



# A Sunfield Fact Sheet

## Intensive Interaction

### What is Intensive Interaction?

The Intensive Interaction approach was developed in the 1980s by a team of staff working at Harperbury Hospital School in Hertfordshire. It is an approach to teaching the social pre-speech fundamentals of communication to children and adults who have severe learning difficulties and/or autism, and who are still in the early stages of communication development.

The approach draws upon, and emulates, research into the way humans learn to socially communicate in early childhood. Social communication needs to be developed in a naturalistic way, through the kind of interactive play seen between infants and caregivers. It is a highly practical, flexible, child-led approach, in which the teacher is relaxed, responsive and non-directive, in order to focus on developing the individual skills and confidence of the learner.

### How is Intensive Interaction applied at Sunfield?

Intensive Interaction forms a key part of an holistic approach to the care and education of children and young people at Sunfield. Throughout their day, our students will be supported in the development of their pre-speech fundamentals of communication.

For example, opportunities will be provided for students to give brief attention to a person, and to briefly share attention with another person, through the sharing of space, eye contact and body language. We offer repeated opportunities for these skills to be strengthened and generalised with different people, to build on the social skills.

Interactive partners may gradually introduce new elements to the social interactions; responding to the student's engagement and interests, to facilitate further development of social skills. Intensive Interaction can be used at any time and in any place, depending on the indications of the student. The interaction is always student-led, with the interactive partner following their lead, through imitation, commenting and playful interaction.

### What is the aim of Intensive Interaction?

Our aim is to develop a social awareness, understanding and ability to use fundamentals, such as eye contact, facial expressions, vocalisations and other forms of non-verbal communication, such as gesture and body language. All behaviours are considered to be communicative, so that the student begins to develop a sense of communicative competence and power.

Ultimately, our mission is to support all of our students, at their pace - no matter how limited their communication skills - to feel safe, heard and understood by their peers and the team around them at Sunfield, with a view to this also being extended to interactions within their local community as they mature and grow in confidence.

### Further reading

Intensive Interaction Website – <http://www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk/>.

BILD Fact Sheet on Intensive Interaction – <http://www.bild.org.uk/information/factsheets/>.