMLD were organized and following my departure, various ideas were tried out. More individual time for the children with PMLD has been created and that has enabled staff to be able to 'seize the moment' when the children are alert and ready to learn. It has also allowed them to assess exactly what each child understands so they can 'start where the child is and not where they think s/he should be'. Once they get the teaching in the right place, there is much more likelihood of learning occurring.

That particular school is a very good example of how senior managers have developed the staff development gains from coaching and joint problem solving and not only supported persistence but also helped to reshape the environment to improve teaching and learning throughout the school.

### **Conclusions**

Research on change in organizations is full of warning against over optimism and expecting enthusiasm from everyone. Georgiades and Philimore (1975 cited in Easen, 1985) warn against the 'hero-innovator', who armed with new knowledge and understanding wants to take the organization by storm. They advocate a much more stealthy approach because 'organisations such as hospitals and schools eat hero innovators for breakfast'. How true that is and one of the most important pieces of advice I give to staff who have been on one of my training courses or have been part of my coaching and joint problem solving days, is 'find a colleague who is open to the same ideas as you and work with him/ her'. It is no good trying to change everyone. Go for the easiest person and together you might be able to influence someone else. Keep gathering people like a snowball and expect it to take a long time.

Coaching and joint problem solving can provide the centre of the snowball as the organization grows together. They are empowering activities that anyone can take on and use over and over again. If you want to try, just remember it is meant to be a supportive activity and criticism is not part of it. Coaches are there to build up confidence and skills, not destroy them. Ask questions that help your colleague to reflect on what is happening and between you come up with ideas for how to move forwards. It is something we can all do together.

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**SEVERE AND PROFOUND  
LEARNING DIFFICULTIES  
INDUCTION COURSE**

The University of Birmingham is developing an induction course for staff new to working with children or adults with severe and profound learning difficulties/ disabilities. There will be two versions of the course: one for those working with children and the other for those working with adults.

Both courses have been written to lead into the University of Birmingham course 'Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (Severe, Profound and Complex)' which is available at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. See information about courses at the end of this issue.

The course is designed to be studied for one and a half hours per week over two terms (30 hours). Each week participants will do 3 things:

1. read and look things up (30 mins)
2. discuss issues with a colleague(s) and / or a mentor (30 mins)
3. collect information in the workplace (30 mins)

The written materials are likely to cover the following:

- Assessment and identifying needs
- Planning to meet needs
- Interventions and meeting needs
- Communication
- Behaviour
- Working together

The materials should be ready to be trialled in the Autumn and available for purchase (probably for £100) from January 2008. They will only be available in electronic form but can be downloaded as many times as required.

For further details contact:

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and

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## Checking Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people

### Using the Quality Network to involve children and young people in evaluating and planning the services they use

Valerie Wilkinson

The Quality Network looks at outcomes for people with a learning disability and has been used very successfully for a number of years in person-centred reviews of adult services. Now a pilot project has shown that the Quality Network could support children's services to include children and young people in evaluating and planning services. The process is flexible enough to use in a range of different settings, across age ranges and to include input from people with no formal means of communication.

The Quality Network review process was developed by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (Bild) and the National Development Team (NDT). Both are national organisations committed to improving the quality of life for people with a learning disability. Taking part in a review can offer excellent opportunities for personal development for staff, family carers or people with a learning disability. It can also highlight training needs for the organisation and challenge staff to reflect on their values and attitudes.

In a Quality Network review, a team of between 6 and 12 stakeholders visits a sample of people who use the service. Each visits one person at least four times, feeds back on what they have found out about the person's life and decide whether each of the outcomes is happening for them. This information is used to agree priorities for change and develop an action plan for the whole service. The review cycle takes up to a year. Team members use a 'My Life' workbook to record what they have seen and heard and how this relates to outcomes for the child or young person they are visiting. For example, team members noted that people they visited responded more positively to some of their classmates than to others but had few opportunities to build on this during the day or in their leisure time. Discussions with parents and staff confirmed that identifying and supporting possible friendships was very difficult and this became a priority for the school's action plan. This emphasis on outcomes and observation, rather than interviews, means that a picture of the life of any child can be built up by seeing them in different places and at different times.

We felt that the Quality Network outcomes were echoed in the Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' and discussions with a number of children's services convinced us that the process could

support reviews and development of services for children and young people. We approached a number of children's services to see if they would be interested in piloting the process and finally decided to work with three schools; Sunfield Special School in Stourbridge, Shepherd Community Day School; Nottingham and the Hillside Day School in Preston. Pilot reviews started in September 2006, Action Plans and Public Statements were produced in February 2007 and plans were reviewed in May 2007.

Each school chose a member of staff who would be trained and mentored by an experienced Bild Quality Coach. This mentoring involved co-facilitating a review in one of the other schools. The plan was to build capacity so that the three schools could support each other in future reviews. The co-coaches would also bring their knowledge and experience of services for children and young people to this role and support Bild Quality Coaches to understand the different issues. Bild co-ordinated the pilots and provided administration and other support.

The pilot showed that Quality Network Outcomes link with Every Child Matters and that:

- Reviews can produce evidence for CSCI and other inspectors that the 'pupil voice' has been listened to and used to shape development plans
- The process can challenge schools to find ways of including people with complex needs and raise expectations for these pupils
- Provided evidence for the SEF
- Was an opportunity to train and mentor coaches from the schools to facilitate peer reviews in the future

Although some changes need to be made to materials, the general feeling was that the outcomes and process worked well in schools and could transfer easily to other services such as respite or foster caring. Another suggestion was that commissioner-led reviews could look at all children's services in a particular region or local authority.

All the pilot reviews focussed on children and young people with complex needs and one of the learning points for teams was the challenge of agreeing what the outcomes meant in this context. For example, there were long debates around choice; do parents control all the important decisions for children? How does this question apply to young people with complex needs? Should we be looking at the support the child has to develop choice-making skills or to be involved as much as possible in choices affecting their lives as they move towards transition?

A Quality Network review often shows organisations that the apparently simple things can make a difference to the quality of a person's life. In the pilot, one team member fed back that the young person she visited had never been able to invite friends to a birthday party. There were all sorts of issues around transport, access to the family home for large wheelchairs or not having contact details for parents of others in her class. The simple solution of deciding to make a room at

the school available to any parent who wants to organise a party there after school resulted in an 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party for one young man who was able to invite all his friends. In another school a camera club has become a great success and allows children and young people to meet new friends and learn new skills alongside parents and teachers who are also members. And finally, challenging attitudes through the review meant that a young man with very complex support needs was able to go to a family wedding, the first time he had ever been to such an event, and made his dad 'very proud of him'. None of this is rocket science, most of the solutions were simple but arose because the schools looked at themselves from a different perspective and really thought about the pupil experience.

We will now be looking at changes to the Quality Network materials to incorporate the ideas from the pilot. We are very excited by the results and want to take the ideas forward to work with other services for children and young people.

If you would like to know more, please contact

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## Spring Vol. 20 Issue 59

### 'Families'

The copy date for all articles, information and news for the Spring 2008 issue is the 7th March

Please send contributions to:  
**Beverley Dawkins**  
**Beverley.Dawkins@mencap.org.uk**

Articles can be long or short and they are welcomed from carers or professionals alike – we value YOUR experience and views. Please contact us if we can help you in any way. If you have any picture or photos to include we would love to see them (providing we have permissions).

## Concept Training

Janet Price

Training success is built on a practical approach. Concept Training has grown to become a leading provider of training for anyone working or living with people who have special needs. There is no doubt that this success is the result of its practical, hands-on approach to training – an approach that goes back nearly ten years.

At that time, Janet Price and Jack Holliday were working in the field of multi-sensory equipment, but became frustrated that nobody was offering independent training and advice on how to set up a multi-sensory room properly and use it effectively.

As Janet explains, “We knew that multi-sensory rooms had the potential to really improve the quality of life of people with all sorts of difficulties. We also knew that people were going to great efforts to fund and set up these facilities, but when they came to use them they didn’t really know what to do. Often, children and adults who could have really benefited from a properly organised session were just left in the room as passive observers of what was going on. This certainly wasn’t because of a lack of will on the part of the staff using the equipment, it was just that nobody had explained to them what they were supposed to be doing – apart from people whose main interest was in selling them more equipment.”

Janet and Jack realised that what people needed was a down-to-earth, hands-on training programme that would build their confidence, help them understand more about the multi-sensory concept and take home ideas and plans that they could use straightaway.

These courses formed the nucleus of the company but, as they spent more time talking to people on their courses, they realised that there was a need for the same type of practical training across a whole number of areas relating to people with special needs. So they set about recruiting like-minded trainers – all leading experts in their fields – who could help them broaden the range of courses they offered. The wealth of courses now on offer covers all aspects of working and living with sensory-impaired and special needs children, young people and adults.

As well as multi-sensory training, other areas that are particularly relevant to the field of PMLD include Intensive Interaction, inclusion in mainstream activities, communication play and leisure, and the therapeutic use of music and drama.

Intensive Interaction, for example, offers a way of starting to communicate with non-verbal adults and children. The results achieved by leading practitioners have produced life-changing results in people who had previously been thought of as unreachable.

Helping children with profound disabilities to play can also have a major effect on their quality of life, and it can also be an ideal way of including children with special needs in mainstream activities.

Concept Training has created practical courses on play and inclusion that not only look at the benefits and challenges, but also show how activities and equipment can be adapted to encourage inclusion – without having to buy expensive specialised equipment.

According to course tutor Judy Denziloe, “The main thing our courses do is to give people confidence to have a go. There’s no need to rush for the chequebook, you can use very simple everyday things. It is often simply a case of being aware of the possibilities when choosing equipment you would have bought anyway, and seeing how to use it in an inclusive way.”

The response she has had from delegates exemplifies the way that Concept Training’s approach strikes a chord.

“One delegate told me that a lot of courses had told her what she must do, but this was the first that told her what she could do. The practical element of our training doesn’t just give people the confidence to get started, they go away thinking about what they can do next.”

At the same time, Concept Training recognises that it is not just the caring professions that want to learn more about providing quality of life to people with special needs, and so can usually offer a generous discount to the parents of children with special needs.

From small beginnings, Concept Training now organises an annual programme of scheduled

courses covering 25 topics that are held at venues across the UK. All of these courses, and a number of more specialised workshops, are also offered as 'in-house' events for a team of delegates at their own workplace. These can either be individual days, or a specially-tailored programme of sessions to meet a specific set of training needs. These have proved to be very successful, and Concept Training is now a preferred training provider for a number of local authorities.

The courses can also help staff to achieve professional qualifications. Concept Training has set up a partnership with Edge Hill University that means anyone attending a course can apply for accreditation by the university and submit an assignment based on the course that can lead to a

Certificate in Professional Development. This, in turn, can provide the basis for further qualifications or recognition by a professional body.

"We have come a long way in the past ten years," says Janet Price. Jack, sadly, passed away earlier this year. But however much we have grown and changed one thing has stayed the same – Concept Training is there to provide practical, independent and hands-on training that people can put straight into practice when they get back to work."

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## **INTERCONNECTIONS ELECTRONIC BULLETIN About Children and Young People (0 - 25) with Disabilities / SEN**

**Note: You can receive the whole bulletin as an e-mail attachment if you request it by sending a message to [p.limbrick@virgin.net](mailto:p.limbrick@virgin.net). To view the listings [www.icwhatsnew.com](http://www.icwhatsnew.com)**

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## Health Aware Champion Training.

Theresa Shepherd

Mencap realised there was a real need to begin to reduce the gaps in health inequalities when it came to food choices and healthy eating. We realised the need to provide accessible information on how to eat well in a way that was effective, positive and supportive.

Training staff who work with people with learning disabilities was not only a cost effective way of reaching the people we support within Mencap, it was also a chance for staff to learn more and to pass on this new knowledge to others around them. It will also allow them to develop new skills which they can pursue if they wanted to.

The aim of the training is to provide staff that support people with a learning disability with basic knowledge about nutrition and the importance of healthy eating.

The training will result in staff becoming Mencap Health Aware Champions (this is an added responsibility to their normal day to day work) who will use the knowledge they have gained through the 1 day training session to do a variety of things. These could be:

- To provide the help and guidance that the people they support need in making food healthy choices.
- Pass on the information learnt to other staff members who work with them directly or in the same area as they do.
- Suggest different methods of shopping, preparing and cooking foods to the people they support who may want to change their food choices.
- To help the people they support who want to loose weight for example. They will be able to work on goals together, meal planning together and spend one on one time helping them to reach the weight they want to be.
- They will be the first point of contact for healthy eating advice in their immediate areas or even in their region depending on logistics. This means they may be asked to go and speak at team meetings in other services or they may be asked to support someone who they don't work with normally.
- They will be the point of contact with external people such as community nurses who have concerns about the diet of someone they visit.
- They will be the first point of contact if there are any healthy eating events in their area – they may be asked to be involved.

- They will become a Health Aware Champion and use the information they have learnt and begin to make some real changes to the diet of the people they support. They can create your own resources for example and use them within their services or within other services in their area.
- They may have the opportunity to do a NVQ training course or similar over a longer period of time – this will be more intense nutrition training.
- Finally, there will be an annual conference that they will attend to discuss the work that has been done, to meet other Health Aware Champions and to find out what resources are available at that time.

At the moment Mencap are recruiting staff who want the training. Once we have final numbers from all across the UK, we will begin the training sessions.

We hope that once the Health Aware Champion training has been established, other providers could use the model in the future.

