

Learning and communication

Katrin Stroh and Thelma Robinson

Ipswich: Concord Video and Film Council, 1993. Videotape and handbook.

This material — a 16-minute video and accompanying 16-page handbook — has been provided by the authors as support for their functional learning programmes for young developmentally delayed

children. The work of the authors will be familiar to readers of *CLTT*, as an account of their approach appears in Vol. 7(1) 1991. The handbook introduces the notion of 'learning tools', breaks them down into the chief individual steps (placing, banging, pairing, matching, sorting), and gives practical guidelines and illustrations of how parents or professionals can get children involved in these activities.

The colour video shows glimpses of a normal child developing through these stages, then extracts from therapy sessions with several developmentally delayed children, showing their progress over a period of time. The pictures are well chosen and nicely edited, and clearly illustrate the authors' approach.

The emphasis is on learning in the broadest sense. Speech and language teachers and therapists will be immediately struck by the learning environment, where the authors have tried to replicate the quiet environment often found when young children play intently by themselves. They comment: 'We therefore keep any talking to a minimum in order that all the child's concentration and effort is focused on the work in front of them'. The total silence of some of the activity sessions seen on the video tape will surprise anyone who believes that conversational reinforcement is natural, or a prerequisite for facilitating learning. There is an interesting contrast between these sessions and the clips of the parents when they carry out the activities with their children, where there is a full conversational interaction. At the same time, the progress which the children have made is also very evident from the tape.

Well-prepared material is always helpful as a means of learning about a therapeutic approach, and this video will be useful to anyone who wants to find out about Functional Learning or to develop their awareness of it. It may be hired from Concord Films Council Ltd, 201 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich IP3 9BJ, UK.