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## **Environmental Control Technology for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties at Rosewood School**

Jenny Boyd

Rosewood School, Southampton, is a non-maintained special school for up to 40 children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). Run by the Rose Road Association, a local charity, the school offers a specialised curriculum focusing on the individual needs of each pupil, developing key skills in Communication, Cognitive Development, Environmental Control Technology, Physical skills, and Personal, Social and Health Education. The National Curriculum is used to provide a breadth of experience and learning opportunities in which to teach the key skills. The school has an attached therapy suite enabling staff to meet the therapeutic and medical needs of the pupils. The therapy team consist of physiotherapists, an occupational therapist, a full time nurse and two healthcare support workers, a hydrotherapy support worker, a speech and language therapist and a music therapist.

### **The Environmental Control Technology Project:**

In March '06, following the successful development and implementation of the schools Early Communication Assessment and Curriculum and a similar package for Cognitive Skills the school moved to looking at the impact technology could have on the education of all our pupils. The earlier projects readdressed the weaknesses found in using existing target setting material. The assessment being used was not integral to the curriculum planning process and the levels did not reflect the range of differential between pupils at p1-p3 i.e. our school population. The school had developed through training and curriculum guidance a strong child led approach to curriculum planning and whereas Information Technology had been agreed as a Key Area of learning it was not received with the same commitment as the other key skills. (This aspect will be discussed further.) The aim of the project was to use research material both academic and experiences from other schools; teacher's knowledge and experience and move forward the boundaries of what was the accepted use of technology within the school for pupils with PMLD, (the curse of the Big Mack will also be discussed later) and to ensure that through the use of technology learning opportunities could be provided and built upon. The final outcome was to be an Assessment and Curriculum in Environmental Control Technology with a full package of staff training; resourced from an initial budget and including a plan for future developments.

### **Initial Stages:**

As stated earlier the plan to include the then named Key Skill Area of ICT into the development of 5 Key Skill areas was met with a strong resistance and in some camps opposition. During the launch stage of Key Skill Areas five large

sheets of paper were placed around the room for staff to put skills and opportunities for learning under each of the five headings. Communication was overflowing (very positive as this was our first area to be developed) but ICT was left blank. This was a difficult point as strong views were held against it then being included; staff were assured that if at the end of the development of the Key Skill Assessments and Curriculum there was still this level of reservation the inclusion would be reviewed. It was following the early stages of research that one of the leaders of the project re-named the subject. The re-launch at a staff meeting of the inclusion of Environmental Control Technology as a Key Skill Area was positively received and the idea that it was all about computers was dispelled.

### **School Philosophy:**

We live in a world in which it is becoming increasingly necessary to be aware of how technology is influencing our everyday lives and increasing our access, freedom and control on a global level.

The stark contrast of this is the world of PMLD; here events may often occur without the control of that person. There is a bank of research that demonstrates that without control of our external world actions become increasingly self directed and motivation to control reduces.

At Rosewood we have given ECT the status of one of our five Key Skills; the others being, Communication, Cognitive, Physical Skills and PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education). This means that every child will have an ECT target on their Individual Education Plan. It is expected that this target will be taught across a whole range of subjects and appear at least on a daily basis in

the child's day.

It is our intention to use the wealth of technology available to look to how the pupils at Rosewood can learn to control their environment. We want to use the advancements to help overcome physical and cognitive impairments and help reduce their level of dependency. We aim to provide environments that enable a level of control above what has previously been known to them.

In order to achieve increased control we must also remember that whereas we can access a range of technologies there are none, yet, as flexible as a human! Developing communication remains our central aim and developing interaction with other adults and peers is a main priority. For some of our pupils the development of ECT may lead to access to a high tech communication aid but this will only be the case when the child has acquired the necessary pre-requisite learning.

We must also acknowledge the development of assistive technologies is going to require often ambitious and targeted resources. We must be careful not to limit opportunities for future technologies to be embedded into practice.

We are committed to empowering parents as to the benefits assistive technology can have in their own home environments. The current funding means only adults with physical disabilities are prioritised to receive NHS Funding to have home adaptations. The benefit in preparing for this technology at school is currently being explored through companies such as Possum and we now need to look at the entitlement issue for pupils with PMLD.

**Assessment Content:**

As with our previous two Assessments in Early Communication and Cognitive Skills the aim was to ensure a clear link through from the needs of the child, Individual Education plans and into effective lesson planning.

Each pupil at the school has one ECT Target in their IEP yet the assessment covers 8 strands of ECT and each strand has a curriculum area with suggested teaching targets. During the

implementation period teachers have been asked to monitor which strand they opt to put as a priority and whether this is linked to a level of development, age of the pupil or purely needs led. This information will be part of the ongoing evaluation of the projects impact across the school. Quite rightly the teaching staff all asked the question why 8? We looked at combining strands or moving into other Key Skill areas but as we produced Aims for each strand it became clear that each had a valid purpose for inclusion.

The Strands:

**PHYSICAL ACCESS:** To maximise physical abilities, to increase levels of control accessible to the pupil.

**SWITCH CONTROL:** To develop access and degrees of control a pupil can have over devices.

**CAUSE AND EFFECT:** To develop the understanding a pupil has with their ability to control the environment.

**PHYSICAL REFINEMENT:** To increase levels of control by access to technology.

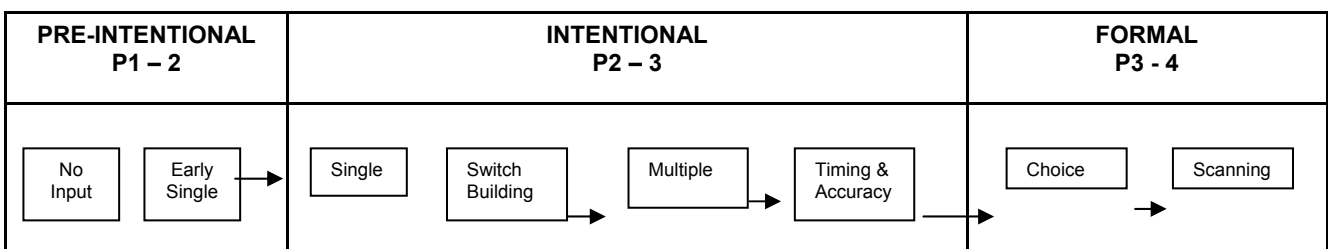
**STIMULUS RESPONSE:** To be actively engaged in the impact that increased control gives the pupil.

**MOTIVATION:** To ensure the use of ECT motivates the pupil to control their environment.

**CONTROL FOR INDEPENDENCE:** To ensure the skills being developed are functional and applied throughout the pupils daily routines.

**COMMUNICATION:** To develop a link between controlling devices and controlling people.

For each strand a series of questions have been devised so that they are developmentally sequenced through three main development stages; Pre-Intentional (P1-2), Intentional (P2-3) and Formal (P3-4). Then within each of these main development stages between 2 and 4 further sequenced steps are broken down.



Example switch control strand

Linked to each of the boxed stages are three questions, a simple scoring system of 2 out of 3 means the box is etched in and the same title area appears in the curriculum showing suggested targets and teaching points:

Switch Control Assessment Example

No Input

1. Reflex reaction to stimulus activated by adult
2. Startles/stills at changes to the immediate environment, controlled by an adult
3. Briefly attends to an effect activated by an adult

Early Single

1. Will activate switch as a reflex/chance event
2. Responds to action after switch is activated
3. Shows awareness of the switch

Single

1. Is motivated to activate switch to cause action
2. Connects switch activation to action
3. Stops activating switch during reward/effect

Leading to the Switch Control Curriculum area example below:

**Liaison with ECT Companies/Providers:**

As part of the initial audit of resources available and browsing through endless catalogues of new technology, aspects of the equipment being highlighted by the QED Company were closer to the way we were trying to move and due the close proximity of their headquarters contact was made with the company. They agreed to loan equipment to the school to enable informed decisions to be made prior to purchasing. QED have been very supportive of our work and were keen to help us develop it into a computer based package that will enable teachers to assess (with whole school, class and individual data collection features), target set and plan lessons. The company had previous experience of working with schools to develop resources and were keen to forge such a relationship with Rosewood. The work is currently with a software designer to develop as a published resource.

One of the services QED offered the school which we would strongly recommend is an ICT Equipment Amnesty! All classes pulled every piece of technology out of their cupboards including those gathering dust at the back. The QED team then came in for a day and explained the equipment and its use and whether they were

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL CURRICULUM – SWITCH CONTROL				
AREA FROM ECT ASSESSMENT	P-scale Reference	Learning Objectives (suggested)	Teaching Points	Resources
Early Single	ICT P1(ii)	To have switch positioned where accidental effect can occur.  To have access to switches, that can be activated by chance in a range of environments.  To demonstrate a response to an effect activated by an adult.  To consistently demonstrate a response to an effect activated by an adult.  To begin to demonstrate preferences over effects activated by an adult.  To briefly attend to the switch post effect.	Working with the Occupational Therapist and/or Physio to assess movement and positioning for switches will be crucial for development through this stage.  Using a wide variety of switch types and effects will be essential to support this stage. Keeping a record of resources tried and responses will allow team to reflect and refine best access for the individual pupil.	



beyond repair or now available with additional features. This immediately increased the pupils' access to ECT and highlighted areas for purchasing priority. It also confirmed the abundance of Big Mack switches throughout the school. Whereas for some pupils these switches are beneficial what we had was an excessive amount of "Hello's" (usually in adult voices), a few "More Pleases" and generally a switch that for those who did activate it lent itself very much to *Happy Switching*, where the switch was continually hit without waiting for a response and often the click of the switch was more of a reward than any messages recorded. We are now looking for switch control that is more functional to the pupils and their access to their environment.

QED were keen for us to look at their new kit, Life Skills which they had developed in partnership with Possum. Every weary of a sales pitch we invited Possum into the school to demonstrate the possibilities of environmental control technology. Aspects of the kit are exactly what we had been looking to develop for our pupils in terms of environmental access, particularly for our Post 16 pupils. However the company had worked closely with a number of SLD schools and a lot of the technology required access through symbolic recognition of pictures or symbols and our pupils operate at the pre-symbolic level. At a recent training day Possum worked with the expertise of the staff on some "blue sky thinking". We are currently looking to continue this relationship to the benefit of the pupils using the expertise of the company and the knowledge and experience of the staff to move the boundaries forward.

### The Assessment & Curriculum Package:

Currently the Assessment and Curriculum covering ECT is with a software company. Following our work with QED they are supporting the school in developing a CD to be available through their catalogues in the near future. It is the intention of the school to develop each Key Skill Area as a software package and to be able to collate data across all five for the purposes of whole school and individual target setting, in a meaningful way for pupils with PMLD. Obviously as a school we are delighted at this development but we recognise the strong role of INSET in the effective implementation of the work undertaken. Therefore linked to the published material will be the availability of training and on-going support packages for schools interested in the work being developed at Rosewood. We strongly would promote any changes in assessment and curriculum material to be undergone at a pace suitable for an individual school's own starting point. The design of the materials is flexible to enable the assessment and targets set in conjunction with a school's existing planning framework.

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## Rock and Role Play: Combining the Arts and ICT for Students with Special Needs

Cathy Herries

I have been back in New Zealand three years now and after one return visit to England a year ago have had time to reflect on the differences and similarities in teaching practice in schools for students with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. I am fortunate to be working at a Special School with a SMARTboard (Sommerville was the first Special School in NZ to purchase and use a board) – they are still fairly rare in New Zealand Special Schools. I have long been a convert of the Grove / Park approach to Drama, adapting the ideas to suit my own style of teaching which invariably involves a multi-media approach. The opportunities and possibilities the SMARTboard offers in integrating the Arts and ICT is very exciting.

The pace of work and workload for teachers in England has in no way reduced since I was there. There is clearly a need for high quality resources that improve and develop both teaching and learning skills. Although I have fond memories of spending my holidays creating units of work it was a lonely, time consuming exercise. We are fortunate in New Zealand to have access to a new resource with far reaching possibilities.

SmartArtz, the dynamic duo of Julie King and Hilary King (no relation) have combined Drama and Music in a Multi-media package, resulting in a highly motivating teaching tool with positive learning outcomes for both students and staff.

“High quality teaching is potentially the largest single school influence on student achievement. International and New Zealand evidence suggests that between 16 and 60 percent of differences in student achievement outcomes can be attributed to the quality of teaching” (Education Review Office Evaluation Indicators, 2003, p.16).

Resources are only as good as the skill of the teacher using them. ‘The key to good teaching and learning lies in coherent planning, based on sound educative procedures rooted in a theoretical framework for development’ (Peter, 1995, p.v). The SmartArtz packages are seeped in theory; they lead teachers through step-by-step, giving structure and training while allowing for individual creativity.

SmartArtz packages include a CD Rom of the unit that can be used on an interactive whiteboard; students and staff are taken through the story / activity by following the directions on the screen and activating music and video clips by pressing the icons. For those classes that don't have access to a whiteboard there is an audio CD and a handbook that can be downloaded from the CD Rom that are just as easy to follow. The packages

have different emphasis and are designed to work with a range of learning needs. ‘Body Works’ is a fabulous and fun-filled collection of action songs to develop body and spatial awareness, peer interaction and cooperation, building self esteem and increasing motivation; ‘Maui and the Fingers of Fire’ can be used to develop anticipation, turn-taking and joint attention with those students at the pre-intentional level of communication and for those students working within the higher P-Levels the unit develops students’ metacognitive skills. ‘Lotto’ works particularly well with students functioning in levels P1 – 4; it develops attention, encourages anticipation and works on developing the proto-declarative function with the repeated ‘LOOK’. ‘Holiday Pacifica’ challenges the students to distinguish between different roles and although still relying on repetition has a slightly more complex structure. Packages that involve a storyline can be completely arts based or used as a storytelling session giving teachers the option depending on their own skills and the needs of their students.

Most of the music is original, written specifically for the packs by SmartArtz who have years of experience working with students with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. The songs follow simple rhythms and the format of the packages (CD Rom for use on the Whiteboard and audio CD) makes the songs accessible to teachers and students for use in their classrooms.

SmartArtz uses the concepts of Brain based learning as its starting point, the learning process rather than the outcome is central to the approach. They purport the principles of the constructivist theory that knowledge cannot simply be passively received (Novak, 1998). Included in the principles of Brain-based learning is that the input of new information should utilize visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modes. All SmartArtz packages utilize music (auditory), drama (kinaesthetic) and multi-

media (visual); a complete sensory experience. SmartArtz packages provide the bridge over Vygotsky's 'Zone of proximal development', giving students the foundations, 'scaffolding' and motivation to want to achieve and the skills to be able to achieve. The structure of the SmartArtz 'bridge' has been developed in such a way to be conducive to moving students from their present to their potential level of development.

Students need a reason to communicate – SmartArtz provide this. The packages are full of life and can be used with students at the earliest levels of communication to develop intentional communication through chanting, repetition, anticipation and visuals but they are also challenging when used with more able students (and early years children). Smartartz is also concerned with developing students' 'Theory of Mind' from its most simple level – joint attention (Park, 1998), found in 'Lotto' "LOOK", to more complex discussions, such as 'why' Maui dropped the fire in the river'. The story of 'Maui and the Fire Keeper' has been used particularly well to develop students' metacognitive thinking. 'Maui is a thinker, Maui wants to know' is a line repeated in the story. Maui's character is developed and activities played out to illustrate and demonstrate what this means, i.e. 'thinker', 'know'. It provides the foundation for endless extension activities.

The multi-media aspect of the work has been enormously effective. The packs enable students to participate in and use ICT equipment. Clear images on a big screen focus students who are distracted by clutter. The CD Roms allow the students to take control in the sessions, whether it is identifying and starting the next song, i.e. remembering the sequence, 'Ready for work' should follow the 'Hello' song (students can start the song themselves by pressing the icon); moving onto the next activity or activating songs and film clips. In stories such as 'Maui and the Fingers of Fire' SmartArtz have included short film clips for both students and staff to learn from. The film clips use students with special needs as role models.

The intention of SmartArtz is to use the Arts as a teaching tool in a multi-sensory way that can be used in all areas of the curriculum. The work that stems from each package is completely cross-curricular. Assessment is implicit in the resource packs. Students are assessed according to Key Competencies / Key Skills and it is acknowledged that skills taught in context need to be generalised. The learning outcomes are set using the P-Levels. The Assessment sheets guide teachers in terms of setting objectives and evaluating students. Julie and Hilz have been using video very effectively to evaluate and record student progress but that's

another story!

The work produced by SmartArtz is the most exciting, practical, accessible, far reaching resources I have seen in years; especially as the packs have been specifically written with the needs of students in Special Schools in mind.

Hilz and Julie King have just returned from a highly successful and enthusiastically received trip to the UK where they presented a series of "action packed" workshops called 'Rock and Role Play'. In conjunction with this they launched two of their exciting new interactive resource packs: Body Works and Maui and the Fingers of Fire. The workshops and arts based approach they adopt was described by one participant as, "the most lively and exciting course I have attended to date. The content is very relevant to teaching and learning". Another, "I think management and staff should look at implementing this learning strategy into the curriculum...". This is tremendously exciting when the essence of this approach is in providing , "fun, exciting, energetic, engaging, active, and motivating learning experiences"; all responses from those who attended the workshops.

Reflecting back on my earlier point regarding teacher work overload it is refreshing to hear of teachers motivated and excited by a new and innovative approach to teaching and learning; of teachers having fun and wanting to take new ideas back to their classroom . And a final note, a participant at one of their workshops emailed them recently and said, " I can't get the songs out of my head but it makes me smile and more importantly the kids love it too!!! ..... One of our autistic pupils came to life and I have never seen him like that before!" Isn't that what it's all about?

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## Improving Transition for students moving on from a residential special school

FE Interdisciplinary, St Margaret's School, Tadworth

*"Effective transition for disabled young people requires early planning to ensure that services provide a continuity of support that is focused on individual need. Disabled young people should be fully consulted in accessing their preferred services"* (EDCM –WEBSITE)

Blum et al 1993, describe transition as "a process, rather than an event, which can also be defined as the purposeful, planned process that addresses medical, psychosocial and educational/vocational needs of adolescents and young adults with chronic physical and medical conditions as they move from child centred to adult orientated health care"

### What were our concerns?

As a core team working with the young people at St Margaret's, a school for children and young adults with PMLD and complex health needs, the need for a smoother, better planned transition process is very important. Quite often the students leave with 1-2 months notice, sometimes less. This leaves the team very little time to prepare reports, programmes or equipment, let alone the student! For young people with disabilities, particularly as severe as those experienced by our students, the rushed transition process can be very distressing. For families, it can be stressful and daunting. This meant that staff at the school felt unhappy with their handover, feeling that they needed to do more. Also staff in adult services often felt that they needed more time and more information to get to know the young adults better and thus provide the best service possible for them.

*"The Good Practice Guide, published in March 2006, aims to show that the handover from children's to young people's services to adult services should be planned and managed as a process"*. ([www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk))

To this end, the care, therapy and education staff all met and set out to draw up a protocol. The aim was to ensure the smoothest, most effective, least distressing transition process for the young adults concerned. We wanted to prepare the young person and their family, as well as the providers of adult services as much as possible, to ensure that the correct level of care, therapy and further education/vocation would be in place.

From the student's Annual review at age 14+, all professionals are constantly aware of the forthcoming transition. We now ensure that at the final LAC review (around 17 years of age) a joint

interdisciplinary report is submitted to the social worker for submission to the funding panel. This report is then kept on file, and updated regularly, adding any changes to health, education, or therapy needs.

We had two classes in the St Margaret's School Further Education (FE) department. All staff worked consistently together as a multidisciplinary team in each class; teachers, therapists and care staff. In September 2006 the decision was made to amalgamate the two classes and provide a more 6<sup>th</sup> form college approach. As our students spend their last few years with us in FE the transition process becomes a major part of our work.

Students are now able to work within this wider group, joining activities and classes which best meet their individual needs. This has enabled us to set up transition groups for those young people who will soon be leaving us and specifically focus on preparing them more fully for this extremely important and significant event in their lives.

### What did we do to ensure a positive and meaningful transition for each student?

#### Communication

##### *Communication for student:*

It is important for the team to advocate on behalf of, and in consultation with, the student as people who know them well and are familiar with their individual system of communication, in order to ensure these communications are understood by others. The new placement is provided with a portfolio of annotated photos, CDs of favourite music and cue music for regular school sessions, a DVD showing class activities and students working on their individual education aims and therapy programmes. The students themselves will have been involved in producing this portfolio.

##### *Communication within the team:*

Working in a large team makes communication

more complex, but it is crucial in ensuring we strive to meet the needs of the students. In order to improve communication two systems were put in place:

#### Transition meetings

These take place on regular bases once a month and involve the whole interdisciplinary team. This is an opportunity for staff to catch up with each student's transition timetable and discuss their progress.

#### Transition file on the computer

Under a library accessible to all the team each student has a transition folder. This contains all the recent details of their progress towards transition. This is also another form of communication within the team so that everyone is kept updated with activities taking place.

#### *Communication with adult placements:*

The Head of the student's residential house holds the responsibility for coordinating this. They report on progress and ensure that adult service providers are fully aware of the work which is being done. They also act as the link communicator back to the interdisciplinary team.

#### *Communication with parents:*

Parents are fully involved and informed at all times. They are encouraged to start looking for appropriate placements early, and are given information about possible appropriate placements to look at alongside anything their social worker might have suggested. Once they have identified a placement the multidisciplinary team work with them, and it is the responsibility of the student's head of house to keep them informed regarding the transition timetable.

#### **Visits**

The students are taken on visits to their new community. Some students start at St Margaret's at five years of age, so can live in the same environment with many of the same students and routines for 15 years. An important part of preparing for transition is moving outside this known environment with people you know and who can ensure you feel safe and secure.

When the decision is made that it is time to move, it is important to go on visits to the new placement and surrounding area. Where there is a town close by the local facilities can be visited so that students become familiar with the whole area they will be moving to.

#### **Staff exchanges**

Staff from the new placement visit the students in school as well as in their residential setting. This gives the staff understanding of what our students have been involved in during their time at St Margaret's. They will need an understanding of every situation the student is involved in order to maximise opportunities for continued learning in adult settings. It is also important that staff from St Margaret's School visit the new placement with the student and we ensure this happens as often as possible before they move. We also try to set up arrangements where a member of St Margaret's School staff goes with the student for the first few days when they move, to support the adult placement as well as ease the transition for the young person.

#### **Maintaining links**

Students are invited back for reunions at the St Margaret's School, such as the ALL (Accreditation for Life and Living) presentation in the summer term, for coffee mornings, and to join other educational trips occasionally. This is important not only for the students that have left but also for those who are still here, showing them that their peers have not disappeared, but moved on. Visits to the new home to have tea with their peers can give students experience of the kind of place they could move to. Maintaining these links is not always easy; there are geographical and time restraints, but we continue to strive to make them happen as we feel strongly that they are an important part of the transition process.

#### **Reports**

##### *Transition report:*

As soon as the student starts in the FE department a report is written setting out the essential therapy needs for each student. This enables them to be planned into the funding for any new adult placement. As soon as the adult placement is confirmed the education staff add to this therapy report, so that it becomes an interdisciplinary report for the placement.

##### *Annual reviews and IEP's/PEP's:*

It was decided that for the FE department annual reviews and subsequent IEP's/PEP's should follow the same structure and would differ from those of pupils in the younger classes. Our aims were to identify two broad IEP targets in each of three areas of the curriculum: Sensory cognitive, Communication and Social. These would focus on what the department felt would be the most important areas for the students to be working on. They focused on extending and generalising skills already established in order to equip the students

better for adult life. Aims were:

#### **Sensory/Cognitive**

- To build awareness and attention skills through exploratory behaviour
- To continue to develop understanding of cause and effect

#### **Communication**

- To give signals
- To anticipate and understand my environment

#### **Social**

- To develop a sense of self through creative and leisure activities at an age appropriate level
- To interact with people

Within each of those general aims students have more specific aims which link and extend work which has been undertaken in the lower school.

In conclusion, we feel that we are taking some significant steps in developing the transition process for our PMLD population. We are all

committed to the need for an interdisciplinary focus on transition and often feel frustrated by the lack of time we have to prepare our students and their families for this most significant event in their lives.

We know there is still much work to do but hope that, at the very least we are working together to improve the process for our students.

**Written by the FE interdisciplinary at St Margaret's School.**

For more information on the St Margaret's School Developmental Curriculum and assessment tool please contact

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or

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## **Spring Vol. 20 Issue 59**

### **'Families'**

The copy date for all articles, information and news for the Spring 2008 issue is the 7th March

Please send contributions to:  
**Beverley Dawkins**  
[Beverley.Dawkins@mencap.org.uk](mailto:Beverley.Dawkins@mencap.org.uk)

Articles can be long or short and they are welcomed from carers or professionals alike – we value YOUR experience and views. Please contact us if we can help you in any way. If you have any picture or photos to include we would love to see them (providing we have permissions).

## Transition Learning Programme – A Model for Change

Anne Aitchison, parent of a young person with Rett syndrome

Over the last couple of years, we have become aware of many parents' struggles to access appropriate support and activities for their young daughters with Rett syndrome. The challenges for providers and commissioners of securing suitable services for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities means their needs are often overlooked.

When I first heard from Anne about the Transition Learning Programme, and following carefully the progress of her many negotiations and hard work with different organisations, I thought this was definitely an achievement that should be shared with others. It is so important that good practice is shared, and more importantly, demonstrate that with real collaborative working, much can be achieved. PMLD Link magazine naturally came to mind as a means of spreading this message, and I am delighted that Anne was able to write the article and to obtain contributions from Connexions and the Learning Skills Council.

Athena Pite  
Support Services Manager

The Transition Learning Programme provides a learning environment for school leavers with complex health and learning needs. It was set up in 2005 at Rawlins Community College in Leicestershire which is an educational establishment for the community offering a wide range of adult learning services, in addition to providing education for all fourteen to eighteen year olds.

The TLP is ground-breaking because it is funded jointly with input shared by services, and it is the result of parents' hard work and commitment over a number of years to secure the right post-school provision for their disabled children. Assisted by the Connexions Service the parents began by profiling what would be suitable for these young people when they left school. They felt their children would thrive best if they continued to live at home while accessing a local lively and stimulating learning environment during the day. Existing Further Education Colleges were too large and overwhelming to meet their needs. An inclusive but small setting was necessary with appropriate care input to meet individual needs. Given the right input and environment, the young adults would be able to continue with their learning, have social and recreational opportunities and be cared for properly.

### Transition Planning

With the help of the Connexions adviser the parents' vision was communicated to statutory agencies. At the request of the parents, who had identified Rawlins as an appropriate setting, a visit was arranged for Liz Coates to meet the young people and their parents to initiate discussion about the possibility of creating something completely new. At the same time, the

Leicestershire Social Services Transition Team was looking at how the hopes and aspirations outlined in the individuals' Transition Plans could be accommodated. Meanwhile, following the publication of the white paper Valuing People, person-centred-planning was being implemented with the school being chosen to pilot progress files.



### Multi-agency planning

With equality of opportunity forming a transition objective of the white paper and the 1999 Health Act allowing for service-providers to pool resources, many multi-agency meetings took place to consider jointly-funded provision. Despite all the obstacles, the team persevered, secured funding and were brave in their commitment to this innovative, new venture.

### Finance

In 2004 Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council agreed for Disability Discrimination Act finance to be made available for a new double mobile classroom, kitchen, toilet, disabled toilet and changing facilities to be built at Rawlins ready for when the young people would leave school. The unit was fitted with brand new equipment and technology to meet their educational, social care



and community access needs.

The complexity of joint funding was overcome; put very simply, the setting up of the mobile classroom and the learning were paid for by the LSC, the care needs of the students were funded by Social Services with Health input in the form of therapy.

### Running costs

The LSC provides funding for sixteen hours of learning while Social Services pay for the remainder of the week as social care. Funding for staff and transport is also split between services, with staff appointed to posts which require skills in social care and learning support. In addition, nine days are funded by Social Services during the summer holiday to maintain continuity and social inclusion. At present, five students are attending the unit with funding available for three years of study.

### Curriculum

It has been an exciting time and as the students are now into their second year at Rawlins the success and benefits of this new provision are clear. It is a model of good practice which the parents hope will be replicated elsewhere when the time comes for the students to move on. The curriculum is evolving; at present it includes numeracy in the community, drama, communication, citizenship, art, relaxation and aromatherapy, swimming and IT. The students are very happy and are making progress with their learning because they feel secure in their learning environment, while the opportunities they have to experience inclusion in the college and wider community are improving their communication and recreational skills.

Not only is this equality of opportunity but also it is cost-effective. Provision of this kind is essential if the life-chances of disabled people are to be improved. The stakeholders in TLP are: Rawlins Community College, Leicestershire Social Services, Leicestershire Adult Learning Service and Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council. To give insight into the role of the Leicestershire Connexions Service and the Learning and Skills Council Leicestershire in the setting up of this creative, new provision, read on.

### Leicestershire Connexions Service

Leicestershire Connexions Service had been involved in helping to identify suitable provision for the students who are currently on the TLP course, since first meeting with them and their parents at Transition Planning Reviews in year nine at Ashmount school. At that stage, the students had another five years before leaving school. It was apparent even then however, that there were gaps



in local Further Education and Social Services provision that needed to be filled if the needs of the young people concerned were to be met on leaving school after the age of nineteen. The Connexions Adviser assisted the parents in investigating the post-school options that had previously been available, and set up meetings with existing providers and Social Services to discuss possible ways forward. Connexions continue to be involved with the TLP students and their parents, and have been pro-active in facilitating discussions with the Learning and Skills Council and Social Services to look at progression for the young people beyond TLP.

### Learning and Skills Council Leicestershire

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is committed to improving the choice and effectiveness of education and training opportunities for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the past, learners such as those at the Transition Learning Programme (TLP) would have left special school at 19 and may have progressed to an out-of-area residential college or moved onto day care provision. The LSC was delighted to have the chance to work with parents and partners to bring about a third choice that offered a local solution and became the TLP. This facility is not only designed to meet the learning needs of the students but is co-located with a local community college, which provides opportunities to support inclusion. The LSC Leicestershire has commissioned a short guidance document that will soon be available to give practical advice to education providers who may be interested in the setting up of similarly successful and cost-effective models. For further details, please contact LSC Leicestershire at [leicestershireinfo@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:leicestershireinfo@lsc.gov.uk)

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## Scaffolding in home-based intervention with young children with additional needs

Lindsey Winterton

As a Specialist Advisory Teacher for Early Years, I have had the privilege of carrying out research into home based intervention carried out in partnership with parents. I have explored the way that parents and professionals work together to 'scaffold' young children's learning. In this article I am going to look at how Katie's matching skills are being encouraged through scaffolding by Alex, her Mum, and me. Katie is thirty six months old and has delay in all areas of her development. Medical investigations are taking place that may lead to a diagnosis in the future. In this instance we are helping Katie to find the connections between what she already knows about matching objects, and what is necessary to carry out the new task. The bridging role we carry out involves helping Katie to understand what to do in the new situation by lending support to her constructive activity – scaffolding her learning.

### What do we mean by 'Scaffolding'?

The concept of scaffolding is a useful image for understanding the way in which a child's own ability to perform a task may come only after successful performance has been established through assisted learning. I use the term 'scaffolding' when I help parents to encourage their child's development; it is a very useful explanatory image. After all everyone has a good idea of what scaffolding is and of its purpose. It is clearly a framework of support that can be constructed and then removed when no longer needed. Scaffolding simplifies the child's role by means of graduated assistance from the adult. It's worth pointing out that scaffolding is not just about quantity of support, many of the adult's actions in assisting the child will be qualitatively different from one another. A parent or professional may sometimes direct attention, hold important information in memory or offer simple encouragement (Griffin & Cole, 1984).

Scaffolding builds upon Vygotsky's work which sees development as a social activity. Children take part in activities that they are unable to do alone with help from an adult or a more competent child. In social interaction and through social guidance, children develop by gradually internalising the skills that were practised with support, so they can be performed independently (Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch 1979). Vygotsky's approach provides a central and constructive role for adults in fostering a child's development.

Vygotsky became interested in children with special needs early in his career. One of his central ideas relating to children with special needs is that the most debilitating consequence of the disability is the way that it changes how the child takes part in social activities. Any lack of full participation in social activities will limit a child's development and

Vygotsky saw these social difficulties as being more problematic than the original disability. According to Vygotsky the most important role of education of children with special needs is improving social interactions with adults and peers. This means that they should be included as much as possible in the normal everyday activities of their culture – a good argument for home based teaching within the family and for inclusion.

### Responding contingently

Within what Vygotsky called the child's 'zone of proximal development' where assistance is given by more capable others, there are different levels of control or instruction. David Wood (1986) suggests these are:

1. General verbal prompts
2. Specific verbal instructions
3. Indicates material/ assists in choice of material
4. Prepares material
5. Demonstrates.

As we move down the list, the amount or detail of the instruction increases and the instructions become more controlling. For example in a matching activity a general verbal prompt might be "Find one the same". If a child was unsuccessful a specific verbal prompt such as "Where's the other apple like this?" may be used.

David Wood suggests a simple hypothesis develops. If the learner is having difficulty then the teacher should increase the level of control, and if the learner is experiencing success then the teacher should decrease the level of control. If we do this we are making a contingent response. Research has shown that the more frequently contingent a teacher is, the more the learner can

do alone after instruction. Contingent teaching by a parent or a professional involves pacing the amount of support a child is given on the basis of their moment to moment understanding.

In the home setting we are in an ideal position to provide contingent teaching in the zone of proximal development as we are in close touch with the child's activities. There is the time for interaction, conversation and joint activity which will hopefully lead to sensitive and accurate assistance. Having written about the theory which makes contingent teaching sound simple dare I look in detail at some of my video data? Interestingly David Wood reports (Wood, Wood & Middleton, 1978) that even in an experimental situation with a practical task with a single solution, a trained experimenter found she was only able to follow the contingency rules about 85% of the time.

That Katie is mastering new skills and developing concepts is clear from her ongoing assessment. We are recording her achievements at regular intervals. How is she developing these practical skills and ideas? As part of a larger research project I made video recordings of my home visits to Katie and her family. Let us look in some detail at a short section of the transcribed video data obtained during a home visit.

### The Interaction

To set the scene, Katie shows a great deal of interest in toy animals so this is the equipment I have decided to use to develop her matching skills. She has been introduced to the toy giraffe and panda and shows obvious enjoyment while playing with these. I put out the large giraffe and panda on Katie's tray and then introduce a small giraffe, hoping that Katie will choose to put like with like and match the animals. In structuring the situation in this way I am assisting Katie's performance through the selection of materials and the grading of the task. These choices are made to provide a specific learning experience.

As Tharp & Galimore (1988) point out the child may not share an adult's view of the purpose of an activity. A child's initial goal may be to sustain a pleasant interaction or to have access to some attractive objects, or there may be an altogether different motive that the adult can not guess. In my experience of working with children with special needs I would conclude that it is rare for a child to conceptualise the activity's goal in its early stages. Although I may have a clear goal in mind, the child is also usually very active in structuring the situation as well! Children can actively direct adults towards desirable activities and away from undesirable ones. They can make their preferences very clear, refusing to participate in

some activities and insisting upon others. Initial play suggested that Katie would be happy to participate in this task.

Lindsey: We'll put the giraffe .....and we'll put the panda...

*Hands Katie small giraffe....*

Put the giraffe with the giraffe... where does it go Katie?

Signs this as well, Katie moves excitedly picks the giraffe up and waves it around, Alex and Lindsey watching Katie.

Alex: Put it with its mummy that's right.

*Katie looks at her Mum.*

Lindsey: Put it with its mummy.

***Katie vocalises approximates a 'there' sound as she moves the little giraffe towards the big one, while looking from me to Alex.***

Lindsey: That's right, good girl.

*Speaking at the same time.*

Alex: That's right, good girl.

***Both are signing 'good' while looking at Katie and smiling.***

Lindsey: Good girl, clever girl....did it want its mummy?

***Katie puts the giraffes' heads together, then moves her hands to her face. Alex and Lindsey look at her and laugh and smile.***

Lindsey: Shall we do the little panda? Does the little panda want its mummy?

Katie picks up the small panda and she has also picked up the small giraffe and is still holding it in her other hand.

Lindsey: Stand that one up.

Puts the big giraffe straight so Katie can place the small one with it and can then concentrate on the panda. Katie then puts the small giraffe with the big one without further prompts.

Lindsey: Good girl you've put it with its mummy, are you going to put little panda with its mummy?

*Katie nods and looks at the large panda, although she does not carry through the action.*

Lindsey: She's looking at the right place isn't she? (to Alex)  
Put it with its mummy.

Lindsey takes hold of little Panda and makes it move while saying.....

I want my mummy, I want my mummy.

Puts panda down and points at the other panda, moving finger between the two. Katie puts the panda down near the other one and then begins handling and playing with the toys, gesturing for more.

### Discussion

This teaching – learning interaction is unusual in that there are in effect two adults working with one child. In order for there to be contingent teaching we, that is teacher and parent, have to be in tune with each other as well as being sensitive to Katie's relationship with the task in hand. This is an important reason for the need for a close and effective partnership between us. I believe that this data shows evidence of our effective partnership as we interact together with Katie to scaffold her learning.

Alex shows sensitivity to Katie's need for the increasing support I was giving. I had begun by

asking Katie to put the giraffe with the giraffe. As she hadn't been able to do this I did make a contingent response by simplifying my language to "Where does it go Katie?" and accompanying this question with the appropriate system of augmented communication we are using. This is 'Signalong' which is a signing system which in itself acts as scaffolding to the understanding of spoken language. For children like Katie whose language development is delayed, the scaffolding role of adults involves supporting their understanding by the use of non-verbal cues. Most of these non-verbal cues will be informal gestures and expressions; the formal signing system adds to these.

Most young children are skilled in obtaining information non-verbally. This is often why assessing young children's verbal comprehension is so difficult! Some children with special educational needs are less good at interpreting non-verbal communication, particularly if their difficulties are within the autistic spectrum. Katie can pick up cues non-verbally. She actively seeks eye contact and responds appropriately to facial expressions of adults. From the first year of life young children use a process termed social referencing to pick up information from adults about ambiguous situations (Feinman 1982; Gunnar & Stone 1984). The ability to gain information from the direction in which adults point or gaze facilitates this referencing. (Bruner 1983; Butterworth & Cochran 1980). This skill usually appears by the end of the first year. For Katie this is an emerging skill which she is practising. She is not yet doing this consistently.

While Katie is hesitating her mother adjusts the level of scaffolding further by moving from a general verbal prompt to a specific verbal instruction saying "Put it with its mummy, that's right". She is also providing a bridge between familiar skills and information, and those now needed, by bringing in the concept of mummy and baby which Katie understands and can now apply. She is helping Katie to find a connection between what she already knows and what is necessary to handle this new situation.

Katie looks at her mother for reassurance as she tentatively moves the small giraffe towards the large one. She is seeking a non-verbal cue from her mother's facial expression. I repeat the instruction to "Put it with its mummy", reminding and reassuring. At this point Katie seems to decide this is what is required and places the giraffe correctly while vocalising an approximation of "There" and looking from me to her mum seeking approval which she gets! We both respond in exactly the same way speaking at the same time to

say "That's right, clever girl!" and we both sign 'good' which is a great example of working together!

I reinforce Katie's action by giving further praise and reminding saying "Good girl, clever girl.....did it want its mummy?" Katie responds positively to social praise and puts the giraffes' heads together in an effort to repeat this action that has received such praise and attention.

We move on to encouraging Katie to repeat her success by matching the pandas. As she has demonstrated an understanding of 'putting with its mummy' this is the language I use. Katie is distracted from the given task by having an animal in each hand as she has once again picked up the little giraffe as well as the panda. I have to increase the level of scaffolding by drawing Katie's attention to completing this first task by orienting the materials and she does then place the giraffe appropriately without the need for further assistance. She is praised, and she appears to indicate her willingness to put the panda in the correct place when the instruction is repeated. She looks at the correct place but doesn't place the panda. I feel that she is finding it difficult to sustain attention. In an attempt to refocus Katie's attention I pick up the little panda and say "I want my mummy, I want my mummy" in a suitable baby panda voice! I also increase the level of scaffolding further by pointing at the larger panda and moving my finger between the two. At this point Katie places the panda correctly and begins handling the toys and gesturing for more which she knows I have in my bag. She is indicating that she has had enough of this particular directed activity!

Working with children with special needs I very often find that the amount of time they can sustain joint attention is short, even with frequent changes of activity. An important function of children's social interaction with adults may be the direction of the child's attention. Several studies have provided evidence of this, and suggest that attention may be an important individual activity that can be channelled by the highlighting of events by a social partner (Rogoff, 1989). In one experiment reported by Belsky, Goode & Most (1980) in which the level of mothers' focusing of attention was increased by having an encouraging observer comment on the mother's natural stimulation of the child, infants showed greater exploratory competence as much as two months after the intervention. The active involvement of a supportive adult in a child's exploration of objects and the environment encourages the development of the child's skills and knowledge.

Much research carried out with typically

developing young children has found that they have a propensity to seek proximity to and involvement with adults. This obviously helps them to obtain information about their environment and the adult's activities (Hay, 1980). Many children with developmental delay do not seem to share this propensity at toddler stage and it could be argued that this further delays their development. At age 36 months Katie is quite happy to entertain herself handling objects and moving from place to place in a secure environment. Although Katie appears to be a sociable little girl, at this stage she will not often seek adult attention unless she wants a need to be met. This contrasts with research carried out by Rheingold (1982) who found that toddlers aged between 18 and 30 months followed their parents around the house, trying to be involved in ongoing activities. Barbara Rogoff (1989) confirms this finding in her writing.

During the times when Katie is able to sustain joint attention with an adult it is important to her development that we 'get it right' by responding contingently to provide an effective teaching – learning interaction.

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## Future Focus

### Health Matters

Annie Fergusson

Summer is hardly here and we're asking you to think about our Winter issue already! **PMLD Link** will be taking a theme of 'Health Matters'. We'd like to invite contributions that look at the many aspects surrounding the area of health and their impact on people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. We want to use 'health' in the broadest sense of the word.

Some of your experiences will be concerned with day to day issues and practices – whatever is needed to ensure someone achieves their optimum health and therefore able to lead a full life. Other aspects may be advice or experiences in dealing with very particular situations – that help to promote positive physical, mental or emotional health and wellbeing. These ideas might describe HOW you manage an aspect of health and maybe not just with traditional interventions?

Keeping people with profound and complex disabilities 'healthy' places a huge responsibility with us. In many instances we are faced with situations which are beyond our knowledge and understanding. Take this coupled with the added difficulty of individuals who cannot easily tell us - what's wrong, how they feel, where it hurts, even 'I'm hungry-not thirsty', for example, we have a great challenge. We take on the role of 'detective', looking for clues across many aspects of someone's life, in the hope it might get us on the right path to better health and improved wellbeing.

At points we may have to rely on accessing the skills of others. This can be a very positive experience when

collaboration works well, but it may not always happen as smoothly.

We must not forget either, the health of those who care and support people with profound learning disabilities. This is a lifelong-needed role that will present many stresses and strains in trying to do our best to ensure the quality of life for those we love & care for.

Let's hear about your experiences. Let's share the things that have worked really well, so we can spread good practice and learn together. You might have just that 'little gem' of information or experience that will help someone else – you can make a difference by sending us your stories!

We look forward to hearing from you...



Ann Fergusson

*Continued from page 34*

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## PMLD Network Email Forum A Digest of Discussions March 07 - May 07



### Is there still a need for small residential family type services for children and young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities?

- Information was requested on a possible change from the above type of service to a short breaks service and whether there was a trend for this nationally.
- It was suggested that service users are consulted on any changes.
- It was questioned where this information about a possible new 'trend' away from residential services had come from and what evidence there was to suggest this. This parent said that residential units were vital and that support in the family home was less valuable in terms of respite.

### Massage for people with pmlD

- The value of massage for people with pmlD in terms of interaction, communication, stretches, turn taking and choice was espoused by a massage therapist new to working with people with pmlD. People were asked to describe similar experiences.
- A teacher of infants with pmlD suggested that Tac Pac might be a similar approach, using routine touch with different textures to music. They also use hand and foot massage for play and relaxation. The teacher requested further guidance for schools on this.

### Holidays where suitable facilities would be available

- There was a request for information on appropriate holidays for a young woman who uses a wheelchair and requires hoisting facilities.
- The following were suggestions:
  - [www.kingfisherbarn.com](http://www.kingfisherbarn.com) (near Oxford).
  - [www.blagdon-farm.co.uk](http://www.blagdon-farm.co.uk)
- Jane Hodge hotel near Cowbridge, (a purpose built hotel with a pool, though no fully accessible changing facilities).
- Google 'ceiling track disabled accommodation' which comes up with various options.
- Centre Parcs, Elveden Forest, (there is no overhead ceiling hoist but you can take a mobile one and book a villa with disabled access, you can

access the swimming pool and hire wheelchair bikes.

- Grooms holidays, 01446 771311. Cottages in Brittany can be very spacious which is useful. Look at [www.leguily.com](http://www.leguily.com)

### Spending other people's money

- A family asked for advice after their daughters service provider, (she lives in a purpose built bungalow with 1 to 1 support), suggested support workers be allowed to buy her clothes with her from her benefits. The family was concerned that they were being sidelined.
- It was suggested that the support workers may be closer in age to the daughter and may feel that this could offer a different perspective. Would it be possible to just allow them a small budget from the benefits to buy the occasional thing?
- It was also suggested that key workers can try to push their own personalities onto the service user through clothes. They also, it was said, may not consider carefully enough the small budget she is on.
- Another view was that as adults people should not be totally reliant on parents for their choices but have extra influences on them as we all do as we grow up. These support workers may consider their daughter to be an individual and in having got to know her themselves may have ideas as to what she might like. Overall it is important to keep communicating with each other on the issue.
- A parent said that mother- daughter shopping can be a real pleasure for all of us and it shouldn't be denied to this family.

### Definition of the word 'carer'

- A message stated that it is important to remember the word carer, according to Carers UK can be defined as a non-paid family member or friend/ partner.
- A parent wrote that it is important this is defined because as her role has no holidays and is unpaid, there is a huge distinction.
- Other parents wrote in to agree. They also said it is important to give paid workers the dignity and accuracy their title deserves.



**Destructive positioning in postural care**

- A student asked for advice on designing staff training around the damage that is incurred by people with disabilities when their postural care needs are not met .
- A staff nurse said they photograph people in good positions and put these photos in their care plans so everyone can support them. (Although you need to look at consent here). They also pointed out the need to highlight other risks of bad posture such as feeding problems, aspiration, chest infections and pain.
- It is important to consider people's wider needs when you look at positioning. Many people are positioned in a way that doesn't support them to use their sight or hearing effectively, (these may be impaired).
- A downside of this training may be that carers can realise that they have inadvertently been causing further damage to their loved one and these realisations can be devastating.
- Look at Penny Lacey and Carol Ouvry's 'People with profound and multiple learning disabilities – A collaborative approach to meeting complex needs'. Or contact Sarah Hill, (posturalcareskills.com).

**People with profound and multiple learning disabilities and consultation**

- There was a request for resources that support the above.
- Look at 'See what I mean' by BILD and Listening to children' by Sally Millar
- Use observation, based on the 'Affective Communication Assessment' which can be found in Coupe O'Kane and Goldbart's 'Communication before speech'.
- Mencap are currently looking into funding a 'consultation toolkit' for exactly this use. This will include advice, on storytelling, multimedia, supported- object based presentations etc. Contact [victoria.neil@mencap.org.uk](mailto:victoria.neil@mencap.org.uk)

**Baseline assessments for children in the foundation stage**

- A teacher of children with SLD/PMLD aged 3-7 wants help finding good baseline assessments to assess communication and understanding.
- There is a Welsh Assembly document, 'Routes for learning', which is apparently useful. Call 0870242320 for a copy or visit <http://snipurl.com/1:87m>
- Also the afore mentioned 'Affective Communication Assessment'

- The teacher was advised to contact the local Speech and Language Therapist for advice.

**IT and other aids for supporting communication**

- A request for training and advice on how to make the most of equipment such as switches/basic software etc.
- The disability living foundation provide, free, impartial advice on all types of disability equipment. [www.dlf.org.uk/](http://www.dlf.org.uk/)
- Useful website, [www.findavoice.org.uk/](http://www.findavoice.org.uk/)
- A company called Inclusive Technology could be helpful [www.inclusive.co.uk](http://www.inclusive.co.uk)
- Also Ability Net [www.abilitynet.org.uk](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk)
- Priory Woods school website apparently has free downloadable switch programmes. [Www.priorywoods.middlesbrough.sch.uk](http://www.priorywoods.middlesbrough.sch.uk)
- Useful people to talk to are, PMLD secondary school teachers, health professionals, Sense, RNIB, RNID, people who know the pupils well and suppliers of the equipment.

**Anxiety of resident**

- A staff member in a residential unit enquired about a resident who has constantly high anxiety. He has severe learning disabilities and a hearing impairment.
- Intensive Interaction was recommended as a method of building a relationship.
- Information on reducing anxiety in people with autism can be helpful
- The worker was advised to contact their local community health team for people with learning disabilities, SLT's, OT's psychology, nursing etc can all help.
- There could be any numbers of possibilities of issues for him. Look at the environment, what has changed? Is there too much noise, (which can be especially disturbing for people with a hearing impairment), has there been a change in his medication, staff, health, other people around him?
- It may help to get him an advocate who can work with him on what the cause is.

The PMLD network discussion forum, ([www.pmldnetwork.org](http://www.pmldnetwork.org)), is run and maintained by the

Foundation for people with Learning Disabilities  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 83 Victoria Street,  
London SW1H OHW.

Tel: +44(0)20 78020301

Email: [nmorris@fpld.org.uk](mailto:nmorris@fpld.org.uk)

Website: [www.learningdisabilities.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk)

Registered Charity No: 801130 Company Registration

Number: 235 0846

## NEWS, PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES



### ***The Reach DVD has arrived!***

Reach is a set of standards for Supported Living. The new edition of Reach now maps itself (as far as is possible) to Domiciliary Care Standards and Supporting People QAF.

The Reach pack consists of the *It's My Life* pack, the *Service Review* pack and an interactive DVD

If you would like to buy the Reach Standards of Supported Living pack then please contact us below.

Contact: DH Publications Orderline Address: PO Box 777, London SE1 6XH Phone: 08701 555 455 Textphone 08700 102 870 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday) Fax: 01623 724 524

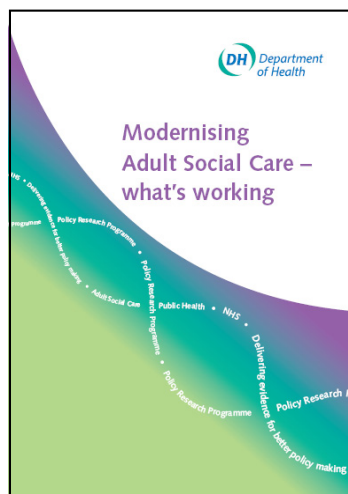
Email: [dh@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dh@prolog.uk.com)

### **Modernising adult social care – what's working?**

The Department of Health has published a report that assesses the progress and outcomes of the process of modernisation initiated in Modernising Social Services (1998) and developed in Independence, Well-being, and Choice (2005) and Our Health, Our Care, Our Say (2006) and related policies. It draws on eleven research studies commissioned by the Department of Health's Policy Research Programme, between 2003 and 2007.

To view Modernising adult social care – what's working? (PDF, 1045K) go to

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/>



### **Can You Hear Us? DVD**

The group who made this DVD is made up of people with learning disabilities and United Response staff. They want to show how often people with learning disabilities are mistreated in every day situations.

The DVD is made up of five dramas, each showing a different example of discrimination.

#### **Who will benefit from it?**

Anyone at all. The DVD is not just a training resource, it's an awareness raising tool:

- Support staff and social workers
- Self-advocacy groups and citizen advocates
- Teachers, schools and colleges
- Emergency services
- Social services and teams
- Libraries and advice centres
- Employers
- Companies
- Banks, building societies, supermarkets
- Transport organisations

#### **Other features**

The DVD has been produced in various additional formats: with subtitles, with speech supported signing, or with subtitles and BSL to appeal to a wide range of people.

To order a copy, go to: [www.unitedresponse.org.uk](http://www.unitedresponse.org.uk)



## DVD/video: Self-injurious Behaviour

**What causes self-injurious behaviour?  
What action should parents and carers take?**

Professors Chris Oliver and Glynis Murphy, the UK's leading authorities on self-injurious behaviour, join forces to offer clear and practical information and advice to families caring for individuals with severe learning disabilities. In this 45 minute video/DVD you will also meet Laura and Tobias, learn how their self-injurious behaviour has affected their lives and the lives of their families, and how some simple, straightforward steps can help to reduce self-injurious behaviour.

The video/DVD emphasizes understanding the causes and the function of the self injurious behaviour, and addresses issues such as the use of medication and protective devices. Produced primarily for family carers, this resource also provides a useful introduction to any professionals who may encounter self-injurious behaviour in individuals with severe learning disabilities

**To order a copy, priced £30, go to:  
[www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk)**

## PMLD Link guest edits another journal!

The PMLD Link editorial team were recently asked to 'guest edit' a special issue of the prestigious education journal 'Support For Learning'. The team welcomed the opportunity to put **Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities** firmly on the education agenda, with this edition focusing on some **pertinent issues relating to learners with PMLD.**

**Penny Lacey and Annie Fergusson, together with the rest of the team, were excited to take on the task to create this special issue, drawing on interesting articles from some of the eminent figures in our field (including members of our team!). We were also pleased to be able to include the working definitions paper drawn up by Beverley Dawkins together with members of the *pmldnetwork* email discussion group (<http://www.fpld.org.uk/information/have-your-say/choice-forum/> - see page 36-37 for more info).**

**For a copy of the issue please contact:**

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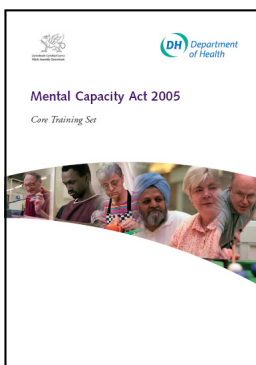
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Support for Learning	
IN THIS ISSUE	
British Journal of Learning Support	
<b>Guest Editorial</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Articles</b>	
Melanie Neal Supporting lifelong learning for people with profound and multiple learning difficulties	111
David Pearce On health related context and people who have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties	116
Mark Baker Inclusion, interaction and dialogue using Informatic Interaction	124
Don Hogg Assessing and teaching children at the early stages of development: Combining psychology and ICT in evaluation of a short intensive course for teachers of pupils with PMLD	131
Paul Robinson and Chris Gunning Special school (organisation by a local authority) - children's stories	137
Devi D. Meek and Matthew Payer Who gets to SLD? A critical analysis of policy and provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties who attend special schools in England	145
<b>Notes on contributors</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Reviews</b>	<b>154</b>

## Mental Capacity Act 2005: training materials



Author: University of Central Lancashire; Social Care Workforce Research Unit

(King's College, London) and various authors

Published date: 8 May 2007

Gateway reference: 8082

Copyright holder: Crown During May 2007 the Department of Health, in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), is publishing five sets of training materials to support the implementation of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The training materials have been produced by the University of Central Lancashire and the Social Care Workforce Research Unit at King's College, London.

The five sets (a core set, a mental health set, a residential accommodation set, a community care and primary care set and an acute hospitals set) can be downloaded from <http://tinyurl.com/268b9o>

A CD Rom of all sets can be obtained by quoting 277742 Mental Capacity Act: Training Sets.

## *Snap!* Mencap photo competition 2007

London's Victoria and Albert Museum played host to the Mencap Snap! photo awards. The Snap! photography competition showcases photos and stories by and of people with a learning disability.

Snap! offers people an insight into what it is like to have a learning disability through the eyes of those closest to it.

This year's competition received nearly 700 entries. The quality was fantastic.

The categories were chosen to reflect everyday aspects of life which members of the public can connect with:

- Love and Friendship
- Lifestyle and Health
- Work, Success and Achievements
- Through My Eyes
- Changing Minds
- Young Snap!

The winning entries and best of the rest will be on display at the Link Gallery at the V&A Museum in London, from 17 June - 22 July 2007.



Jo Yarnall  
'Beauty in the eye of the beholder' 2007

This picture is of Jo's daughter Hannah who has Down's syndrome. Jo was awarded Gold in the 'Through My Eyes' category.

'As I look into Hannah's eyes I don't see her disability. All I see is her attractive blue eyes and the brushfield spots, which are the tiny speckled white spots in the iris of her eye. As I look into my daughter's eyes I am totally captivated by her beauty that makes her the unique person she is.'

Jo Yarnall, 'Beauty in the eye of the beholder', 2007

### ***Some other winners***



## Don't stick it, stop it!

### Mencap's campaign to stop the bullying of children and young people with a learning disability

#### Summary

*Don't stick it, stop it!* is Mencap's new campaign to stop the bullying of children and young people with a learning disability.

Mencap talked to over 500 children and young people with a learning disability and found that nearly all children with a learning disability are bullied.

Children with a learning disability are bullied everywhere they go. This wrecks children's lives, making them scared to go out because they are frightened they might be bullied.

'Don't stick it, stop it!' is calling for children and young people, adults and the Government to take action to stop disablist bullying – when children and young people are bullied because of their disability.

Please visit [www.dontstickit.org.uk](http://www.dontstickit.org.uk) to make an online sticker to say you want bullying to stop.

**"I don't like getting bullied by people. It makes me upset. I wish it would stop."**

Mencap talked to over 500 children and young people with a learning disability about their experiences of bullying. We found that 8 out of 10 children with a learning disability are bullied, and 8 out of 10 are scared to go out because they are frightened they might be bullied.

Children with a learning disability are more likely to be bullied because of their disability. They can be seen as 'different' and bullies see them as 'easy targets'.

Children with a learning disability are bullied wherever they go, including at school, on the bus, at the park, at youth clubs and out on the street.

Bullying has a long-term impact, making it harder for children and young people with a learning disability to develop skills and gain confidence.

4 out of 10 children told Mencap that the bullying didn't stop when they told someone. Adults do not always listen to children with a learning disability when they report bullying.



### What children and young people with a learning disability said about bullying

Mencap talked to over 500 children and young people with a learning disability about their experiences of bullying, between January and March 2007.

The children were aged between 8-19 years.

#### Mencap found that:

- 8 out of 10 children with a learning disability are bullied.
- 8 out of 10 are scared to go out because they are frightened they might be bullied.
- 6 out of 10 children with a learning disability had been physically hurt by bullies. 8 out of 10 children had been called names.
- 4 out of 10 children were bullied for more than a year.
- 4 out of 10 children said that the bullying didn't stop when they told someone.
- 5 out of 10 children with a learning disability who had been bullied were bullied in more than one place, which included at school, on the bus, at the park, at youth clubs and out on the street.
- 4 out of 10 children said that they had had their things taken from them by bullies. Children also reported being left out of things and being bullied by phone and text messaging.

**Children said:**

- "I don't like the street, I don't like the park, I don't like the swimming pool, because of bullies"
- "Bullying makes me feel sad"
- "I am scared of being bullied again"
- "Bullying is not a nice thing to do. It must stop"
- "People call me names on the street sometimes"
- "I don't like getting bullied by people. It makes me upset. I wish it can stop"
- "I like the bus, but I'm frightened I may be bullied on there"
- "When I was being bullied I was very upset. I tried to hide how I felt. The girls were nasty. I was scared it would get worse. They told lies – nobody believed me"

**Alice's story**

Alice is 11 years old and loves to make people laugh by telling jokes. Tommy is Alice's brother. He is 8 and has tuberous sclerosis and a severe learning disability. Tommy does not speak but uses noises and facial expressions to communicate.

Alice's mum, Michele, used to take Tommy to meet Alice from school, but she is no longer able to do this. This is because when she did there was a group of kids who would laugh at Tommy and say things about Tommy's disability. Michele later found out that Alice was also being bullied.

Michele, explains: "to my absolute horror, Alice came out of school, very distressed and upset, a group of children has been taunting her with 'Alice's brother is a spac, Alice's brother goes UI, UI, UI'."

For Alice, the bullying was very upsetting: "It made me feel really upset and I used to lock myself in the toilet so people couldn't see me crying. I would like it if Mum could bring Tommy to school because some of the kids really like him and enjoy meeting him, but she can't because a few kids laugh at him."

Alice's mum, Michele, does not take Tommy to Alice's school any more as she does not want to put Alice in a situation where she will be bullied again. Michele explains:

"I stayed away from the playground when Tommy was with me so that it never put Alice in that situation again, to be singled out and bullied."

Both Michele and Alice would like to see an end to people bullying because someone has a learning disability.

**Don't stick it, stop it!**

Children and young people with a learning disability should be able to enjoy life and take part in activities without being scared of bullying. All children and young people with a learning disability have the right to feel safe.

It is not right that children and young people are bullied because they have a learning disability. Mencap wants disablist bullying – when children and young people are bullied because of their disability – to be recognised and treated as seriously as other forms of prejudice-based bullying.

We want the Government, adults, children and young people to take action to stop bullying.

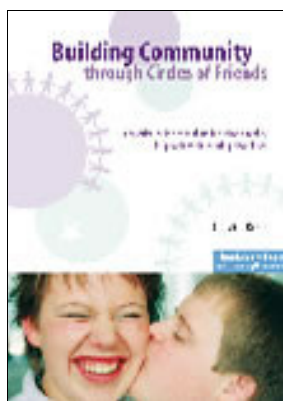
**What can you do?**

- We are asking everyone who wants bullying to stop to sign-up to support the campaign on our new interactive website [www.dontstickit.org.uk](http://www.dontstickit.org.uk). Here you can make a sticker and sign up to support the campaign. The stickers will be used to show the Government that action needs to be taken to stop children and young people with a learning disability being bullied.
- Adults should look out for signs that children with a learning disability are being bullied, listen to children when they report bullying and take action to stop the bullying.
- Children should stick up for children and young people with a learning disability who are being bullied – tell a teacher or another adult what is happening.
- If you are being bullied, tell someone. It is not right that you are being bullied. If you are a child or a young person with a learning disability who would like to speak to a counsellor in confidence, you can call **Childline** on **0800 1111**.

**Contact us**

If you want to contact the campaigns team, you can email us at [campaigns@mencap.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@mencap.org.uk)

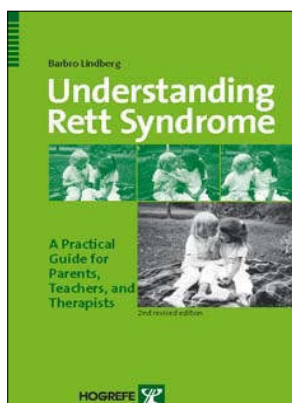




**Author:** Christine Burke  
**Publisher:** Mental Health Foundation  
**ISBN:** 1903645891  
**Pub Date:** 2006  
**Price:** £15

### Building community through circles of friends

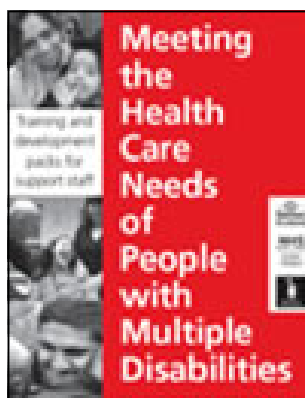
A practical guide to making inclusion a reality for people with learning disabilities. This book outlines practical steps to developing circles of support that will result in long-lasting friendships and on-going connections in a person's local community. It is a resource to help understand the values that should underpin the process of person-centred planning. The book contains practical guidance and examples of good practice, as well as real life case studies.



**Author(s):** Barbro Lindberg  
**Publisher:** Hogrefe & Huber Publishers  
**ISBN:** 088937306X  
 Edition 2nd  
 Revised edition  
 Hardback  
**Pub Date:** 2006  
**Price:** £22.95

### Understanding Rett Syndrome

The brand new edition of this unique book describes the difficulties and challenges of girls and women with Rett Syndrome, and proposes solutions that can help them in everyday life. Written from an educational perspective, and based on extensive practical, real-life experience, it also takes into consideration living conditions as a whole to provide practical and effective help for all those involved in the care of those with Rett Syndrome.



**Publisher:** Pavilion  
**ISBN:** 978184196187 3  
**Pub Date:** June 2007  
**Price:** £295.00

### Meeting the Health Care Needs of People with Multiple Disabilities

Training and development for support staff - full set of 8 packs

Sense Scotland and Women and Children's Directorate, NHS Greater Glasgow 2006 Developed to bridge the gap between health and social care, these training packs are designed to provide social care support staff with the underpinning knowledge and practical skills they need to support a person with a specific health care need. Each of the packs can be used as stand-alone training, or together as a comprehensive training course.



**Devised by:** W Buchanan, M Neville, N Jay, S McQuarrie, E Schneider, J Cope, T Kirk  
**Publisher:** www.circlesnetwork.org.uk  
**Pub Date:** 2003  
**Price:** £200 inc P&P

### Inclusion Matters an introduction to person centred approaches

If you are a disabled person, or if others perceive you as different, you are likely to have an insight into the story told on the enclosed video. If not, you may have little understanding of the barriers society creates which disable and isolate people with a physical impairment, learning difficulty or enduring mental ill health.

**This pack comprises a video, CD-ROM and book.**

# Reviews

## **Routes for Learning: Assessment Materials for Learners with Profound Learning Difficulties and Additional Disabilities**

Rob Ashdown

This pack was produced in 2006 for use by teachers in Wales by the Qualifications and Curriculum Group of the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills of the Welsh Assembly Government. It has been developed by a working group of teachers supported by Dr. Jean Ware from St. Patrick's College, Dublin and has been trialled in various schools in Wales. These materials are aimed primarily at inexperienced teachers who require guidance on the teaching and assessment of pupils with PMLD. However, even experienced teachers will find the presentation of a holistic assessment process of learning needs very useful. The *Routes for Learning* materials focus on the early communication, social interaction and cognitive skills that are crucial for all future learning, leading from very basic 'notices stimuli' to 'contingency awareness', 'object permanence', 'early problem solving', 'expresses preference for items not present via symbolic means' and 'initiates actions to achieve desired result'. Reassuringly, the assessment does not aim to provide a summary score because this can do no justice to their complex behaviours. A 'routemap' shows a range of learning pathways leading to these crucial skills, called 'key milestones', in recognition of the fact that children with PMLD have very individual needs. Although the focus is on children, the materials in this pack have much relevance for professionals who work with adults with PMLD.

The pack contains an assessment booklet which provides guidance on suitable assessment activities; a guidance booklet which provides an overview of the main theories and background information underpinning effective teaching and assessment; a DVD of videoclips taken in classrooms that demonstrate communicative and cognitive skills featuring in the routemap; a routemap poster; and a CD with text files of all the printed documents.

The guidance booklet provides an overview of some of the main theories that have influenced teachers of children with PMLD emphasising behaviourist practices that have proved to be effective and pointing out the benefits of interactive approaches. The section on curriculum design provides a useful reminder of the seminal guidance in the 1996 SCAA/ACAC booklet *Planning the*

*Curriculum for Learners with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties* and the flexibilities that exist in the National Curriculum. There is a clear steer that the absolute priority is that the developmental needs of children are met so that they are empowered by developing skills for future learning. The booklet goes on to articulate key principles for effective learning, related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, including the importance of making sure that children feel secure, safe, comfortable, and free from pain, thirst, hunger and fatigue to ensure that they are physically and emotionally ready to learn. There is discussion of the importance of careful positioning and movement in learning, immediate and consistent feedback for children for their behaviour and planning for transfer or generalisation of skills. There is careful exposition of the concepts of contingency responding, contingency awareness and object permanence and the need for carefully controlled sensory stimulation and the implications of sensory impairments. The nature of the communication process and the main stages in the development of communication skills receive a full treatment. Finally, the booklet explores record keeping and the purposes of assessment and the key issues in relation to children with PMLD, including the difficulties of hierarchical assessment for children whose responses are idiosyncratic and vary from day to day and in different contexts. Such difficulties make it almost impossible to make meaningful best-fit judgements about achievement (a particular difficulty with the P-levels).

The assessment booklet provides practical guidance about assessment in relation to the routemap. Crucial skills are coloured orange on the routemap but emphasis is given to the fact that learners will follow a range of pathways through it. The left-hand side of the routemap focuses on communication skills and the right-hand side on early cognitive development. For each numbered step on the routemap, the assessment booklet provides suggestions for assessment activities to try, things to look for in terms of changes in behaviour and teaching strategies that may help to move a child on to achieve the numbered step. Again, it is important to stress that there is no hierarchical or predetermined order to achievement of the steps in the routemap and that children may follow a range of pathways. Also, the routemap is not a curriculum for pupils with PMLD. However, the strength of the routemap lies in the possibilities of recording significant developments and suggesting possible next steps as exemplified in two examples of children assessed against it. A key part of the *Routes for Learning* package is

the DVD which shows videoclips with commentary (in English or Welsh) of children demonstrating particular skills. These videoclips are cross-referenced to particular numbered behaviours from the routemap. The illustration of these skills is intended to promote discussion among staff in schools and consistency in making observations and recording progress. This DVD certainly helps to make the assessment process more transparent and helps greatly to make the whole pack meaningful and relevant to typical teaching situations.

The *Routes for Learning* pack has relevance for learners with PMLD of all ages and it is refreshing to read materials where there is no emphasis upon whole school target setting and best fit judgements in relation to P-scales. This a genuinely useful set of assessment materials that will have appeal to all and it is a shame that there seems to be no intention to make an English version available or to point up their relevance to adults with PMLD. However, a Northern Ireland version is due to be launched soon and the materials have been disseminated by some professional groups in England and Scotland. These materials are not a substitute for quality training but would be an

excellent resource for training organised by local authorities, schools and other institutions despite the need to create your own Powerpoint slides and print off sufficient materials. Individuals will need structured opportunities to work through the materials with peers and they may wish to develop their own videoclips of learners to exemplify assessment and support discussion. All of the materials, except for the all-important DVD, are available as downloads (go to <http://old.accac.org.uk/eng/content.php?mID=167> and click on the icon at the bottom right of the page) and materials in the English medium can be ordered from the Qualifications and Curriculum Assessment Group on 0870 242 3207 quoting the title and the reference number AC/GM/0612. There has always been a shortage of good materials to support assessment and meaningful target setting with these learners. Do take the opportunity to get hold of this pack and explore it with your colleagues as soon as you can.

Rob Ashdown  
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St Luke's School  
Scunthorpe  
[rob.ashdown@ntlworld.com](mailto:rob.ashdown@ntlworld.com)

## Spring Vol. 20 Issue 59

### 'Families'

The copy date for all articles, information and news for the Spring 2008 issue is the 7th March

Please send contributions to:  
**Beverley Dawkins**  
[Beverley.Dawkins@mencap.org.uk](mailto:Beverley.Dawkins@mencap.org.uk)

Articles can be long or short and they are welcomed from carers or professionals alike – we value YOUR experience and views. Please contact us if we can help you in any way. If you have any picture or photos to include we would love to see them (providing we have permissions).



**Sunfield Professional Development Centre**

Clent Grove, Clent, Nr. Stourbridge, West Midlands DY9 9PB

Tel No: 01562 883183; Fax No: 01562 881316

email: [pd@sunfield.org.uk](mailto:pd@sunfield.org.uk) [www.sunfield.org.uk](http://www.sunfield.org.uk)

**New Dimensions in Special Needs;  
challenges to teaching & learning**

18<sup>th</sup> October 2007

£75.00 per delegate

**THE DAY WILL BE LED BY:**

**Professor Barry Carpenter,**  
Chief Executive, Sunfield

**WITH GUEST SPEAKERS:**

**Dr. Patricia Champion**  
Emeritus Clinical Director, Champion Early Intervention Centre, New Zealand

**&**

**Susan Fleisher**  
Executive Director, National Organisation on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome-UK

*~ Come and learn about some of the new challenges facing the  
profession ~*

*Themes will include*

**PRE-TERM INFANTS**

**MENTAL HEALTH**

**FOETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME**

**This is a rare opportunity to discuss with international & national  
speakers issues that will transform children's learning**

*For further information on this course and others offered at both  
Sunfield PDC, Stourbridge, West Midlands, and Booker Park School, Aylesbury,  
please see web site [www.sunfield.org.uk](http://www.sunfield.org.uk) or  
contact the Administration Manager on 01562 883183 or email: [pd@sunfield.org.uk](mailto:pd@sunfield.org.uk)*



## Short Courses and Conferences

### Providers Details

#### BILD

**British Institute of Learning Disabilities**  
Campion House, Green Street,  
Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY10 1JL  
Tel. 01562 723025  
E-mail: [learning@bild.org.uk](mailto:learning@bild.org.uk)  
website: [www.bild.org.uk](http://www.bild.org.uk)

#### Catalyst Education Resources Ltd

1A Potters Cross  
Wootton, Bedfordshire MK43 9JG, U.K.  
Tel. 0845 127 5281  
E-mail: [patcerl@aol.com](mailto:patcerl@aol.com)  
Web: [www.cerl.net](http://www.cerl.net)

#### Concept Training

15 Beach Street,  
Morecambe,  
Lancashire LA4 6BT  
Tel. 01524 832 828  
E-mail: [info@concept-training.co.uk](mailto:info@concept-training.co.uk)  
Website: [www.concept-training.co.uk/](http://www.concept-training.co.uk/)

#### EQUALS

PO Box 107, North Shields,  
Tyne & Wear, NE30 2YG  
Tel. 0191 272 8600  
Email: [admin@equals.co.uk](mailto:admin@equals.co.uk)  
Website: [www.equals.co.uk](http://www.equals.co.uk)

#### Sunfield PDC

Clent Grove, Clent,  
Nr. Stourbridge,  
West Midlands DY9 9PB  
Tel. 01562 883183  
E-mail: [pdc@sunfield.org.uk](mailto:pdc@sunfield.org.uk)  
Website: [www.sunfield-school.org.uk/courses.htm](http://www.sunfield-school.org.uk/courses.htm)

#### The University of Northampton

Park Campus  
School of Education  
Boughton Green Road  
Northampton  
Tel. 01604 892897  
E-mail: [education@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:education@northampton.ac.uk)

**Some of next years short courses & conferences were not available at the time of print. Please visit their websites for updated information.**

### September

**Date:** 17th  
**Title:** Addressing Learning Styles: exploring the surprising diversity of learning styles on the autism spectrum  
**Provider:** Sunfield PDC  
**Contact:** (See Providers Details)

### October

**Date:** 1st  
**Title:** One day courses focusing on sensory rooms and studio's focusing on good practice.  
**Provider:** Hirstwood Training Ltd  
**Location:** Glasgow  
**Contact:** Tel (+44) 01524 42 63 95  
Fax (+44) 01524 45 20 54  
email [lois@hirstwood.edi.co.uk](mailto:lois@hirstwood.edi.co.uk)  
[www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk](http://www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk)

**Date:** 3rd  
**Title:** Implementing the New Numeracy Framework for Pupils with Severe or Complex Learning Difficulties  
**Provider:** Sunfield PDC  
**Contact:** (See Providers Details)

**Date:** 5th  
**Title:** One day courses focusing on sensory rooms and studio's focusing on good practice.  
**Provider:** Hirstwood Training Ltd  
**Location:** Birmingham  
**Contact:** Tel (+44) 01524 42 63 95  
Fax (+44) 01524 45 20 54  
email [lois@hirstwood.edi.co.uk](mailto:lois@hirstwood.edi.co.uk)  
[www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk](http://www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk)

**Date:** 10th  
**Title:** One day courses focusing on sensory rooms and studio's focusing on good practice.  
**Provider:** Hirstwood Training Ltd  
**Location:** London  
**Contact:** Tel (+44) 01524 42 63 95  
Fax (+44) 01524 45 20 54  
email [lois@hirstwood.edi.co.uk](mailto:lois@hirstwood.edi.co.uk)  
[www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk](http://www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk)

## October

**Date:** 12th  
**Title:** Multisensory environments big & small: validating current practice (Conference)  
**Provider:** Florich Productions Ltd  
**Location:** Mayfair London  
 A one day multi sensory forum - sharing, knowledge, experience and innovation.  
**Contact:** Tel (+44) 01524 42 63 95  
 Fax (+44) 01524 45 20 54  
 email [lois@hirstwood.edi.co.uk](mailto:lois@hirstwood.edi.co.uk)  
[www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk](http://www.multi-sensory-room.co.uk)

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup>  
**Title:** Making the Revised Numeracy Framework Accessible for Pupils with Severe or Profound Learning Difficulties  
**Provider:** Equals  
**Location:** The Bonnington Hotel, London  
**Contact:** (See Providers Details)

## November

**Date:** 1st  
**Title:** Sherborne Developmental Movement Level 2  
**Provider:** Sunfield PDC  
**Contact:** (See Providers Details)

**Date:** 6th  
**Title:** Working with Families of Children with SEN  
**Provider:** Sunfield PDC  
**Contact:** (See Providers Details)

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>  
**Title:** Routes to Learning: An assessment tool for learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties  
**Provider:** Equals  
**Location:** Novotel Birmingham Centre, Birmingham  
**Contact:** (See Providers Details)

**Date:** 8th  
**Title:** Intensive Interaction  
**Provider:** Sunfield PDC  
**Contact:** (See Providers Details)

**Date:** Friday 9th November  
**Title:** Quality of life and learning For people with brain injury and/or complex needs  
**Location:** Somerset College of Arts and Technology  
**Contact:** Julia Tester on 01823.366525 or email [Julia@eqol.co.uk](mailto:Julia@eqol.co.uk)

**Date:** 20th  
**Title:** Ann Craft Trust Conference  
**Location:** The Village Hotel, Nottingham  
**Contact:** [www.choiceforum.org/actconf2007.doc](http://www.choiceforum.org/actconf2007.doc)  
 Charlie Heywood, Marketing & Development Officer on 0115 951 5400 or by e-mailing [charlie.heywood@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:charlie.heywood@nottingham.ac.uk)

**Date:** (see below)  
**Title:** The "Communication for All" course.  
**Provider:** CandLE  
**Location:** Lee Valley Youth Hostel, near Cheshunt in Hertfordshire  
**Programme:**  
 DAY 1, 7<sup>th</sup> Nov: Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC)  
 DAY 2, 8<sup>th</sup> Nov: Specialist approaches to learning and communication  
 DAY 3, 9<sup>th</sup> Nov: Making mainstream opportunities available to people with special needs  
 DAY 4, 21<sup>st</sup> Nov: Understanding Movement and Communication Difficulty. Motor Planning Training; and approach based on Facilitated Communication Training  
 DAY 5, 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov: Using the Ladder and beginning to talk about person centred supports  
 DAY 6, 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov: Using Vocabularies on High tech aids and communication books and a new take on Circles of Support  
**Contact:** Communication and Learning Enterprises, 48 Station Road, Holywell Green, HX4 9AW, Phone: 07904693302  
 Email: [contactcandle@btinternet.com](mailto:contactcandle@btinternet.com) Web [www.contactcandle.co.uk](http://www.contactcandle.co.uk)

**PMLD-Link  
Subscription Year 2007**

Volume 19 Nos. 1,2 and 3

<b>Subscription Rates:</b>		<b>UK</b>	<b>Overseas (sterling)</b>
	Individual:	£12.00	£17.00
	Organisation or group:	£17.00	£25.00

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Please pay: HSBC Bank plc, Ross-on-Wye branch  
Sort Code: 40-39-06  
For the Credit of: PMLD-Link  
Account No: 81156284  
The sum of: £  
Commencing: .....and thereafter annually until further notice

Account to be debited: .....

Account No. ....

Signature(s): .....

Date: .....

## LONGER COURSES (with accreditation)

Updated June 2007

### Master of Arts in Education

#### SLD1: Pupils with Severe and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (Contexts & Understanding)

This module addresses the requirements of the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) National Special Educational Needs Standards (Core 1a – 1e, Extension 2.i – 2iv.). It is directly related to the module Curriculum and Teaching – Pupils with Severe and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties which addresses further standards. The module provides students with an opportunity to gain an understanding of those influences which impact upon the learning, development and management of pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

**Module: EDUM081**

**For further Details:** The University of Northampton. Tel: 01604 892192. E-mail: [admissions@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@northampton.ac.uk)

### Master of Arts in Education

#### SLD2: Pupils with Severe and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (Curriculum & Teaching)

This module addresses the requirements of the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) National Special Educational Needs Standards (Core 1a – 1e, Extension 2.i – 2iv.). It is directly related to the module Curriculum and Teaching – Pupils with Severe and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties which addresses further standards. The module provides students with an opportunity to gain an understanding of those influences which impact upon the learning, development and management of pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

**Module: EDUM055**

**For further Details:** The University of Northampton. Tel: 01604 892192. E-mail: [admissions@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@northampton.ac.uk)

### Master of Arts in Education

#### Physical Disabilities: Contexts & Interventions

This module provides opportunities for those with QTS and professional qualifications & experience in services for children to engage in structured critical reflection, exploration of key substantive issues and overarching policy determinants in respect of children and young people with physical disabilities. The module encourages both the development of enhanced understandings of the dimensions of physical disability, with regard to both their theoretical bases and the policies and practices invoked in meeting identified needs.

**Module: EDUM058**

**For further Details:** The University of Northampton. Tel: 01604 892192. E-mail: [admissions@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@northampton.ac.uk)

### Master of Arts in Education

#### Physical Disabilities: Curriculum Issues

This module provides students with opportunities to investigate, critique and evaluate a range of curriculum approaches in the field of PD. It engages students in debates concerning the relevance and practical efficacy of recent guidance & legislation in PD-related issues, and offers an in-depth series of curriculum-focused activity which is intended to enhance both the understanding and the practice of those working with children and young people with PD.

**Module: EDUM059**

**For further Details:** The University of Northampton. Tel: 01604 892192. E-mail: [admissions@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@northampton.ac.uk)

### Master of Arts in Education

#### Understanding Multi-Sensory Impairment

This module addresses the requirements of the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) National Special Educational Needs Standards (Extension 2.i – 2iv.). It is directly related to Pupils with Multi Sensory Impairment (MSI) The module provides students with an opportunity to gain an understanding of those influences which impact upon the learning, development and management of pupils with multi sensory impairment.

It provides professional development for teachers and other professional colleagues working in an area of low incidence need and addresses priorities established by Local Authorities, individual teachers and others working with children and young people who experience MSI.

**Module: EDUM054**

**For further Details:** The University of Northampton. Tel: 01604 892192. E-mail: [admissions@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@northampton.ac.uk)

### Certificate in Higher Education (CHESL): Supporting Learners with SLD/PMLD

During the course we will be looking in detail at the needs of learners who are known to have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. They may also have other additional or associated disabilities, such as physical or sensory impairments. The course will examine topics of both a theoretical and practical nature to provide students with a greater understanding about this group of learners. Together with a broad range of strategies and approaches that can be applied to practice. The sessions will include lectures, workshop activities, discussion and some visiting speakers.

**For further Details:** The University of Northampton. Tel: 01604 892192. E-mail: [admissions@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@northampton.ac.uk)

### BSc in Professional Practice (Learning Disability Pathway)

The School of Health & Social Care, University of Chester, BSc in Professional Practice (Learning Disability Pathway) - includes forensic, mental health/learning disability, challenging behaviour, older person with LD and epilepsy modules (plus others)

**For further details:** University of Chester

Telephone: 01244 511471 (Pat Palser), 511472 (Monica Davies) or 511473 (Ann Ashford)

Email: [p.palser@chester.ac.uk](mailto:p.palser@chester.ac.uk), [monica.davies@chester.ac.uk](mailto:monica.davies@chester.ac.uk), [a.ashford@chester.ac.uk](mailto:a.ashford@chester.ac.uk)

**AdCert, BPhil, PGCert, PGDip, MEd.  
Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (Severe, Profound and Complex)**

*Distance Education*

This distance education programme has been developed for the range of staff who work with people with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, for example teachers and lecturers, nurses, therapists, psychologists and support staff.

It is primarily about the learning and development of children and adults with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, particularly in the areas of cognition and communication. Education, in its broadest sense, is seen as a key topic but other areas covered include health, therapy and social care. An important central theme is multi-agency collaboration and course participants will be expected to develop and reflect on their collaborative work as part of course. All the course assignments are grounded in reflective and evidence-based practice and are driven by the individual professional development needs of participants.

The modules are as follows:

1. Understanding Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
2. Interventions for People with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
3. Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: Communication and Behaviour
4. Working Together to Meet the Needs of People with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
5. Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: Life Long Learning
6. Either: Special Studies in Special Education or Practitioner Inquiry in Education

**For further details:** University of Birmingham Dr Penny Lacey, phone: 0121 414 4878 or email: [p.j.lacey@bham.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.lacey@bham.ac.uk)

**AdCert, BPhil, PGCert, PGDip, MEd.  
Multisensory Impairment (Deafblindness) - Distance Learning**

This programme enables teachers and others working in education related fields to work more effectively with learners who are deafblind (multisensory impaired). Some students are teachers working with children or adults, but others are from social services, medical, or residential work. A one-year programme can lead to the awards of Advanced Certificate or Postgraduate Certificate.

- A two-year programme can lead to the award of BPhil, or Postgraduate Diploma.
- A two-year programme with a dissertation can lead to the award of an MEd.

Students working on BPhil or Postgraduate Diploma programmes with some additional activities can, on successful completion, be recognised as meeting the requirements of the DfES for the mandatory qualification for teachers of children with multisensory impairments.

**For further details:** University of Birmingham Dr Liz Hodges on 0121-414 4873 or email: [e.m.hodges@bham.ac.uk](mailto:e.m.hodges@bham.ac.uk)

**PGCert, AdCert.**

**Early Years: Sensory and Multiple Needs—This programme begins in January**

*Distance education.*

This programme enables professionals to work more effectively with young children with sensory and multiple needs. Participants may be teachers, who may already hold a specialist qualification in visual impairment, deafness or multisensory impairment; specialist speech and language therapists; health visitors; social workers; carers or others working with young children with sensory and additional needs.

**For further details:** University of Birmingham Dr Liz Hodges on 0121 414 4873 or email: [E.M.Hodges@bham.ac.uk](mailto:E.M.Hodges@bham.ac.uk)

**MSc and Graduate Diploma in Learning Disability Studies - Distance Learning**

If you are currently working with people with a learning disability and are interested in updating and expanding your knowledge of theory and practice, this course provides an opportunity to learn alongside other experienced professionals from a wide range of backgrounds.

- Is designed for experienced professionals involved in the care of adults and children with a learning disability.
- Is a distance course, involving the use of specially-prepared texts, annual weekend schools, and local tutorial groups.
- Assesses ability through small practical assignments and a dissertation of 15,000 words based on original research.
- Can be completed in one-year (full-time) or between two and five years (part-time).
- Leads to a Masters of Science degree after the completion of all assignments and the dissertation, or a Postgraduate Diploma for the completion of the assignments alone.

**For further details:** University of Birmingham Dr Stuart Cumella, Division of Neuroscience on 0121 414 4507 or email: [S.Cumella@bham.ac.uk](mailto:S.Cumella@bham.ac.uk)

**Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma Profound Learning Disability and Multi-Sensory Impairment Programme**  
**MSc Learning Disability and Multi-Sensory Impairment Programme**  
**Programmes available by Distance Learning at The University of Manchester, School of Education**  
**Programme Aims**

- To provide an increased knowledge and understanding of children and adults who have complex needs and/or sensory impairments.
- To empower those directly concerned with this group to advocate for the rights of the individuals concerned.
- To enable this to happen by providing current information relating to cognitive, emotional, physical, sensory and social needs.

**Programme Structure**

Courses are delivered by Distance Learning over a period of 1 - 3 years (including an extra year of independent study for MSc. students undertaking their dissertation). The MSc and Postgraduate Diploma are also available full time (distance learning) over 1 year. The written materials are underpinned by a variety of Study School formats during this time. Student support is also provided by telephone contact with the academic tutors. There are no examinations and the course requires approximately 3-4 hours private study per week.

**For further details:** University of Manchester Janet Grimshaw, Phone: 0161 275 3463, Email: [janet.grimshaw@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:janet.grimshaw@manchester.ac.uk)

**MSc in Advanced Practice (Learning Disabilities)**

The School of Health & Social Care, University of Chester, MSc in Advanced Practice (Learning Disabilities) - includes generic modules in research and inter-professional working plus 3 LD specialist modules (socio- political themes in LD; developmental perspectives on LD; profound & complex needs).

**For further details:** University of Chester

Telephone: 01244 511471 (Pat Palser), 511472 (Monica Davies) or 511473 (Ann Ashford)

Email: [p.palser@chester.ac.uk](mailto:p.palser@chester.ac.uk), [monica.davies@chester.ac.uk](mailto:monica.davies@chester.ac.uk), [a.ashford@chester.ac.uk](mailto:a.ashford@chester.ac.uk)

**Adults with learning disabilities who have significant and complex needs**

The School of Psychology at the University of St Andrews offers a Post Graduate Certificate by open/distance learning: "Adults with learning disabilities who have significant and complex needs". This consists of four distance learning modules, chosen from six, and is available to staff with a professional qualification or a first degree.

- Challenging behaviour
- Mental health
- Offenders with learning disabilities
- Older people with learning disabilities
- Profound and multiple disabilities
- Vulnerability, victimisation and abuse

The next intake is October 2006.

The programme leads to further qualifications at Diploma and Masters level.

**For further details:** University of St. Andrews <http://psy.st-andrews.ac.uk/people/personal/mc1/>

Dr Martin Campbell email: [mc1@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:mc1@st-andrews.ac.uk)

**BPhil, PGDip and MEd**

**Inclusion and SEN**

Year 1 Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (Severe, Profound and Complex)

Year 2 Autism (Children) or Autism (Adults)

*Distance Education*

This two/ three year course contains 6 modules and students study the required number from this list for their chosen award plus a dissertation.

1. Understanding Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
2. Interventions for People with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
3. Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: Communication and Behaviour
4. Special Educational Needs of Children with Autism or Autism (Adults) Understanding and Working with the Continuum of Need
5. Curriculum and Treatment for Children with Autism or Autism (Adults) Intervention, Care and Education
6. PGDip includes a practical project based on your work  
MEd includes a research methods module and a dissertation

For further details: The University of Birmingham, Penny Lacey [p.j.lacey@bham.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.lacey@bham.ac.uk) or Helen Bradley [h.bradley.2@bham.ac.uk](mailto:h.bradley.2@bham.ac.uk)

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**PMLD-Link** is an informal journal for practitioners and carers working with people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), of all ages and in all situations. It is published three times a year and covers a wide range of issues of interest and practical use in the day-to-day work of practitioners, parents and carers in schools, colleges, adult provision, in the home, and many other settings. In recent years the scope of the articles has been widened to include all professions and services, and to cover issues pertaining to all groups, including occasional articles by practitioners and parents from overseas.

**PMLD-Link** is a grass roots publication and depends on written contributions from parents and carers, teachers, psychologists, special support assistants and workers in all settings. The contributions may be:

- short papers
- news of individuals, families or other groups
- information sharing
- requests from readers for information or useful addresses

**PMLD-Link** also includes:

- information and reviews of resources or publications and reports on conferences and research
- listings of courses and events relevant to the area of PMLD.

It enables readers to create networks, and provides a forum for contact with others involved in the field.

The editorial team is drawn from a variety of settings and currently includes:

<b>Rob Ashdown</b>	Head Teacher at St. Luke's Primary School, Scunthorpe – a special school for children with complex learning difficulties aged 3 to 11 years.
<b>Alice Bradley</b>	Freelance training and development worker.
<b>Beverley Dawkins</b>	National officer for profound and multiple learning disabilities Mencap.
<b>Julia Dixon</b>	Early Years Advisor and parent of young adult with PMLD.
<b>Ann Fergusson</b>	Family member with learning disability; research and teaching in severe / profound and multiple learning difficulties at the University of Northampton; Research Associate for University of Cambridge <i>What About Us?</i> Project.
<b>Di Foxwell</b>	Coordinator of Clinical Education and Practice Development – BHCT NHS Trust and Distance Regional Tutor for Birmingham University on two learning disabilities programs.
<b>Penny Lacey</b>	Co-ordinator of the University of Birmingham course in severe, profound and complex learning difficulties; freelance consultant; family member with severe learning difficulties
<b>Loretto Lambe</b>	Director of <i>PAMIS</i> - an organisation in Scotland working with people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, their family carers and professionals who support them.
<b>Carol Ouvry</b>	Special education teacher and freelance consultant in the field of PMLD. Editor and administrator of <b>PMLD-Link</b> for many years until retirement.
<b>Kim Scarborough</b>	Nurse with 25 years experience in working with people with SLD/PMLD and their families. Have 2 nephews with PMLD. Programme leader for BSc (Hons) in learning disability studies University of the West of England.

There is also a consultation group to assist in commissioning articles from all regions of the UK and overseas and, to ensure a wide coverage of topics. The administrator of **PMLD-Link** is Paul Bramble, The University of Northampton, e-mail: paul.bramble@northampton.ac.uk

**Information for Subscribers:** **PMLD Link** is published in three issues per year.

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Personal/individual	£12	£17
Organisation	£17	£25

(NB. Subscriptions run from January and copies of all issues already mailed this year will be sent)

**If you wish to subscribe, or to receive a sample copy of **PMLD-Link** please contact:**

Carol Ouvry, **PMLD-Link**, 31 Birdwell Road, Long Ashton, Bristol BS41 9BD.  
Telephone: 01275 394621 e-mail: PMLD@mansell.wyenet.co.uk

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**Disclaimer:** Views expressed by contributors to **PMLD Link** are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies and opinions of the editorial team

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# PMLD Link

## IN THIS ISSUE

<b>Guest Editorial:</b>	Penny Lacey
<b>Articles</b>	
<b>Changing Children—Changing Schools? Concerns for the future of teacher training in special education</b>	Baryy Carpenter
<b>Training and PMLD</b>	Peter Imray
<b>From Lecture Room to Classroom: The Transfer of Training to Practice in an Educational Setting</b>	Iain Chatwin
<b>Start where the Learner is: Coaching for a better quality of life</b>	Penny Lacey
<b>Checking Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people</b>	Valerie Wilkinson
<b>Concept Training</b>	Janet Price
<b>Health Aware Champion Training</b>	Theresa Shepherd
<b>Environmental Control Technology for Pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties at Rosewood School</b>	Jenny Boyd
<b>Rock and Role Play: combining the Arts and ICT for Students with Special Needs</b>	Cathy Herries
<b>Improving Transition for Students moving on from a residential special school</b>	FE Interdisciplinary
<b>Transition Learning Programme—A model for Change</b>	Anne Aitchison
<b>Scaffolding in home-based intervention with young children with additional needs</b>	Lindsey Winterton